

WORLD CONFERENCE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher Education in the Twenty-first Century

Vision and Action

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The International Labour Organization (ILO)

Note1: To meet UNESCO publishing standards, some editing of papers has been required.

Note2: Authors are responsible for the choice and the presentation of the facts contained in signed articles and for the opinions expressed therein, which are not necessarily those of UNESCO and do not commit the Organization.

**Speech of Mr Bill Ratteree
Representative of the ILO**

Mr President,
the Director-General of UNESCO, Dr. Mayor,
Distinguished Ministers and Delegates,

It is a pleasure to take the floor at this important World Conference on behalf of the Director-General of the International Labour Office and my colleagues from the ILO's Enterprise Department and the International Training Centre in Turin. I join with others in welcoming UNESCO's initiative to convene influential policy- and decision-makers from governments, teachers' unions, student and other non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations to recommend a policy framework for higher education's development on the eve of the 21st century.

The ILO is especially pleased to be associated with this conference as an extension of our long-standing cooperation with UNESCO to improve the quality of educational services. Our joint focus has been largely on improvements in the status and service conditions of the teaching profession, in this case higher education teachers and researchers, because they represent not only the largest component of public and private sector investment in educational expenditure, but also constitute essential deliverers of services and innovators in teaching and research on which our increasingly knowledge-based societies depend. This point is underlined by the regional conference results summarized in the conference working document on «Vision and Action».

Despite a diversification of sources for technical innovation, scientific research and the transmission of knowledge and know-how, higher education teachers and researchers still represent a critical component of any nation's knowledge capacity, and will continue to exercise that role into the foreseeable future. They deserve, therefore, our strongest support to ensure that the critical work they perform is of the highest value. This is the sense in which yesterday's timely thematic debate on staff development recommended an increase in staff development assistance to meet new challenges, ranging from demands for increased accountability in teaching and research to requirements for professional innovation in a rapidly changing scientific and knowledge environment. The ILO fully supports this approach and urges a strong emphasis on such measures in the final Declaration and Framework for Action to be adopted by this conference - attractive remuneration packages to recruit and retain the best staff, infrastructure and teaching/research conditions of the highest affordable quality, continual training to maintain professional competence, and decision-making structures which maintain a strong democratic framework for individual and collective staff participation through their organizations, in line with international labour standards.

A new tool for this support is the Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher Education Teaching Personnel, adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO in November 1997. The Recommendation was the fruit of a large process of consultation and cooperation among all stakeholders in its drafting, a process in which the ILO was pleased to play a meaningful role given the Recommendation's holistic approach to professional and workplace concerns of higher education institutions and staff. We feel that the Recommendation's provisions establish a very sound policy framework for reforms, meriting careful consideration and application among member States of our two organizations. Furthermore, we hope that common ground can be found with the recommendations of the ILO's Governing Body that the responsibility for monitoring this important new international instrument be conferred on the existing Joint ILO/UNESCO Committee of Experts (CEART).

The ILO's interest in this conference extends to other fields, principally post-secondary technical and vocational education and training and the nexus between higher education, the transition to employment and the world of work. The debate organized by the ILO on the «Requirements of the World of Work» has placed on the agenda a number of important issues relating to curricula, teaching/learning approaches and implications for future actions from the perspective of workers, employers, students, and academic staff. Ideas were advanced on **partnerships** between higher education institutions, representatives of the world of work and civil society, in terms of governance, jointly developed research programmes and curriculum

development, and orientation of students to the world of work. In addition, the creation of partnerships between higher education institutions and other institutions of management training, as well as workers' education institutions, call for more reflection and action, including the identification and analysis of best practice case studies on how such partnerships can be most effectively implemented and replicated.

The ILO, including its tripartite constituents, the relevant divisions of the International Labour Office in Geneva, its worldwide structure of multi-disciplinary teams, and the Turin Centre, look forward to developing cooperation on these issues with UNESCO headquarters, its associated institutes and centres and its member States. We have a joint responsibility to do so in the framework of accelerating trends towards effective lifelong learning opportunities which will undoubtedly mark the teaching, learning, and research environment of the next century.

Thank you.