

**THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION OF
EMPLOYERS**

ANNUAL REPORT

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OUR MISSION

Since 1920, the International Organisation of Employers has been the only recognized organization representing the interests of employers in international social and labour policy matters.

The mission of the IOE is:

- To promote the economic, employment and social policy environment necessary to sustain and develop free enterprise;
- To provide an international forum to bring together, represent and promote the interests of national employers' organizations and their members throughout the world in all social and labour policy issues;
- To assist, advise, represent and provide relevant services and information to members, to establish and maintain permanent contact among them and to coordinate the interests of employers at the international level, particularly within the ILO and other UN agencies;
- To promote and support the advancement and strengthening of independent and autonomous employers' organizations and to enhance their capabilities and services to members;
- To inform public opinion and promote understanding of employers' points of view;
- To facilitate and promote the exchange and transfer of information, experience and good practice amongst members.

The International Organisation of Employers:

The largest global business network

THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION OF EMPLOYERS

THE IMPORTANCE OF ENGAGEMENT AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

Labour and social policy are no longer neatly parcelled into the domain of the International Labour Organization, with debates and policy issues now occurring in diverse fora. *Other* organizations and *other* actors are increasingly now involved. Challenges in this area abound for all employers and it is only through active collaboration and coordination that business can effectively respond to such challenges.

For most employers' organizations today, there seems to be an avalanche of work of the very pressing kind that requires an immediate response. Consequently, for many, events at the international level can and do take a back seat. This is not unusual as in any organization, particularly smaller ones, it is difficult to see beyond the day-to-day-issues. This however does not limit the importance of keeping an eye on the bigger picture, as many of the policy issues that employer organizations are eventually faced with will emerge at the international level first and need to be tackled there, before they re-emerge at national level.

In some developed countries, in particular in Europe where national focus in recent years has switched to Brussels and the European Commission, there has been less of a focus on the ILO and its work. But this does not make the ILO any less important to employers than it was ten or twenty years ago. In fact the opposite is the case. For instance, the ILO is often used as a vehicle to try and push through a particular agenda first, before it is attempted elsewhere and this can be the case with proposed Directives at EU level.

Even if the business community needs a global order and the ILO is the only institution providing this order, issues at the international level can often seem abstract and possibly even irrelevant to employers at the national level. In today's globalized world, issues transcend national borders and, increasingly, trade unions and NGOs are operating over borders, with international involvement in domestic disputes. Moreover, there is a growing trend to extend more formative structures to this form of cooperation. Many NGOs and trade unions are increasingly looking to the international institutions as a mechanism to resolve issues. The current debate on CSR, where international standards are being heavily propagated by some, is an example of this.

The bottom line is that engagement at the international level is more important than ever and it is vital that employers' organizations remain engaged and committed at this level. Keeping your eye on the big picture can be difficult for any organization. But this does not lessen the importance of this process, as 'abstract issues' can from one day to the next suddenly become the immediate issues in a national context.

François Perigot
President

Daniel Funes de Rioja
Executive Vice-President

Antonio Peñalosa
Secretary-General

THE EVOLVING BUSINESS AGENDA

Corporate Social Responsibility : An ongoing engagement

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) affects all employers' organizations and their members in one way or another. It is a complex issue with many stakeholders, facets and impacts. The IOE is actively engaged in various CSR debates – indeed, in more and more fora around the world CSR is heading the agendas of groups ranging from NGOs and academics to governments and companies.

Major debates within the European Union, at the UN High Commission for Human Rights (UNHCHR) and the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) or as part of the ILO's *World Commission on the Social Dimensions of Globalization* have all ensured that the IOE has remained focussed on presenting the views of employers, drawing on the IOE approach to CSR developed in 2003.

Within the ILO the debate has been guided by the work of the IOE's CSR Working Group which finalized an employers position to the debate. This position gives support to the Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy as the ILO point of reference for business in the CSR debate and supports its promotion. It also calls on the ILO Business and Social Initiatives Database to remain as a neutral depository of information on business-led social initiatives. The position paper finally underlines the importance of the ILO's role in strengthening the capacity of member States to implement and enforce their national labour laws.

The employers' position is also clear in what it does not want the ILO to be doing : namely becoming a monitoring or verification organization with respect to voluntary company CSR initiatives; judging or ranking company performance or behaviour; creating any form of conditionality for or against companies on the basis of their CSR action or non-action; and perhaps most fundamentally, shifting responsibility for international labour standard's onto companies.

The IOE response to CSR:

- *supporting member initiatives to promote CSR to companies*
- *promoting the IOE papers on CSR and the Guide to the MNE Declaration*
- *developing materials to assist companies within the CSR debate*
- *advising members on international CSR developments*
- *hosting a CSR related event in 2005 in response to the World Commission Report*

The IOE CSR Working Group

The IOE CSR Working Group principally serves two purposes. First, it is a mechanism through which the IOE can obtain direct input from its members regularly and quickly on the relevant issues that arise. Second, it serves as a dynamic vehicle through which employers' organizations can maintain their up-to-the-moment engagement in CSR. The work of the CSR Working Group was used as the basis for the current IOE CSR policy and strategy, which are regularly referenced as the position of business in international debates.

The Working Group model has been instrumental in ensuring that the IOE's representation of business in the CSR debate remains dynamic and on the cutting edge of its members' needs.

Business has always recognized that it has an important role along side other actors in contributing to the development of the communities in which it operates. This understanding has become part of a developing debate on the role of business in a globalizing world

Renate Hornung-Draus (BDA) - Germany
IOE CSR Spokesperson

Giving effect to international initiatives

The Report from the ILO *World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization* was launched in late February. While there is much in the Report that business would see differently, there is also much that is positive. Perhaps the most striking outcome from this Report was that globalization can be a tremendous force for positive change – *economic, political and social*. The Commission has helped to move the debate on globalization away from confrontational polemics, *but* it was a Report that entailed compromises and it is doubtful if even one of the 26 commissioners would spontaneously agree to *all* its recommendations.

Some of the recommendations provide the ILO with an opportunity to focus on the key areas where it can add value and where it has demonstrated its strength and expertise. Above all the Report provides an opportunity for the ILO to position itself as the principal agency to develop practical policies for employment generation within the multilateral system.

The Report has as a key objective '*Making Decent Work a Global Goal*'. This objective will require a real focus on those working in the worst conditions – namely the informal economy. Real emphasis needs to be given to assisting labour market polices and institutions to enable them to apply to everyone. Regulation needs to work for business and workers – not to hinder them. This objective will not be easy to achieve. However, the ILO is well placed to effect real change.

The essential role that the private sector can play in development and poverty alleviation is increasingly being recognized by major international policy makers and this was a central component of another report in 2004, the UNDP Report '*Unleashing entrepreneurship: making business work for the poor*'. Major global initiatives of this kind can be a useful means in giving focus to an issue, but chiefly what is needed are tangible, practical outcomes that have real impact.

The ILO is well placed to give effect to many of the recommendations without changing or weakening its current work or traditional mandate. Increasingly, the ILO is focusing on the promotion of employment as a central route out of poverty and this is ostensibly a very positive development.

Daniel Funes de Rioja addressing the 2004 International Labour Conference

The report of the World Commission recognizes the potential benefits of globalization and also recognizes its potential in terms of economic and social development. The conditions needed for this entail giving real and serious consideration to the basic principles and values that must imbue the democratic market economy model.

François Perigot addressing the 2004 International Labour Conference

Small and medium sized enterprises The key to development

The IOE, jointly with the ILO, conducted a study during the year of seven employers' organizations and their role in entrepreneurship and micro, small and medium-sized enterprise development. One of the key messages that has emerged from this study was that it is the employers' organization - *not government* – that potentially has the most important role in creating the conditions for SMEs and entrepreneurs to thrive. It is the employers' organizations that are central in creating the environment conducive to attracting foreign direct investment; developing an entrepreneurial culture; bringing the informal economy into the formal economy. These are the essential ingredients that would enable more developing countries to access the benefits of globalization.

The study also underlined the fact that many employers' organizations, in developing and transition countries need real technical help in developing strategies to enlarge their membership base, to develop services for their members and to increase the effectiveness of their voice nationally. In many cases this will entail outreach strategies to the informal economy – where often most people work.

Consequently, work has accelerated with ACT/EMP and the employment sector of the ILO on a '*Toolkit*' specifically designed for employers' organizations undertaking SME development strategies. The kit is designed to be a holistic approach to SME development for employers' organizations, from concept to implementation. These tools are being developed in three categories, *Advocacy* (lobbying for the right regulatory environment); developing *Services*; and *Representation* (increasing SME members).

“There is unanimity that a major growth potential for employers' organizations can be through attracting larger numbers of SME members, if done in a strategic and sustainable manner.”

**Employers' organizations and the promotion of small and medium-sized enterprises:
*Practical experiences from seven countries***

The Business Response to tackling corruption

One of the central issues emanating from the *ILO World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization*, and one heavily propagated by employers, was the importance of good and effective governance. For there to be a successful democratic market economy, societies need as a first step to build governance structures that are transparent, free of corruption, democratic and above all genuinely serve the public interest and are accountable to that public.

The consequences of corruption can be pervasive, creating weak or unstable political situations, developing a lack of trust in political and public authorities, creating unfair competition or worse, an absence of competition, increasing company costs, undermining investor confidence, hampering business-start-up. All of which contribute to hindering economic, political and social development. Corruption is also seen by the public in some instances as a "failure" of democracy and its presence in everyday life can further undermine public support for the political and judicial system. While corruption is on the agenda of many employers' organizations, it can often be difficult to find concrete and practical ways to fight it as often other highly political elements can come into play.

The IOE approach to this issue is to try and keep the focus on how *all* companies can tackle corruption and not just a narrow focus on MNEs. The IOE also been engaged with the Global Compact during the year in trying to develop an greater awareness of this approach.

Prior to the annual IOE European Meeting in Poland, the IOE and ACTEMP organized a European workshop on the role of employers' organizations in the fight against corruption. This process has started to raise awareness among members in all regions of their own role in tackling corruption.

“Sustainable good governance structures need to be built from the ground up at all levels by all actors. Well governed institutions – national and local - have an extremely important function in facilitating integration and ensuring that more people can share the benefits of globalization.”

**Michel Barde (Union Patronale Suisse)
IOE Vice-President**

Making International Labour Migration Work for everybody

As highly skilled and qualified professionals migrate from developing countries to richer ones, there is increasing debate on the issue of 'brain drain'. Huge investments in education, seemingly wasted. But experience has shown that "brain drain" can also lead to huge benefits through "brain gain".

In developed countries competition is increasing to recruit skilled immigrants to meet shortages in key sectors. Employers in these sectors are increasingly working closer with governments and other social partners to identify where skills shortages exist and proposing measures to rectify the situation, such as ensuring that residence and work permits are accessible to those with the required skills. Unquestionably, labour migration can have a net beneficial effect on both sending and receiving countries. It can be a *win win* situation.

There are a number of processes at the international level addressing the issue. The IOE has been working closely with the *Global Commission on International Migration* set up by the UN Secretary-General in December 2003, whose main mandate is raising the profile of global migration. The Commission is also charged with analyzing gaps in current policy approaches to migration and examining linkages with other issues.

In terms of the Doha multilateral trade round, the focus is on the further liberalization of trade in services through the cross-border movement of professional, managerial and technical personnel. The IOE tracks these developments through the WTO Consultative process, in which it participates. In the ILO, the 2004 International Labour Conference adopted a *multilateral framework on Migration* to guide its future work in this area. Importantly, its implementation must be coordinated with these other international processes.

"Let us work together to make international labour migration a win-win situation for all"

Jorge de Regil (CONCAMIN) – Mexico

Business at the forefront in the fight against HIV/AIDS

The IOE's key message at the XV International AIDS Conference in Thailand was simply that no one group could win the fight against HIV/AIDS alone and that collaboration between the business community and other actors, both nationally and internationally, is critical to an effective response.

This leadership role from business in tackling the HIV/AIDS pandemic is gaining increasing recognition. With the impact of this deadly scourge being felt most amongst those of working age, HIV/AIDS is a key workplace issue. Global partnerships thus are an essential part of the response. In this respect, the IOE has developed close working relations with *UNAIDS* and the *Global Fund to fight HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria*. The Global Fund Executive Director, Richard Feachem addressed the Employers' Group at the June International Labour Conference to discuss possibilities of collaboration between federations and the Fund at national level. The IOE also took part in the Fund's first partnership forum held in Bangkok.

The IOE and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) joint HIV/AIDS policy statement began to see tangible effects during the year with the launch of concrete programme of activities. National action plans have been developed which initially target eight of the worst affected countries in Africa. Progress is now well under way in a number of countries. Activities such as the training of peer educators, the development of joint training materials and development of guidelines for workplace policies are now part of the practical rollout of these national action plans.

The IOE has also been working with member federations in terms of focusing efforts on resource mobilization with multilateral and national donors and how to increase efforts with multinational enterprises (a number of which the IOE worked with during the year).

“Collaboration between worker and employer organizations is critical if the fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic in the workplace is to be successful. Employers’ organizations and trade unions together are stronger than the sum of their individual forces.”

Antonio Peñalosa - IOE Secretary General
XV International AIDS Conference

The Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work: The continued commitment of employers

Given the employers' role in creating the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, it is essential that the IOE remain visibly and consistently committed to its success. The strength of the Declaration is derived from the fact that, unlike the ILO's supervisory machinery, which is a legal track, the Declaration is a political track. The political obligations required to give effect to the principles under the Declaration are distinct from the specific legal obligations that are undertaken through the ratification of any Convention. In the past year, the IOE was actively engaged in a number of ways to ensure that this key strength remains unchanged.

Like any process, review is an essential component in maintaining its relevance and the IOE is currently engaged with the ILO and the other social partners in examining the effectiveness of the follow-up mechanisms, including technical cooperation. The Employers' Group feels that technical assistance should be focussed and directed at concrete, meaningful and measurable results. The IOE is using this as an opportunity for broader reflection about the future of the Declaration and how can employers assist in the realization of its principles

What is clear is that the relevance of the Declaration remains stronger than ever. The labour principles of the Global Compact are based on the Declaration's fundamental principles. The IOE will continue to ensure this very important instrument maintains its profile and purpose.

"We think that what at the end of the day is most important in terms of the Declaration are the steps taken to give effect to the fundamental principles. Yes, ratification can be important, but ratification is often a symbolic gesture rather than a real gesture."

Ed Potter (USCIB)
International Labour Conference 2004

Freedom of Association: A direct impact on Business

The principle of Freedom of Association is one that impacts on business in a number of ways. In terms of the ILO's machinery to deal with this issue – the Committee on Freedom of Association (CFA) – it remains a key and very relevant component of the IOE's work. In its 50-year history there are few countries that have not been directly affected by its work.

Through 2004 the IOE continued servicing member federations by offering assistance and counsel within the Committee on Freedom of Association (CFA) procedures, both in cases where private enterprises were involved in allegations of non-compliance, as well as in cases where employers' organizations were victims of abusive government or legislations that directly hampered their freedom of association rights.

Probably the most noteworthy case for employers during 2004 was the IOE complaint launched against the Government of Venezuela. In its recommendations, the CFA found that the Government of Venezuela continued to carry out actions against employers, which constituted physical, economic and moral attacks on the Venezuelan independent business community. Other cases involving employers' organizations were those of the complaints brought against the governments of Macedonia and Serbia and Montenegro. In both cases the CFA issued recommendations to remove legal restrictions that prevented local employers to secure their registration.

In terms of individual companies, the IOE through its Chilean member (CPC) assisted Chile's national airline carrier *Lan Chile* in clarifying allegations of violations of freedom of association. The information provided by the CPC through the IOE shifted the direction of the case entirely. Whereas its initial findings were that the company had engaged in unfair labour practices, the final conclusions completely exonerated the company from any illegal activity.

In other instances, the IOE assisted in facilitating a better understanding of particular situations. One of these cases concerned allegations made by Swiss unions that national laws did not provide sufficient protection against anti-union discrimination. The IOE's intervention was crucial in ensuring a shift in direction which could have an impact on the current negotiation process between Switzerland and the European Union. The IOE also used this case to question the long established practice of recommending reinstatement in cases of alleged anti-union discrimination, as neither of the ILO Conventions foresees reinstatement as a remedy.

THE IOE IN THE REGIONS

AFRICA

Enhancing the national voice of business

In terms of delivering national development strategies the role in Africa of the national employers' organization is increasingly being recognized. In that respect, the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) process, the implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the ILO's Decent Work agenda are some of the main initiatives through which regional federations are working for change.

Linked to this is the overall strength of the employers' organizations, their need to be united, as well as their capacity to respond to the changing needs of their members and this was a key theme developed at the Conference of East, Central and Southern African Employers' Organizations held in Mauritius.

The year has also seen moves in the region, in some cases towards mergers between organizations, to in others, alliance building. In the forthcoming year the IOE, together with ACTEMP will develop a set of tools to assist federations in making these decisions and in how to proceed.

HIV/AIDS

Unquestionably, HIV/AIDS remains the greatest challenge for business across the region. While the IOE was active on a number of fronts on this issue, specifically in Africa a number national action plans (NAPs) were launched. These NAPs are the first concrete manifestation of the IOE-ICFTU *joint declaration on the fight against HIV/AIDS in the workplace* signed in 2003. National action plans have now been launched in eight African countries. Consultations with multinational enterprises, UNAIDS, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, the WHO, the ILO and donor agencies are being held on how to support these pilot projects.

Strategies to tackle poverty

Ouagadougou in Burkina Faso was the venue for the African Union Summit of Heads of State and Government, which focused on employment creation and poverty alleviation strategies. The event was preceded by the *African Social Partners Forum*, which brought together employer and trade union representatives from across the region. Addressing these fora, the IOE reiterated that decent work could only be realized if there is an enabling environment for enterprise creation and development.

ASIA

Subsequent to the Vietnamese member (VCCI) becoming the 139th member of the IOE practical assistance was initiated in helping the organization respond effectively to current developments and changes to the national industrial relations system. Increasingly, work at field level is focusing more on practical aspects such as providing direct assistance in developing strategic objectives, indicators of achievement, helping organizations learn from others through study tours; and developing labour relations capacities such as negotiation skills, labour management skills etc.

Productivity and Competitiveness

Broadly speaking in the region, industrial relations and CSR are becoming increasingly important within the context of competitiveness, productivity and supply chain management issues, more so in a year that saw the end of the multi-fibre agreement in the textile and garment industries, bringing major challenges to the region.

The IOE, CAPE and the ILO held a major regional meeting in Kuala Lumpur to discuss ways in which employers' organizations could assist companies in their efforts to enhance productivity. Many countries in the region, such as Nepal, Bangladesh and India, have or are exploring mechanisms to address productivity issues. .

The IOE and CAPE are identifying ways to exchange experiences and learn from each others' successes within the region. A Workshop on "*Productivity Growth and Corporate Competitiveness*" also was held preceding the ASEAN Confederation of Employers (ACE) meeting of Board of Directors held in Bangkok and a special session that addressed the impact of HIV/AIDS on the productivity of businesses in the region was also held.

Employment

The development of the Chinese economy is extremely important to the region and consequently the *China Employment Forum* was of major interest. It is clear that a number of challenges lie ahead for China: the urban- rural divide, WTO accession, skills shortages, a growing informal economy and the restructuring of State-owned enterprises.

In terms of national responses, entrepreneurship is high on the list of government initiatives. A programme is in place to specifically assist budding entrepreneurs (e.g. providing finance and other support). With the support of the IOE, the ILO has provided considerable assistance with *Start Your Own Business* (SIYB) schemes operating in 100 Chinese cities and with a China Resource Centre for women entrepreneurs also being set up.

Finally, the IOE continues to work in developing practical responses to the Youth Employment Challenge. To date meaningful progress has been limited, but tentative work on developing national youth employment strategies in Arab countries has resulted subsequent to an ILO tripartite meeting in Amman, Jordan.

The Americas

Americas Summit: on the road of economic integration

Regional economic integration accelerated in the year with the conclusion of six new trade-agreements, bringing to 18 the total number of this kind of agreements.

Under the proposed text of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), parties would reaffirm their obligations as members of the ILO and their commitments under its Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. In addition to the four principles contained in the Declaration, a fifth has been added referencing “*acceptable conditions of work with respect to minimum wages, hours of work, and occupational safety and health.*”

The IOE continued to closely monitor these processes through its participation in the activities carried out in the context of the Plan of Action adopted by the Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labour of the Organization of American States (OAS).

Challenges for business in a new political landscape

The XV Meeting of Presidents of Ibero-American Business Organizations was held in San José, Costa Rica, where the main discussion was on the changes of the traditional political system and its impact on the business community. The meeting adopted a Statement conveying a message from the business community to the Ibero-American Heads of States, reiterating the need for the development of a national employment policy.

Capacity building of employers’ organizations

Unquestionably, capacity building of employers’ organizations continued to be one of the IOE’s priorities in the region. The Latin American Institute for Management of Employers’ Organizations (ILGO) continues to be a unique world class programme for employers in the region and has provided highly specialized training to senior management of employers’ organizations for 20 years. Extending the ILGO programme to other regions is being actively explored.

Strengthening ties with Europe

Representatives of over twenty member federations coordinated by the IOE, participated in the “*Third Meeting of Organized Civil Society of the European Union (EU) – Latin America and the Caribbean*” held in Mexico City. Sponsored by the European Economic and Social Committee, the meeting’s main theme was social cohesion, particularly ways of reducing inequalities, combating exclusion and carrying forward economic development and reforming the labour market. The conclusions of the meeting were later transmitted to the Summit of Heads of States of the EU, Latin America and Caribbean.

EUROPE

In terms of technical work, much of the focus during the year was in governance and organisational development areas. Programmes, through ACT/EMP, gave a focus to membership development, membership structure, developing representativeness and financial structures.

The CSR debate

Corporate Social Responsibility was a central theme for European federations during the year and the IOE was and remains very engaged in the debate at European level, particularly through the UNICE Social Affairs Committee. The IOE was very involved in coordinating the global and European employers' position on CSR.

Individually federations were active in their national debates on CSR. *MEDEF International*, together with the IOE, hosted a meeting in January on the international dimension of companies' engagement with society. This meeting presented an opportunity for French companies to share national and international perspectives and experiences, and to engage with the international trade union movement. The Irish employers (IBEC) produced their first substantive Report on CSR and the IOE gave the international dimension to the issue at the launch of the Report in Dublin.

In Sweden, the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) hosted a two-day Conference in Stockholm in June as part of its process of considering the suitability of the development of ISO deliverables in the field of corporate social responsibility. The IOE, working closely with the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise, was successful in making sure a common sense attitude prevailed in this process. Finally, in Germany, the IOE worked closely with the BDA in developing its CSR thinking, participating in a number of workshops.

Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe

The continued support of the *IOE network of experts in labour law* from South Eastern European employers' organizations by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation has enabled this network to develop significantly. The year was mainly marked by the development of national activities and twinning programmes in Moldova/Romania and Croatia/Montenegro.

Progress was reviewed at the annual regional meeting as well as at a joint IOE meeting with the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC). In parallel to this network, IOE members in the region participated in other projects under the Stability Pact umbrella, such as programmes on entrepreneurship, employment, social protection and energy.

BUILDING A STRONGER COLLECTIVE BUSINESS VOICE

The increase in debates on issues relevant to the IOE continued in 2004 and as in previous years this saw the IOE working with a number of business organizations at the regional, national and international levels.

Issues such as Human Rights, Standardization and CSR saw the IOE continue its close collaboration with ICC and the BIAC. With regard to the Human Rights debate the joint efforts of the IOE and ICC were fundamental in influencing the outcome of the UN High Commission for Human Right's consideration of the "Draft Norms". The continuation of this debate means such collaboration will continue to strengthen.

UNICE at the European level remains an important partner for the IOE. Debates on CSR, working time and health and safety within Europe are but a few of the policy areas where the IOE was engaged, as more and more, the European experience is feeding into international debates. Collaboration with the Confederation of Asia Pacific Employers (CAPE), the Pan African Employers' Confederation (PEC) and the ASEAN Confederation of Employers (ACE) continues to evolve. The IOE provided support in a variety of regionally based initiatives and meetings throughout the year, such as the Central American Labour Coordination Forum, which aimed to assist member federations in the region in their preparations and coordination of the negotiations for a free trade agreement between central American countries and the US.

IOE Partners in 2004

- ASEAN Confederation of Employers (ACE)
- Association of Private Business of Central America and Panama (FEDEPRICAP)
- Business and Industry Advisory Committee to OECD (BIAC)
- Caribbean Employers' Confederation (CEC)
- Confederation of Asia-Pacific Employers (CAPE)
- General Union of Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture for Arab Countries
- International Chamber of Commerce (ICC)
- International Christian Union of Business Executives (UNIAPAC)
- International Association of Crafts and Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (IACME)
- Pan- African Employers Confederation (PEC)
- International Business Leaders Forum (IBLF)
- Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederation of Europe (UNICE)
- South Eastern European Employers Forum (SEEEF)
- West African Employers' Association (FOPAO)
- World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD)

WORKING WITH ENTERPRISES

In an increasingly integrated world, companies are facing a different and changing set of challenges - working with complex supply chains, campaigns waged by NGOs against multinationals, international labour standards and their link to CSR, freedom of association issues, to name but a few. Unquestionably, in the current climate major companies are increasingly looking to work with international organizations and the ILO is often an obvious place to start. In this respect, the IOE has been approached and given guidance on the above issues.

However, in order to identify any potential pitfalls in the process, if companies are looking to work with the ILO then they should first discuss their intentions with the national employers' organization and then subsequently with the IOE and ACT/EMP. Simple and clear guidance to companies at the start of a process can often save headaches later.

IOE Enterprise Advisory Group

The IOE Enterprise Advisory Group remains an important mechanism for the IOE in dealing with specific issues which arise from time to time. This group of senior business figures generally only meet periodically to discuss important issues, as and when they arise.

In 2002 they met with the *World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization* and made a significant contribution to that process, supplementing the work of the business members of that Commission. This year the key issue was Human Rights and business, and the ongoing debate in UNHCHR. This engagement, not just with senior officials but also importantly with some Government members of this Commission, considerably augmented the business perspective on this potentially problematic issue. The forthcoming year will see the Group play an active role in the CSR debate.

Sectoral Activities

The year saw the start of national action sectoral programmes with six launched in the agriculture; construction; education; financial services; hotel, catering and tourism; textile, clothing and footwear sectors, as well as one cross-sectoral action programme on HIV/AIDS. There was in fact only one 'traditional' type meeting in the year on *the Future of Work and Quality in the Information Society : Media, Culture and Graphical Sector*.

As tripartite consensus at national level is essential for national action programmes, new procedures needed to be designed and developed. Principally, this entailed establishing National Steering Groups (NSGs) which are tripartite bodies responsible for defining the priorities of their respective action programme. All of this understandably was a relatively slow process, with resultant delays to the actual start of each programme.

As of November 2004, several NSGs had already started their work and had identified their national priorities and others were scheduled to have their first meetings in December 2004 or early 2005.

Throughout the year, the IOE Secretariat and member federations worked closely with international sectoral employers' associations concerned with current action programmes. Work with these organizations in general terms (and more specifically in terms of influencing programmes of activities) has deepened considerably over the last twelve months.

During 2004 the IOE worked with the following international sectoral bodies

- Airline Personnel Directors Conference (APDC)
- Confederation of International Contractors Association (CICA)
- International Confederation of Temporary Work Organizations (CIETT)
- European Council of Chemical Manufactures' Federation (CEFIC)
- International Chemical Employers Labour Relations Committee (LRC)
- International Hotel and Restaurant Associations (IHRA)
- International Road Transport Union (IRU)
- International Shipping Federation (ISF)
- Assembly of Employers' Organizations in the European Food and Drink Industry (AEFD)
- EuroCommerce
- Council of European Employers of the Metal, Engineering and Technology-Based Industries (CEEMET)

EMPLOYERS AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

International Labour Organization

The World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization permeated almost every aspect of the work of the ILO in 2004. What is becoming clear is that there are now competing views of the direction that this Organization should now take.

In the global system the ILO has its particular niche. For instance, international labour standards have to be adapted to new global realities; employment creation needs to be at the forefront of national development strategies; the informal economy has to be effectively addressed with appropriate policies; child labour remains a serious problem; many developing countries need urgent assistance in developing effective labour institutions and systems; social safety nets need establishing. It is these kinds of areas where the IOE expects the ILO to focus in order to make a most meaningful contribution.

The Committees of the Governing Body were likewise overshadowed by the World Commission, notably the **Strategic Policy Framework** (2006-2009) This document was rejected as it was clear that it was proposing a move away from the world of work and technical co-operation towards policy advocacy. In this respect, concerns regarding **technical cooperation** activities continued. Technical activities in the employment sector were particularly affected, which is somewhat ironic given the ILO is engaged in international efforts to mainstream employment as the path out of poverty.

The **Global Employment Agenda** continues to be the main policy response of the ILO to employment and the year saw its continued practical implementation – noticeably in areas like SME development and entrepreneurship. Programmes have been in existence a long time, with good results to be shown however presently suffer excessive underfunding.

The debate on possible improvements to ILO **standards-related activities** continued, with some, albeit limited, progress. The Committee adopted new measures to regulate the process through which representations are made against ILO member States for alleged non-compliance of ratified Conventions, which seeks to avoid duplication.

Work on promoting the **Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy** made some headway in the year and the Office will now work closely with other agencies, such as the European Commission, World Bank and the Global Compact Office, in its promotion. Finally, the **Global Campaign on social security** is at last up and running and an informal group has been established to follow and support the Campaign.

International Labour Conference

Concern remains that the work agenda of the Conference has become so heavy that it is making it difficult for delegations with a limited number of advisers to effectively engage in the debates. *Eight* Conference items require diverse attention at a time when most employer delegations number no more than three. The issue of Conference reform is still on the agenda of the Governing Body, but progress remains stilted.

One positive aspect of the Conference was that political issues did not affect the workings in the different Committees. The technical and realistic approaches followed by the employers in the Resolutions and **Migrant Workers** debates contributed to the development of realistic outcomes in both Committees, in spite of the political issues before them. The **Resolution on Gender** kept an emphasis on ‘women in the workplace’ and also underlined the importance of women’s entrepreneurship. As for the **Migrant Workers’** Committee, it eventually adopted a non-binding multilateral plan of action aimed at guiding the future work of the ILO in this area. The common sense injected into the discussion by the workers and employers in this Committee in the face of some governments’ refusal to move from rigid positions has shown the value of having the representative constituents in the debate.

Unfortunately, employers could not support a new Recommendation on **Human Resources Development and Training** due to a reference to global collective bargaining. Despite many efforts to get the text changed to reflect realities, stubbornness unfortunately won through. The ILO, therefore, has an instrument (which is in the main a good Recommendation) lacking the support of the key actors in HRD, namely the employers. Finally, progress at the first discussion on **Work in the Fishing Sector** was slow and as a result, consideration of the full draft text was not possible. This sets the scene for a difficult second discussion in 2005 with a number of problematic issues outstanding.

“Everything that is good for enterprises we represent, is good for the world of work and is also good for governments, and by working together we can build a common future. Let us do that through social dialogue, freely accepted.”

Youssoufa Wade (Senegal) Employers Vice-President of ILC

UN High Commission for Human Rights (UNHCHR)

Business is and has been long involved in actively promoting respect for human rights. However, an initiative by a Working Group Subcommittee within the UNHCHR to look to fundamentally change the nature of businesses “responsibilities” with regards to human rights by making them a bearer of human rights obligations under international law has met with a strong IOE response.

With the support of member federations the IOE undertook a protracted round of discussions with UNHCHR member States to explain the employer opposition to the initiative contained in what have become known as the ‘Draft Norms’.

In the subsequent debate, the call for the endorsement of the draft norms was not supported and in the Commission's decision it clearly states that the draft norms are not endorsed by the High Commission and are of no legal effect. However, the Commission in April 2005 will consider a report prepared by the Secretariat of the High Commission on *‘the scope and legal status of existing initiatives and standards relating to the responsibilities of transnational corporations and related business enterprises with regard to human rights’*. The IOE has placed its views on this before the Commission and supported that with a direct consultation involving member federations and business leaders to underline its views through the provision of concrete corporate experiences.

IOE POSITION

- Business is positively engaged on Human Rights issues
- Business engagement is however no alternative for government action with regard to legislation and enforcement
- Whilst business is accountable for Human Rights observance as is any other citizen, the national or international legal responsibility for Human Rights rest with governments
- Transnational corporations are not all large western businesses and increasingly even within the developing world, small and medium sized businesses are operating outside of their home country
- More should be done by the UNHCHR to clarify the meaning of international Human Rights principles

UN SECRETARY-GENERAL'S OFFICE

The Global Compact

Substantial developments took place within the Global Compact in 2004. In June UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan held a Business Leaders Summit in New York to in effect re-launch the Global Compact with the addition of a tenth principle on bribery and corruption. Linked to this was the establishment of integrity measures to enable complaints to be made against what are seen as non performing companies and a detailed process for reporting company progress.

The IOE continues to monitor Global Compact developments. It reissued its Employers Guide to the Global Compact to incorporate the changes ushered in since June and will continue to support the promotion of the Global Compact as a call to the business community to voluntarily promote and support the principles it contains.

The Global Compact is a useful point of reference for company CSR engagement

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

The year has seen some concrete steps in the developing relationship between the IOE and UNDP, building on the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which was signed in 2003. In the regions this cooperation has started to materialize in more concrete ways. UNDP country offices and IOE member federations in a number of countries in Eastern Europe, Africa, Asia and Latin America and Caribbean have started to examine ways in which they can work together.

Most ostensibly the IOE, together with the ILO, has been in discussions with UNDP on the follow up to its recent report “*Unleashing Entrepreneurship: Making business work for the Poor*” which was launched in February. The IOE and the ILO jointly submitted a number of proposals to UNDP in this respect. UNDP also participated in the IOE meeting on tackling corruption in Warsaw and direct follow-up actions in the region are being pursued in collaboration with them. The IOE collaborates with UNDP in the preparation of the UN Assembly on the review of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

World Trade Organization

The line between trade policy and labour and social policies can be remarkably thin and the relations between the two - featured heavily in the year.

The IOE has particularly increased its collaboration with the WTO in 2004. This collaboration is chiefly in terms of tracking WTO developments through the WTO consultative process in which the IOE participates. The IOE Secretariat has also developed a new electronic information tool *TradeTalk* which is an update on trade issues, in particular those with a relevance to social and labour policy.

At a political level IOE President François continued his engagement with the WTO Informal Business Advisory Group. This group of which IOE Vice-President Tom Niles is also a member, provides the WTO with a sounding board on the business perspectives.

“The multilateral trade route must be pursued as a priority. History has shown us that there is no satisfactory alternative to a strengthened WTO rules-based multilateral trading system”

Statement by François Perigot to the WTO Informal Business Advisory Group

The Organization of American States

The relationship between the IOE - within the framework of the Business Technical Advisory Committee on Labour Matters (CEATAL) - and the OAS continued to intensify during 2004 as the *Americas Summit* process continued its course. Business participation in diverse activities related to the development of a social and labour dimension of that process has required meticulous coordination to ensure that the business voice is heard.

In Washington earlier in the year the IOE participated in a meeting to discuss the social dimension of regional integration and building the capacity of Ministries of Labour. IOE representatives also participated in workshops in San Salvador (health and safety) and Mexico (employment services). Within the OAS/ILO programme, IOE member federations participated in National Tripartite Seminars on regional integration, free trade and labour rights (Peru and Brazil respectively).

The IOE has also played a very useful role in helping to coordinate the growing relationship between the ILO and the OAS, making sure duplication is avoided.

World Bank

In terms of development strategies the World Bank/IMF sponsored Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) have been called '*the only game in town*'. Consequently, the IOE and ACT/EMP are increasingly looking to deepen support to member federations that are engaged (or intend to be engaged) in that process. A number of pilot projects are underway, which aim to enable the participating federations to play a more effective role in the implementation of national poverty reduction strategies. These pilot projects are specifically focused in the area of policy and regulatory environment for SMEs. The utilization of tools from the IOE-ILO SME development toolkit for employers' organizations is envisaged as an important component of this process. It is envisaged to seek a more concrete partnership with the Bank's private sector lending arm, the International Finance Cooperation (IFC) in the 'implementation phase' of this toolkit.

The IOE remains engaged as a partner in the Youth Employment Network (YEN) and attended its third High Level Panel meeting, hosted this year by the Bank. The three core agencies of this initiative (the ILO, World Bank and UN) agreed to focus intensive efforts on ten lead countries and to proceed with *National Action Plans* on youth employment in each.

Employers at other International Fora

G8

The agenda set by the hosts of this years G8, the United States, corresponded in many areas to the IOE's priorities: the role of the private sector in development; good governance and tackling corruption; the fight against HIV/AIDS. In this regard, IOE President François Perigot met with French President, Jacques Chirac in advance of the 2004 G8 Summit in Sea Island to convey to him the IOE perspective.

International Organization for Standardization (ISO)

Throughout the early part of the year the *CSR Advisory Working Group in ISO* was established to identify what they could contribute to the Social Responsibility debate. In June its report was the basis of an international conference in Stockholm, as a consequence of which ISO has proposed a new work item that will look to develop a guidance standard on social responsibility. All ISO responses are called 'standards' but this is not to be a management system standard which can be made the subject of certification. The challenge will be to ensure that the work progresses within the confines of the work item proposed. IOE will continue to be fully engaged in the work on the development of this guidance document.

UNAIDS

The IOE continued with its close collaboration with UNAIDS, which began in 2000. The year saw the start of ICFTU-IOE joint activities which UNAIDS remains a major partner in the practical implementation of these national action plans.

UNCTAD

UNCTAD is the focal point within the United Nations for the integrated treatment of trade and related development issues in the area of finance, technology, investment and sustainable development. Given UNCTAD's potential impact on trade and development policies, the IOE continues to follow those debates within UNCTAD.

Council of Europe

The IOE continues to be an active participant on the Governmental Committee of the Council's European Social Charter. Links with the Council were also strengthened in the year with a number of activities under the auspices of the Stability Pact for South East Europe.

Other UN Agencies and international organizations

As with all relevant UN agencies and international organizations where employers' interests are debated, the IOE tried during the year to increase its visibility and influence, in particular with **UNEP** (through the Global Compact), **ITC**, **ECOSOC**, **UNESCO**, **UNIDO**, **ITU** (through the World Summit on the Information Society) and **WHO**.

IOE BODIES

IOE GENERAL COUNCIL

Seventy-nine member federations, together with a number of guests, attended this year's annual meeting of the General Council, held under the chairmanship of the IOE President.

The Council welcomed as guest speaker the Chairman of the International Chamber of Commerce, Jean-René Fourtou, who highlighted the importance of the ICC and the IOE, working in the economic and social fields respectively, to continue to collaborate on key issues of mutual interest.

The Council also adopted an IOE Strategic Framework 2004-2009, reflecting the nine priority areas which are the foundation of the IOE's activities during the period; adopted an amended text of the IOE Statutes, to better reflect the aims and functions of the Organisation today; approved the Accounts for the 2003 financial year and the draft Budget for 2005; welcomed the Association of Employers of Slovenia (ZDS) into IOE membership as well as Business Unity South Africa (BUSA) and the Jordan Chamber of Industry (JCI) in replacement of Business South Africa (BSA) and the Amman Chamber of Industry respectively; and elected a number of members to the IOE Management Board following the expiration of mandates.

IOE membership as of 31 December 2004 stands at 139 federations in 134 countries.

MANAGEMENT BOARD

The IOE Management Board held two regular sessions, in March and November. In addition to dealing with a number of standing items on its agenda, the Board approved a revised text of the IOE Statutes for submission to the General Council; carried out an evaluation of the specific activities undertaken during 2003 in pursuing the IOE's objectives; drew up a draft IOE Work Plan for 2005; provisionally welcomed the Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI) and the National Confederation of Entrepreneurs (Employers') Organizations of Azerbaijan Republic (ASK) into IOE membership; adopted an IOE Strategy on CSR in the ILO and examined and made proposals for IOE action concerning the various CSR-related activities being undertaken by UNHCHR, ISO, the Global Compact and elsewhere. Moreover, the Management Board decided that a special session of the IOE General Council would be held in June 2005 to discuss the CSR issue in greater depth.

Members of the Management Board

(31 December 2004)

President	François Perigot (France)
Executive Vice-President	Daniel Funes de Rioja (Argentina)
Vice-President (S. America)	Dagoberto Lima Godoy (Brazil)
Vice-President (Europe)	Michel Barde (Switzerland)
Vice-President (N. America)	Tom Niles (United States)

Vice-President (Africa)
Vice-President (Asia)
Treasurer
Deputy Treasurer
Secretary-General

Bokkie Botha (South Africa)
Toshio Suzuki (Japan)
José Maria Lacasa (Spain)
Nam-Hong Cho (Korea)
Antonio Peñalosa

Members

Abdallah Sadiq Dahlan (Saudi Arabia)
Andrew Finlay (Canada)
Renate Hornung-Draus (Germany)
Ali M'Kaissi (Tunisia)
Birahima Nacoulma (Burkina Faso)
Bryan Noakes (Australia)
Pavel Prior (Czech Republic)
Ashraf Tabani (Pakistan)
Gören Trogen (Sweden)
Luis Carlos Villegas (Colombia)

IOE MEMBER FEDERATIONS

AFRICA

Confédération Générale des Entreprises Algériennes / Organisation Nationale des Employeurs du Bénin / Botswana Confederation of Commerce, Industry and Manpower / Conseil National du Patronat Burkinabé / Association des Employeurs du Burundi / Groupement Inter/Patronal du Cameroun / Association Commerciale de Sotavento du Cap-Vert / Association Commerciale, Industrielle et Agricole de Barlavento (Cap-Vert) / Conseil National du Patronat Tchadien / Fédération des Entreprises du Congo (Rep. Dem) / Union Patronale et Interprofessionnelle du Congo / Conseil National du Patronat Ivoirien / Federation of Egyptian Industries / Eritrean Employers' Federation / Confédération Patronale Gabonaise / The Ghana Employers' Association / Conseil du Patronat Guinéen / Federation of Kenya Employers / Association of Lesotho Employers / Groupement des Entreprises de Madagascar / The Employers' Consultative Association of Malawi / Conseil national du Patronat du Mali / Confédération Générale des Employeurs de Mauritanie / Mauritius Employers' Federation / Fédération des Chambres de Commerce, d'Industrie et de Services du Maroc / Confédération Générale des Entreprises du Maroc / Namibian Employers' Federation / Syndicat Patronal des Entreprises et Industries du Niger / Nigeria Employers' Consultative Association / Conseil National du Patronat du Sénégal / Federation of Employers' Associations of Seychelles / Business Unity South Africa / Federation of Swaziland Employers / Association of Tanzania Employers / Conseil National du Patronat (Togo) / Union Tunisienne de l'Industrie, du Commerce et de l'Artisanat / Federation of Uganda Employers / The Zambia Federation of Employers / Employers' Confederation of Zimbabwe

AMERICA

Antigua Employers' Federation / Unión Industrial Argentina / Bahamas Employers' Confederation / Barbados Employers' Confederation / Bermuda Employers' Council / Confederación de Empresarios Privados de Bolivia / Confederação Nacional da Industria (Brazil) / Canadian Employers' Council / Confederación de la Producción y del Comercio (Chile) / Asociación Nacional de Industriales (Colombia) / Unión Costarricense de Cámaras y Asociaciones de la Empresa Privada / The Dominica Employers' Federation / Confederación Patronal de la República Dominicana / Federación Nacional de Cámaras de Industrias del Ecuador / Asociación Nacional de la Empresa Privada (El Salvador) / Comité Coordinador de Asociaciones Agrícolas, Comerciales, Industriales y Financieras (Guatemala) / Association des Industries d'Haïti / Consejo Hondureño de la Empresa Privada / The Jamaica Employers' Federation / Confederación de Cámaras Industriales de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos / Confederación Patronal de la República Mexicana / Consejo Superior de la Empresa Privada (Nicaragua) / Consejo Nacional de la Empresa Privada (Panama) / Confederación Nacional de Instituciones Empresariales Privadas (Peru) / St. Lucia Employers' Federation / Suriname Trade and Industry Association / The Employers' Consultative Association of Trinidad and Tobago / Cámara Nacional de Comercio (Uruguay) / Cámara de Industrias del Uruguay / United States Council for International Business / Federación de Cámaras y Asociaciones de Comercio y Producción de Venezuela

ASIA

Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry / Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry / Bangladesh Employers' Federation / China Enterprise Confederation / Chinese Taipei Federation of Industries / Fiji Employers' Federation / Council of Indian Employers / Employers' Association of Indonesia / Iran Confederation of Employers' Associations / Japan Business Federation / Jordan Chamber of Industry / Korea Employers' Federation / Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry / Association of Lebanese Industrialists / Malaysian Employers' Federation / Mongolian Employers' Association / Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry / Business New Zealand / Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry / Employers' Federation of Pakistan / The Employers' Federation of Papua New Guinea / Employers' Confederation of the Philippines / Council of Saudi Chambers of Commerce and Industry / The Singapore National Employers' Federation / The Employers' Federation of Ceylon (Sri Lanka) / Employers' Confederation of Thailand / Federation of United Arab Emirates Chambers of Commerce and Industry / Vietnam Chamber of Commerce

EUROPE

Council of Employers' Organizations (Albania) / Federation of Austrian Industry / National Confederation of Entrepreneurs (Employers') Organizations of Azerbaijan Republic / Fédération des Entreprises de Belgique / Association of the Organizations of Bulgarian Employers / Croatian Employers' Association / Cyprus Employers and Industrialists Federation / Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic / Danish Employers' Confederation / Estonian Employers' Confederation / Confederation of Finnish Industry and Employers / Mouvement des Entreprises de France / Confederation of German Employers' Associations / Federation of Greek Industries / Confederation of Hungarian Employers' Organizations for International Cooperation / Confederation of Icelandic Employers / Irish Business and Employers Confederation / Manufacturers' Association of Israel / Confederazione Generale dell'Industria Italiana / Latvian Employers Confederation / Confederation of Lithuanian Industrialists / Fédération des Industriels Luxembourgeois / Malta Employers' Association / National Confederation of Moldova Employers / Confederation of Netherlands Industry and Employers / Confederation of Norwegian Business and Industry / Confederation of Polish Employers and Entrepreneurs / Confederação da Indústria Portuguesa / The Employers' Confederation of Romania / Coordinating Council of Employers' Unions of Russia / Associazione Nazionale dell'Industria Sammarinese // Serbian and Montenegrin Employers Association / Federation of Employers' Unions and Associations of the Slovak Republic / Association of Employers of Slovenia / Association of Employers of Slovenia / Confederación Española de Organizaciones Empresariales / Confederation of Swedish Enterprise / Union Patronale Suisse / Turkish Confederation of Employer Associations / Federation of Employers of Ukraine / Confederation of British Industry

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**INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF EMPLOYERS
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