



INTRODUCTION

This cd-rom contains the national reports from the 16th World Congress of Labour Law and Social Security, held in Jerusalem, Israel on September 5 – 7, 2000. They are published in the language in which they were written. The general reports and keynote address has been published separately as a book.

We are witnessing the transformation from the industrial revolution to the information age. Worldwide changes in labour relations systems are taking place. Union density is declining in many nations. Collective bargaining and existing labour standards are under pressure. Increased income inequality has become a serious problem, with its' grave social and political implications. Discrimination against weak groups in the work force has not yet been eliminated. Existing social rights are being challenged and difficulties arise in developing and creating social rights.

And yet, our civilization is based upon human beings and must further their well being. Labour law has, until now, been a way of protecting workers from market forces. Social security systems have protected people from the insecurity and economic risks which are part of every society. Today, worldwide changes in the economic, social and institutional spheres have challenged the foundations of protection to human beings. Can the traditional tools for protecting people adapt to the information age? If so, what changes are necessary to provide social protection and social rights? Are the traditional labour law and social security systems so inflexible that they will be demolished by the tide of market changes? Should the market rule our lives and society? The national reports prepared for this congress describe how each of our nations is coping with these problems. The general reports analyze the problems and suggest partial answers.

Our society encourages research and exchange of ideas, necessary to cope with these and other significant problems. Understanding the reasons for changes in employment systems is the foundation for developing policy to deal with them. We must examine, for example, changes in the role and structure of unions and management; effects and outcomes of employment patterns and practices; the role of law in our economy and society; methods of reducing industrial disputes and solving conflicts; how to provide social security to all people.

This congress will discuss some of the main issues facing labour law and social security today. In addition to learning about the situation in other countries we shall discuss convergent trends across countries and social solutions provided by legislatures and courts and suggested by academics. Variations among countries, resulting from different history and institutional context, should not prevent us from focusing on common problems; protecting workers and improving their working conditions, while strengthening the economy; eliminating injustice and inequality; and developing social rights.

The general reports and keynote address are the roots upon which the congress deliberations will focus. The national reports presented in this cd -rom are the trunk and the panel discussions are the branches. This cd -rom will provide participants with ideas which will help them remember what they have heard during the congress. The Israel branch of our society is honored to have facilitated the publication of the national and general reports submitted to the XVI World Congress of Labour and Social Security.

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