

positions.¹³ Some US Congress representatives have also proposed that investment and development assistance be curtailed on the basis of child labour practices. Again, it is questionable whether reducing investment and restricting work opportunities will make child workers directly, or indirectly through their parents, any better off.

Secondly, the international instruments defining child labour and child exploitation are not precise. There are currently no guidelines for identifying detrimental child labour practices. This lack of rules could prove particularly dangerous for highly trade-reliant countries including Canada. Clear rules are required to set out what practices fall within the potentially detrimental category. In the absence of multilateral agreement on a rules-based approach, sanctions might be used selectively by major trading powers. Each trading partner could define, unilaterally and on the basis of domestic political sensitivities, what practices were or were not detrimental or exploitative. Such actions could be motivated by protectionism, would undermine predictability in the international trading system, and could ultimately prove harmful for the system. One could also question why some countries would pursue trade sanctions against others when their domestic record on child labour is less than sterling.

Effective solutions to child labour must be based on the reduction of chronic poverty through broad-based economic and social development, with a strong emphasis on human resource development. Multifaceted and complex, managing the child labour issue will require a wide-ranging multi-dimensional and multi-institutional approach. In this regard, Canada should continue to actively participate, if not strengthen its participation, in the ILO, with its tripartite membership of government, business and labour representatives, and encourage the ILO's membership to negotiate an effective new convention on child exploitation.¹⁴ To be effective, a convention or an accompanying ILO recommendation would also need to address guidelines for identifying detrimental practices as well as outright exploitation. This raises a

¹³ UNICEF, State of the World's Children 1997, Final version of 19/9/96, Chapter 2, p.3.

¹⁴ At the Conference on Child Labour, Amsterdam, February 1997, the Director-General of the ILO, Mr. Michel Hansenne, in his address entitled "Combating the Most Intolerable Form's of Child Labour: A Global Challenge" set out the ILO's thinking on a new convention. The new convention would focus on the most intolerable forms of child labour; would apply to all children under the age of 18; and, would oblige ILO member States to suppress immediately all extreme forms of child labour. This would include all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery; the sale and trafficking of children; forced or compulsory labour, including debt mortgage and serfdom; the use of children for prostitution or in pornographic activities; and, the engagement of children in any kind of dangerous work.