



Statements and Speeches

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SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE DIRECTIONS OF THE ILO

An Address by the Minister of Labour, the Honourable Gerald Regan, to the Plenary Meeting of the Sixty-Sixth Session of the International Labour Conference, Geneva, June 13, 1980

I join with others in welcoming Grenada, Vietnam, St. Lucia, Lesotho and Zimbabwe as new members of this organization. Universality of membership has always been the ultimate goal of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and these new additions are further steps in that direction. My delegation hopes that China will soon find it possible to play within this organization the active role that it has increasingly been assuming in other United Nations organizations.

We are particularly pleased with the return of the United States of America to the ILO. My Government shared many of the concerns which led the United States to withdraw in 1975. Like others also, we are encouraged by certain changes since then in the atmosphere of the conference. We are appreciative of the efforts of governments, employers and workers to alleviate such concerns.

But in the view of my Government, there is no room for complacency. All of us who are dedicated to the future of this organization must remain vigilant in ensuring that the situation which we so greatly deplored in 1975 does not recur — and it is for this reason that I want to begin my remarks with some general observations.

First, I stress again that the Canadian Government has always made clear before the organizations of all UN Specialized Agencies that it does not accept the insertion of political considerations into their deliberations and decisions where such considerations are not in conformity with the constitution and due process provisions of such bodies. The reasoning behind this position is straightforward. If the UN system is to be responsive to expectations of member states, it must be functional and efficient. Each component of the system must adhere strictly to its mandate and must respect the division of labour on which the system is predicated. To act otherwise can only result in dissatisfaction on the part of member states and of the world community with a system on which so many hopes and expectations are founded.

This organization has its hands full in coping with the labour situations facing our societies today. Its limited resources cannot and must not be diverted to non-productive debates when there is so much to be done in bringing labour conditions to desirable levels throughout the world, as we attempt to cope with the challenges of the 1980s.

Second, we must be primarily concerned at this conference with the determination of the organization's future program priorities. We are at a moment in time when all governments are faced with severe economic constraints. It is incumbent upon us,
