

**91st SESSION OF THE
INTERNATIONAL LABOUR CONFERENCE**

S P E E C H

by

**Mr Roger Briesch
President of the European Economic and Social Committee
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Seul le texte prononcé fait foi
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Check Against Delivery

President,
Director-General,
Ministers,
Delegates,

I should first like to offer my congratulations to the president on his excellent election result.

I should also like to thank the Director-General, **Mr Somavia**, for the invitation which he extended to me and for his outstanding work as head of the ILO.

I regard it as a considerable honour to have this opportunity to address the session today, in my capacity as President of the European Economic and Social Committee.

I am, moreover, very familiar with these premises since, some years ago, I was a delegate here representing the interests of French trade unions and was also a member of the Governing Body of the ILO.

The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), which was set up under the Treaty of Rome in 1957, is a consultative body of the EU.

The Treaty of Nice, signed in February 2001, defines the Committee as the body representing "*the various economic and social components of organised civil society*".

The EESC thus has a special role to play in the EU decision-making process.

Whilst the EU has its own "administration" (the European Commission), European Parliament and Council, it is the EESC which brings together representatives of the economic and social players.

The EESC provides a forum where the organisations representing civil society in the Member States can themselves be represented and informed and where they are able to set out their views.

The members of the EESC form an integral part of the process of formulating policies and decision-making at EU level.

The work of the EESC, our actions and concerns all naturally bring us closer to the ILO.

Furthermore, the EESC has worked in the past and continues to work on a large number of subjects which have been examined by the International Labour Conference, such as the protection of vulnerable workers, poverty and anti-discrimination measures, in addition to all the

subjects being addressed by the ILO, on which we had the opportunity to hold an in-depth discussion with the ILO Director-General, **Mr Somavia**, on the occasion of his visit to the EESC in Brussels.

The convergence and complementarity between our organisations are perfectly illustrated by the work which we have carried out in the areas of the social dimension of globalisation and human rights at the workplace.

When considering these issues, we did, at the request of the European Commission, initiate a debate with our counterparts and partners in non-EU states with which we have on-going relations, namely the Mediterranean partner states, Latin American states and the ACP states (Africa and the Caribbean and the Pacific regions) and Asian states.

We also involved the ILO and the members of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalisation in our work in this field.

Furthermore, my friend, **Lord Bret**, and several leading figures from the ILO took part in the conference held by the EESC last December on this subject.

This conference reached agreement on the role to be played by the ILO and it took note of the progress made in respect of universal standards and inspections and monitoring.

Consensus was also reached on the need to carry on our work in this field with the aim, inter alia, of:

- giving more weight to the conclusions of the ILO inspection bodies;
- establishing a system to promote public recognition of compliance with the basic conventions of the ILO;
- providing increased support for the technical assistance work of the ILO;
- making representations to the European Convention with a view to the inclusion in the draft constitution of references to the provisions of the basic standards of the ILO and to the need for them to be respected and applied.

The complementarity between our two bodies is also reflected in the work which we are carrying out in developing countries to promote dialogue between the various representatives of organised civil society and to strengthen the consultative machinery in these states.

Our endeavours to develop a model based on pluralism and participatory democracy in the partner states of the EESC is also fully in line with the cooperation work carried out by the ILO.

The work of the European Economic and Social Committee is, Ladies and Gentlemen, aimed at promoting socially responsible, sustainable growth.

We are seeking to promote a socially responsible growth model by means of dialogue, and discussion and by endeavouring to improve mutual understanding.

This is an approach which is also being pursued by the ILO, which fulfils the role of a veritable international parliament for the employment field.

It is on this very subject that I have today had the opportunity to hold discussions with one of the representatives of the Director-General, **Mr Kari Tapiola**.

With the above aims in view, we should seek to bring about increased, structured collaboration between our two bodies in the many fields in which we have a mutual interest.

We do, in particular, have a joint interest in making representations to the WTO and developing our relations with this organisation.

In my view, the ILO should enhance its presence at the WTO and step up its interventions and proposals in connection with the work of this body; one way to do this would be for the ILO to be granted permanent official observer status at the WTO.

Making use of the relations it has established with civil society organisations in regions throughout the world, the European Economic and Social Committee also intends to seek to facilitate the expression of the views of these organisations at the WTO.

Thank you very much for your attention.
