



UNION MONDIALE DES PROFESSIONS LIBERALES  
UNION MUNDIAL DE LAS PROFESIONES LIBERALES  
WORLD UNION OF PROFESSIONS  
WELTUNION DER FREIEN BERUFE

## **SPEECH BY THE WORLD UNION OF PROFESSIONS (WUP) AT THE 87<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION (ILO)**

Geneva, June 10<sup>th</sup>, 1999

Mr. Secretary-General,  
Mr. Chairman of the Plenary,  
All Delegates,

The society of knowledge arising as the new reality at the dawn of the third millennium puts professionals in the face of new challenges but also new opportunities.

In the decades to come, the society shall be new and global, the early signs are already to be seen. In the next information society, knowledge shall be more and more important. Our working place will be a computerized office intranet-linked to the company, clients and organizations. As the internet will grow more and more critical, interaction among human beings will acquire a new dimension, in a virtual environment.

Such evolutions call for the definition of new human rights, pursuant to the new information age. Since its inception in 1987, our organization has pursued a common ideal: to defend the man, the whole man and all the men, especially professionals, who are our more direct concern.

But as the new virtual society emerges, new dangers appear, too, against the right to the protection of one's professional secrets or the confidentiality of information on people's private lives, against the right to intimacy and intellectual property. Therefore, there is a need to redraw more clearly the boundaries of private and public spheres. Last April, in Rio de Janeiro, our Congress clearly stressed the need for

legal instruments on such new human right and called for the creation of a working group for deepening the issue.

As the new society of knowledge emerges, along with the new technologies, a new need also arises to redefine the right to education for children, the youth, the workers in general, and professionals in particular. Literacy campaigns are no more adequate; in the new society, education will mean digital literacy. Otherwise, social gaps will carry on widening, and social exclusion, along with social violence, will spread further. The World Union of Professions has much to contribute with to this debate, thanks to its major experience in this field and its presence in the five continents. Governments, employers, and workers—more particularly knowledge workers—should all strive to ensure a universal access to the new society.

### **The WUP and child labor**

The World Union of Professions, which groups multi-professional national organizations as well as mono-professional international confederations, wishes to express its deep concern about the global problem of child labor. By doing so, we also assume our responsibility in this issue, for no campaign can be successful without the participation of the civil society organizations, and that of professionals. While our labor practices do not allow for child exploitation, it is also true that we are part of communities. We can therefore become opinion makers in our societies, so to raise conscience on this issue. We can also propose and lobby for a social and labor legislation aiming to more justice and more solidarity.

Not only children should not be exploited or work on risky duties. They should also enjoy the right to be kids, to benefit from an education allowing them to be prepared for the future labor market. They must enjoy the right to a tele-education, based on today and aimed to the future. Most of all, children has an indisputable and unquestionable

right —the one to smile since the earliest age. Anything we do today shall deeply earmark the next century's culture and lifestyle. I do hope we shall be able to match up to the challenges posed by the third millennium, with a view to build a future of solidarity.

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