

Work as Key to the Social Question

The Great Social and Economic Transformations and the Subjective Dimension of Work



Constructive Response:
Opportunities for more humane work
today and in the future

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I would like to address the issue of opportunities for more humane work today and in the future from a United Nations perspective. This means an international and global perspective - a perspective shaped by the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on the promotion of “higher standards of living, full employment, and conditions of economic and social progress and development” and “betterment of the human condition”. And, more precisely, a perspective shaped by the latest, most comprehensive United Nations global conference, the World Summit for Social Development.

I. Commitments made at the World Summit for Social Development and today’s situation

In 1995 at Copenhagen, the United Nations convened the World Summit for Social Development, which was heralded as a landmark event where representatives from 186 Governments, including 117 Heads of State and Government, gathered for the first time to address the issue of social development, to carry forward the struggle against poverty, unemployment and social disintegration, and to create a new awareness on social responsibility and solidarity for the twenty-first century. The Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the Summit testify to the gravity of the social problems that beset most societies by the end of the 20th century, and mark the emergence of a collective determination to treat social development, or social progress, as the highest priority of all national and international policies. The Summit also reflects a comprehensive

perception of social development, encompassing not only the traditional social sectors of governmental action, but also the functioning of social institutions, including those whose function is the production and distribution of goods and services, and the values enabling people to live in harmonious societies. It emphasized the primacy of the “social”, taken in this comprehensive sense, as welfare and functioning of society, and the centrality of the human person. The originality of the Summit lies in its universality, in the scope it gave to social development, in its ethical basis, and in its call for renewed forms of partnership and solidarity within and among nations.

By deciding to address the question of unemployment as one of the core issues of the Summit, the international community clearly recognized the importance of looking at work in the context of a globalizing and changing world. In fact, the concept that “human work is the essential key to the whole social question”, stated by Pope John Paul II in his *Laborem Exercens*, underscored the urgent need to look at the meaning of work and employment anew.

In Commitment 3 of the Copenhagen Declaration adopted at the Social Summit, Heads of State and Governments commit themselves “to promoting the goal of full employment as a basic priority of our economic and social policies, and to enabling all men and women to attain secure and sustainable livelihoods through freely chosen productive employment and work.” It reaffirmed the proclamation by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that “everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favorable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.”

This is an ambitious commitment and goal, and gave a strong and challenging mandate to policy makers, international organizations, the civil society and actors, including religious institutions, for its implementation at the local, national, regional and international levels.

Five years after Copenhagen, the United Nations held a Special Session of its General Assembly in June 2000 at Geneva, to review and appraise implementation of the goals set at Copenhagen. It identified further initiatives to extend the Social Summit goal of promoting full employment as a basic priority of economic and social policies, and to enable all men and women to attain secure and sustainable livelihoods through freely chosen productive employment and work. Among these initiatives adopted by Governments are:

- Reassessing their macroeconomic policies with the aim of greater employment generation and reduction in poverty;
- Creating an enabling environment for social dialogue by ensuring effective representation and participation of workers’ and employers’ organization;
- Expanding opportunities for productive employment by investing in the development of human resources, especially through education, vocational and management training, occupational safety and health, and by strengthening cooperation with the private sector in this area;
- Supporting the comprehensive ILO program on decent work, which includes promoting equal opportunities for all women and men, including persons with

disabilities, to obtain decent and productive work, with full respect for the basic rights of workers;

- Improving the quality of work and level of employment;
- Ensuring effective and comprehensive action to eliminate harmful child labor
- Encouraging the private sector to respect basic worker rights;
- Extending a range of support measures to informal sector workers, including legal rights, social protection and access to credit;
- Devising and strengthening the modalities of coverage of social protection systems, to meet the needs of people engaged in flexible forms of employment;
- Ensure that migrant workers benefit from the protection provided by relevant national and international instruments.

Indeed, a lot of issues are covered and many initiatives have been identified and agreed upon. It should be borne in mind, however, that they are the outcome of intergovernmental deliberations and inevitably reflect some of the current dominant policy and political views. In order to provide constructive responses on opportunities for more humane work, one needs to take stock of today's situation concerning work, which is more serious than ever before.

Concerning the goal of full employment, the findings pointed to the need to renew the Summit commitment, since sadly, unemployment and under-employment still remain one of the most serious problems in the world today. The ILO estimates some 160 million workers were unemployed at the end of 2000. In most countries, the composition of the labor force has been changing significantly, with implications for income security. Unemployment and underemployment disproportionately affect the poor, women, youth, older people and the less skilled. Their vulnerability lies in the low and frequently irregular levels of income, the casual, informal and temporary nature of labor arrangements and lack of access to social insurance schemes. Unemployment entails not only economic costs, but human and social costs as well. These include: destruction of personal dignity, self-confidence and self-esteem; loss of hope and personal identity; damage to health and family life; denial of the opportunity to contribute to the community; severe constraints on social life; isolation, loneliness, exclusion, crime, effects on children; anger and frustration which can lead to violence, substance abuse and sometimes to suicide. Long-term unemployment is also a major cause of poverty.

Inequalities in income, job opportunities and access to services have become conspicuous during the latter part of the 20th century and are growing. Various forms of exploitation of workers persist, as well as poor and unsafe conditions at work. Separation between capital and labor and domination of the former is very much evident, contrary to the "principle that capital should be at the service of labor and not labor at the service of capital". (*Laborem Exercens*) Workers' salaries remain precarious, and work is being treated solely as an instrument of production and as "materialistic economism". The subordination of everything to profit, expansion and power continues.

II. Creating opportunities for more humane work

With this alarming situation, it is clear that the messages of the Social Summit and the *Laborem Exercens* are more urgent than ever before.

For the purpose of the Conference, I would like to highlight several issues which, in my view, need to be addressed in making work more humane, especially in this age of globalization, which has caused both opportunities, challenges as well as marginalization, immense poverty and unemployment.

1. Understanding fully the meaning of work

I am pleased to recognize the scope, inspiration, beauty and depth of the Encyclical *Laborem Exercens*, which provides a true source of inspiration and guidance. “Work as the essential key to social question” and to consider human work as a “fundamental right of all human being” are indeed the basis of our discussion here, because of the comprehensive political, social and spiritual meaning given to work. One needs also to recall and reaffirm the three purposes of work given at the beginning of the Encyclical: earning of daily bread, contributing to the continual advance of science and technology and elevating the cultural and moral level of the society.

At a seminar held by the United Nations in preparation for the Social Summit in Bled, Slovenia, in 1994 on the topic “Ethical and spiritual dimensions of social progress”, participants recognized that “effort, work, participation in creation, however humble, are at the heart of human nature and personal dignity. Ideally, for each person, work should be what brings fulfillment and gives meaning and direction to daily life. Employment and work should benefit not only the individual, but also the human community. It is one field in which individual interest and the common good can be in harmony.”

In both Genesis and in a Chinese myth, work is expressed as part of the natural order of human society, as personal fulfillment in cooperation with the natural world, and an essential aspect of human well-being. Work can thus provide opportunities for the expression of personal ability, creativity and taking initiative. Indeed, “through work, man achieves fulfillment as a human being”. (*Laborem Exercens*)

There is also a need to change our conception of work and its organization. It is a fact that diversity of the way work is organized is increasing. There is more flexibility, e.g. part-time work, which could increase participation and reduce dependency of older persons and other vulnerable groups of workers. However, it could also be a source of insecurity. While reduction in working hours rather than increase in pay could have in return improvements in productivity, part-time workers often seek additional earnings by taking on several part-time jobs, thereby entailing longer working hours. It is also essential to recognize the importance

of unpaid work in the home and other subsistence activity, including voluntary work. On the vast meaning of work, I wish to highlight the following three aspects:

i. Combating growing insecurity

The growing flexibility in work offers both opportunities for enhancing human fulfillment through work and also the risks of greater exploitation. Flexibility should not always be viewed as a virtue. One must carefully examine the elements of flexibility generated, for example, by technological innovations. Flexibility should not be adopted if it is at the expense of creating instability and insecurity. The principle of the Church of the priority of labor over capital must not be forsaken in the name of flexibility. The collapse of job security (e.g. as a result of downsizing) has led to increase in casual work; family breakdown; and intensifying anxiety. One of the costs of neglecting job security is the quality of labor force tends to fall (e.g. less investment in training). Attention should also be directed to the rise of the informal sector and “parallel” economy, where many are pushed into through losing their jobs in a “downsized” public sector. Many are experiencing the unpleasantness of a disintegrating social fabric with its extremes of wealth and poverty, insecurity and violence (for example, overpaid executives and underpaid workers).

The challenge of employment policy is not just to create jobs, but also to create what is called “decent” work. It is important to aim to reduce job insecurity, unemployment and where possible, ensure adequate access to training, credit, infrastructure and technical and entrepreneurial advisory services.

To cope with job insecurity, education and training can play a critical role in enabling workers to adapt to new situations and demands. Also, investment in in-house capital could be seen as an investment against job insecurity. The inner strength to handle insecurity and the ability to strike a balance between the personal and political aspects of changes is also essential.

Trade unions are the “mouthpiece for the struggle for social justice” (*Laborem Exercens*). Free trade unions have difficulties adjusting their structures and strategies to the necessities of modern economies, due partly to the decline of the industrial sector and rise of the service sector where workers are more scattered and isolated, and to the relative decline in employment in the public services and growing importance of enterprises where there is little unionization (except perhaps in the Nordic countries). Another fact is that the widespread rejection of intervention by the State in the functioning of the economy and the belief that market forces have to operate freely is not favorable to trade union movements. It should be emphasized that strengthening trade unions and globalizing their strategies and networks could provide a countervailing power to global capitalism. Amidst today’s process of globalization, solidarity among workers, albeit difficult, is highly necessary, in particular at the global level.

ii. Emphasizing the role of education and training

Education has played a central role in the life and well-being of societies. A nation's progress is intricately linked to the vitality and impact of its education system. Education, while by no means the only or magical door to opportunity, remains one of the principal ways to achieve fuller human development and thus to reduce poverty and exclusion.

Education has also become an economic imperative. Globalization, changing manufacturing and labor market structures, new information technologies and ever-expanding frontiers of research in the life sciences are combining to reshape most aspects of life. Today's information age creates opportunities that hinge on knowledge and skills, making education increasingly an important determinant of a nation's international competitiveness in the global economy. It also demands greater adaptability to rapid and unforeseen change in the organization of life and commerce. In the new millennium of knowledge-based societies, education has become crucially important as an economic force and requires life-long learning.

The role of education in life-long learning processes has assumed critical new dimensions in the context of globalization. International competitive pressures are reshaping the labor markets of many developed countries, de-emphasizing unskilled employment and boosting growth in jobs that put a premium on duration, skills and flexibility. The pressures of global competition have led both developing and developed countries to change working patterns and practices.

The Social Summit called for strengthening the links between labor market and education policies, realizing that education and vocational training are vital elements in job creation and in combating unemployment and social exclusion in our societies, and emphasize the role of higher education and scientific research in all plans of social development.

The Geneva Special Session recognized the importance of improving access to new technologies, vocational training and counseling, implementing programs for job placement and facilitating the acquisition of work experience, including on-the-job training, as well as by the recognition of work experience acquired through voluntary activities and unpaid work. Technological change without education can alienate workers. It also called for the promotion of lifelong learning and access to education, training and labor market information, and tailoring programs to meet the specific needs of those groups in the acquisition of skills required in the knowledge-based economy. In this connection, involving the private sector in skill training programs was recommended. It is also essential to adapt and improve access of youth to technical, secondary and higher education curricular, to meet the needs of a rapidly changing labor market, and easing transition between learning and work.

iii. Forming new relationships between work and family life

“Work constitutes a foundation for the formation of family life”, and “family constitutes one of the most important terms of reference for shaping the social and ethical order of human work” (Encyclical *Laborem Exercens*). The Universal Declaration on Human Rights states that “the family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.” The Social Summit recognized that “the family is the basic unit of society and as such should be strengthened.” The Geneva Special Session last year reaffirmed this recognition and further stated that the family plays a key role in social development and is a strong force of social cohesion and integration. However, demographic, socio-economic and cultural forces have redefined traditional notions and structures of families and have engendered changes in family roles. Migration and urbanization have brought about salient and unprecedented changes in family forms and household composition. Whatever its evolving form and the forces of change that shape it, the family has endured as a basic institution central to a variety of human interactions, relationships and development processes. It is both a catalyst for and reflection of the transformation of societies.

The increased participation of women in the work force and their financial independence has also impacted on the family as an institution, particularly when it has not always been matched by a sharing of functions in the family, leading to new stresses and strains in balancing responsibilities at home and work.

The substantial increase projected in the world’s older population, combined with other changes in family structures and life, raises crucial questions of housing, insurance, health care and welfare arrangements for older persons, which also means that a small number of working family members will have to support younger and older generations.

Therefore, there is a need to help the family in its supporting, educating and nurturing roles, to the causes and consequences of family disintegration, and to the adoption of measures to reconcile work and family life for women and men, for example, by flexible working arrangements, including parental voluntary part-time employment and work-sharing, as well as accessible and affordable quality child-care and dependent-care facilities.

2. Promoting a more humane economy

At the Millennium Summit held at the United Nations last year, Heads of State and Government reaffirmed that “no individual and no nation must be denied the opportunity to benefit from development.”

The prerequisite for more humane work is the creation of an enabling environment where social justice and equity are the guiding principles. One of the principal requirements for this is to have a more humane market economy. A good economic system, or humane market economy, must provide opportunities for sufficient income to all people, generate

enough resources to enable public institutions to fulfill their responsibilities and promote the common good, and permit participation by citizens, national governments, and other public and private actors in decisions that affect society as a whole. It should serve human needs and aspirations. Key to a humane and efficient economy is a renewed and active partnership for full employment between the private sector and the state.

One of the criteria of assessing the quality of a humane market economy, including the emerging global economy, is economic participation, which means the offering of economic opportunities to a maximum number of people, i.e. availability of jobs and possibilities for entrepreneurship. This would enable people to earn an income, to have access to the basic necessities of life, and the possibility to make meaningful contribution to the economy and society in which they live. The availability of a personal and disposable income is a requirement for dignity and participation in society. Problems of economic participation can lead to breakdown of social structures which poses a threat to social cohesion. Of particular importance in this regard is the question of youth unemployment.

i. Youth unemployment

In most countries, youth unemployment rates are two or three times higher than adult rates.

In the Millennium Declaration, Governments resolved to “develop and implement strategies that give young people everywhere a real chance to find decent and productive work.”

In his Millennium Report to the General Assembly last year, the Secretary-General of the United Nations made a commitment to convene, together with the Heads of the World Bank and the ILO, a high-level policy network on youth employment – “drawing on the most creative leaders in private industry, civil society and economic policy to explore imaginative approaches to this difficult challenge.” Such a panel was held on 16 July in Geneva and a set of policy recommendations on decent and productive work promotion for young people was discussed and will be put forward to the General Assembly later this year.

The Panel stressed that the recommendations are based on a new approach, the new political commitment given at the Millennium Summit and a new way of developing partnerships. The recognized that youth are an asset – and not a problem – in building a better world today; and that there is a great potential for improving the employment situation through the integration of public policies for the young in overall employment policies and by making full employment an overarching goal for global economic and social strategies. A few elements were regarded as top priorities in every national action plan:

- **Employability:** invest in education and vocational training for young people and improve the impact of these investments;
- **Equal opportunities:** give young women the same opportunities as young men;
- **Entrepreneurship:** make it easier to start and run enterprises to get more jobs for the

young; and

- Employment creation: make employment central to macroeconomic and other public policies.

ii. Enhancing social protection/insurance

The Social Summit stressed the importance of equity, participation, empowerment and solidarity, emphasizing a more inclusive approach to social protection. The Copenhagen Declaration contains a commitment to “develop and implement policies to ensure that all people have adequate economic and social protection during unemployment, ill health, maternity, child-rearing, widowhood, disability and old age.” The 24th Special Session of the General Assembly underscored the importance of establishing or improving social protection systems as well as sharing best practices in this field.

Social protection is broadly understood by the United Nations as a set of public and private policies and programs undertaken by societies in response to various contingencies in order to offset the absence or substantial reduction of income from work; provide assistance for families with children; and provide people with health care and housing. It embodies society’s responses to levels of either risk or deprivation that are deemed unacceptable. The existence of social protection systems also promotes more humane societies, although they are now under threat. It should be seen not simply as a residual policy function of assuring the welfare of the poorest but as a foundation at a societal level for promoting social justice and social cohesion, developing human capabilities and promoting economic dynamism and creativity.

With increasing job and income insecurity, renewed focus on social protection requires urgent attention. The concept of social protection needs to be incorporated into a comprehensive employment policy framework. Attention should be given to establishing a system of unemployment insurance and expanding systems of social assistance to provide basic income security for the informal sector workers.

Social protection strategies should be developed in a process led by Governments but involving extensive dialogue with their civil society, including the private sector, religious institutions and people in poor communities.

Social protection policies need to be able to meet the following challenges:

- To adapt to the changing nature of risk and vulnerability as a result of the growing global interconnectedness of trade and capital markets;
- To reduce and mitigate growing national and international inequality;
- To maintain the will and capacity of public policy to provide resources for social protection – and improve the cost-effectiveness of public interventions in the context of constrained resources;

- To deal with the changing structure of power and authority as a result of changes associated with globalization, taking account of the growing influence of transnational actors, such as transnational corporations-in particular to promote enhanced social responsibility and accountability of the private sector;
- To provide support to people at all stages of the life cycle in acquiring skills and responding to changing demands in the labor market.

3. Achieving social and economic justice

The United Nations Millennium Declaration reaffirms that “global challenges must be managed in a way that distributes the costs and burdens fairly in accordance with basic principles of equity and social justice. Those who suffer or who benefit least deserve help from those who benefit most.” Social justice therefore includes equity in the distribution of income, wealth and power and respect for the dignity of all people. Economic justice is the fair reward for one’s economic activity and in relation with dignity and social status. The dignity and freedom of the human person are the decisive criteria for economic and social justice. Economic injustice stems from exploitation and from excessively skewed income and wealth distribution. More economic justice in the world means above all better levels of living and more economic security for all those communities, families and individuals that suffer from material deprivation. Gains in productivity must be equitably shared between capital and labor, and the size and quality of workers’ share of the economic pie must be equitable. It is up to public authorities to set the conditions for full employment through economic, financial and social policies. The prerequisite to reducing unemployment and under-employment is to make it a priority and intrinsic dimension of all economic, financial and social policies. In other words, wiser and better-modulated macroeconomic policies by the State are needed. Under this heading of social and economic justice, I wish to highlight two points.

i. Enhancing the rights of workers and conditions of work

To make work more humane, ethically correct labor policies are essential. Partnership between owners of a company, its management and its employees and workers is often a recipe for economic success and contribute to a humane economy. For example, co-ownership and co-management will contribute to the social fabric. It is important that instead of having strategic corporate decisions made by a few, participation in decision-making, i.e. democracy at the level of the firm, be implemented as a labor policy. Sophisticated, participatory and enlightened management serves to instill in employees a sense of trust and involvement in a mutual quest for growth and quality. Also, a shift from production of physical goods to that of knowledge, information and communication need innovative forms of management to mobilize the best in the brains and hearts of people.

There is an urgent need to expand public outlays for the public sector, including education and health expenditure, and to ensure quality and accessibility to human and social services. Finally, it must be recognized that focus on short-term profit and expansion alone is counter-productive.

The Holy Father said in his *Laborem Exercens* that “workers’ rights should be seen in the broad context of human rights as a whole.” In the present era of globalization and interdependence among countries, neglect of basic workers’ rights must not be condoned for the sake of competition and “comparative advantage”. The agendas of governments, investors, shareholders and managers must embody the results of hard fought battles for human dignity and freedom (e.g. ILO Conventions). Fair labor standards such as minimum wage, minimum working age, health protection, or the right of association must be enforced. They are more frequently ignored and more difficult to enforce in the informal sector than in the formal sector. Attention must be drawn to sweatshops and the so-called “Export processing Zones”, situated mostly in the developing world and employing approximately 4 million persons, where the great majority are young women earning excessively low wages in quasi-slavery condition, with no security, and no rights, especially for illegal migrant workers. These have often led to isolation and powerlessness.

ii. Corporate social responsibility

The State has traditionally exercised responsibility for providing the national institutional framework to promote both economic progress and equitable social development. Yet the ability of Governments to fulfill this responsibility is increasingly being challenged by forces of globalization that are disconnecting networks of production and finance from their institutional frameworks within the nation state.

The growing public demand for enhanced corporate social responsibility has been amplified by the current policy orientation in many industrialized countries, which has reduced the role of the public sector in the economic and social spheres of society.

Overall, liberalization has strengthened the private sector, as the lowering of trade investment and financial barriers has increased the scope and the mobility of transnational corporations. The extent to which transnational corporations now operate outside the regulatory framework of any particular country brings to the fore fundamental questions regarding the obligations or responsibilities of the private sector for promoting general economic growth and social progress, and for maintaining and promoting standards and norms of ethical behavior.

It could be argued that the private sector has both a practical need and a certain ethical responsibility for the well-being of the environment in which it operates, based on its own needs for economic and social stability in which to operate, its needs for skilled and healthy workforces and the benefits it obtains from reduced governmental regulation. It could also be argued that expanding markets are only sustainable if they are complemented by a social

response to ensure a certain degree of equity. The Special Session at Geneva encouraged corporate social responsibility so that it contributes to social development goals by e.g. promoting increase corporate awareness of the interrelationship between social development and economic growth.

At its most basic level, corporate responsibility is concerned with the relationships that a company maintains with its shareholders, clients, suppliers, creditors and employees, as well as with the communities in which it operates. However, the concept of corporate social responsibility goes much further, involves many more stakeholders and includes activities that might extend far beyond the day-to-day operations of an individual company. Stakeholders' interests can be represented in an organized form. Employer's organizations, trade unions, non-governmental organizations, consumers' groups, investors and local communities all represent certain stakeholders' interests.

Corporate social responsibility therefore involves the establishment of dialogue between a company and its stakeholders. The term "corporate citizenship" often refers to the action a company takes to become actively engaged in dialogue and to set policies on issues on direct social impact for one or more of its stakeholders.

In January 1999, the Secretary-General of the United Nations launched the "Global Compact", a major initiative to increase private sector participation in social development. The initiative contains nine principles derived from globally acknowledged and widely recognized declarations and major UN conferences. These include the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (1992), the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action (1995) and the 1998 ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.

The Global Compact calls upon the private sector to adopt the principles that the majority of the world's Governments have already embraced through these instruments. In the area of labor, the compact requests businesses to uphold the right to freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining; to contribute to the elimination of all forms of forced and compulsory labor; to assist in the effective abolition of child labor; and to help eliminate discrimination in respect of employment and occupation. To date, over 300 corporate partners have signed up, compared to 44 at its launch.

III. The role of the United Nations

I would like to end this presentation by referring to the important role of the United Nations in making work more humane and thus contributing to a more humane world:

- *To understand better the distinction between change and progress.* The United Nations has been somewhat too influenced by a liberal view identifying all changes with progress. It is essential to recognize that there are different philosophies of life, cultures and society, as well as a need for stability. Technological advances with the

pure goal of suppressing human work should be rejected.

- *To make a contribution to this common philosophy which could give a concrete meaning to the centrality of the human person*, which is both at the core of the Christian teaching and the central message of the Social Summit. In this regard, the “subjective dimension of work” and “work is for man and not man for work” referred to in the *Laborem Exercens* are most relevant.
- *To restore space for freedom and political initiative*. The role of the UN as the political heart and body with universal membership should be recognized. It is imperative to keep nations as key actors in the building of a world community. Regarding the “political” versus the “economic” – with transnational corporations increasingly acting as sources of power and determinants of working conditions – this trend must be reviewed and rectified. In this regard, it is essential to restore the crucial role of the State and rehabilitate the public sphere – public works, public service, and other public institutions responsible for the common good and the welfare of all citizens.
- *To have a leading role in rigorously analyzing, understanding, controlling and reviewing the process of globalization*, since it is the major determinant of living and working conditions of many people today. There is a need to agree on a strategy for a socially responsible globalization that takes social rights seriously.
- *To bring together the various actors* to debate and agree on regulations that could put work before profit, and work at the service of humanity. The role of international law and international agreements should not be under-estimated, including social contracts. It is also important for the UN to foster closer ties between the international organizations and all the people of good will of the world, including religious institutions, scientific, intellectual, artistic communities, and all workers, to recognize the dignity of work.
- *To ensure a good and rational division of labor between the various organizations of the UN system*. On the subject of work, the important role of the International Labour Organization must be recognized. The specialization and pre-eminence of the United Nations and sharing of a common philosophy must not be forgotten.

In conclusion I would like to quote the following passages from the Copenhagen Seminars for Social Progress:

“Since the beginning of the 1980’s, the traditional value of equity, equality and justice have been poorly reflected in the spirit of the time and have had a low ranking on the political agenda of most countries.”

“The concept of a common humanity implies that all individuals are given equal opportunities to exert their rights and responsibilities and to realize their full human potential. This means that reduction of poverty and

reduction of inequalities coincide.”

It is not too late to renew our combined efforts to face the challenge of restoring the dignity and ethical value of work in the international discourse, in particular in this age of globalization, transformation and great changes. One of the requirements for such efforts would be to view the economy as a means to achieving higher goals and being at the service of these goals – this is one of the strong messages conveyed by the *Laborem Exercens*.

Notes

The content of this paper is based mainly on the following publications:

Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action (12 March 1995, A/CONF/166/9)

Copenhagen Seminars for Social Progress: Building a World Community: Globalization and the Common Good by Jacques Baudot

Encyclical Laborem Exercens, by Pope John Paul II

Further Initiatives for Social Development (United Nations General Assembly resolution S-24/2) of 1 July 2000

2001 Report on the World Social Situation (United Nations)

United Nations Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2 of 8 September 2000)

Work for All, by John Langmore and John Quiggin