113. The Committee agreed to amend the point for decision accordingly.

114. The Committee on Employment and Social Policy recommends that the Governing Body invite the Director-General to develop proposals for ILO follow-up action related to the Johannesburg Summit drawing on the outcomes of the Summit, ILO participation in inter-agency coordination of follow-up, the discussions of the Committee and appropriate consultations. Such follow-up action would include the relevant elements of the Programme and Budget proposals for 2004-05, in addition to identifying opportunities for extra-budgetary support.

V. United Nations initiative on youth employment
(Fifth item on the agenda)

115. A representative of the Director-General (Mr. Miller, Secretary, Youth Employment Network, Employment Sector) introduced the Office paper. He outlined the reason for the document, which was that the United Nations General Assembly had specifically invited the ILO to play a major role in this initiative. This was contained in United Nations General Assembly resolution A/RES/57/165, which had been adopted by consensus by the General Assembly in December 2002, having been introduced by Senegal with 106 co-sponsors.

116. Mr. Miller recalled that the issue of youth employment had already been brought up in the context of the Governing Body’s discussion of the Global Employment Agenda and that its urgency to many governments and other constituents had been underlined. He stressed the long history of ILO work on this issue, including a number of legal instruments, publications, advisory services and technical cooperation activities. The YEN was the first of the global alliances outlined by the Executive Director of the Employment Sector in his introduction to the first agenda item. He then gave an overview of the origins of the YEN, which had been created by United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan and backed by an intergovernmental mandate at Head of State level during the 2000 Millennium Summit in New York. It thus represented the ILO’s most explicit foothold in the MDGs, providing new political urgency and relevance to the question of youth employment. He then touched on some highlights of YEN activities to date, including the 12-member high-level panel, which included representatives of both workers and employers, and which had already issued recommendations to the Secretary-General. The panel had decided on an overall message that youth should be seen as an asset or a solution, not a problem, and was therefore worth investing in. On a technical level, four areas of national action had been identified, which were universal, although relevant in different ways in different countries, and which encompassed both the demand and the supply side: employability, equal opportunities, entrepreneurship and employment creation. The political process invited governments to develop national action plans on youth employment, based on review of past national policies. In summary, the ILO was invited to assist in a two-year process, first in the preparation of national reviews and action plans and, second, in undertaking a global analysis and review of the action plans and assisting in their implementation. The YEN therefore represented an opportunity for the ILO to build consensus on youth employment and to integrate this firmly in the international development agenda.

5 GB.286/ESP/5.
117. The Employer Vice-Chairperson had no problem with the paper but did have some comments on paragraph 19. He recalled that the 1998 session of the International Labour Conference had also adopted a resolution concerning youth employment, sponsored by the IOE, which he wished to be noted. He further noted that the Employers and Workers also had programmes under way promoting youth employment. He expressed concern that this initiative seemed resource-intensive and wondered whether any resources were available for this purpose under the regular budget.

118. The Chairperson indicated that this was a subject for the Programme, Financial and Administrative Committee discussions.

119. The Worker Vice-Chairperson underlined the urgency of the youth unemployment crisis, and pointed to the very high levels of youth joblessness, particularly in some African countries. It was therefore important to carry out the mandate conferred by the United Nations. Work on the Youth Employment Network (YEN) should be integrated in the Global Employment Agenda to give coherence to ILO work. A significant and sustained reduction in youth unemployment needed an environment that fostered employment growth. To successfully tackle youth unemployment one had to address the total unemployment problem. Otherwise, there might be sectoral but no aggregate progress. He recalled the four priority themes and the 12 recommendations of the high-level panel, which placed the YEN in the context of the Decent Work Agenda. He wanted to send a strong signal of support to the invitation extended to the ILO by the United Nations resolution, subject to the following: a reorientation of work undertaken within the YEN to reflect the entire Global Employment Agenda and the Decent Work Agenda, and consultation with the ILO constituencies in doing so. Moreover, additional resources should be mobilized for this key area of work.

120. The Chairperson remarked that it would need to be seen whether these resources were available within the existing budget or not. This would be discussed later.

121. The representative of the Government of Sudan, on behalf of the Africa group, expressed appreciation for the Office paper. He noted that youth made up the bulk of Africa’s population. He supported the high-level panel’s recommendations in paragraphs 5 to 8, and took note of the YEN activities in paragraphs 11 to 12. He stressed the importance of focusing efforts on maintaining and securing a strong commitment of political will on the part of Heads of States to deliver concrete results on youth employment. The Africa group requested that the formulation of this plan be accelerated to help national plans deliver youth employment packages. He also supported the Africa group’s proposal for ILO follow-up action to the Johannesburg Summit outcomes for consideration by the ESP Committee at its November session.

122. The representative of the Government of Ecuador, speaking on behalf of the GRULAC group, noted the statistics in the document. His group fully supported this commitment and the functioning of the YEN and would cooperate with all international institutions participating in this important project. He also supported the recommendations of the high-level panel and recalled the region’s unemployed youth. In conclusion, he supported the recommendations contained in paragraph 19 of the document and requested assistance and support for the Latin American region in the preparation of studies and national action plans on youth employment.

123. The representative of the Government of New Zealand congratulated the Office for the positive role played in the YEN. She noted that facilitating youth employment was a national priority in New Zealand, which aimed to have all those between the ages of 15 and 19 in education, training or activities leading to long-term independence by 2007. An exclusive focus on action at the national level, as suggested in paragraph 19(b), was
however not enough to address global employment issues. ILO leadership that promoted work at the multilateral level was a critical component for success. She asked that in their work at the national level the Office and its tripartite partners ensure that this latest form of national plan of action be integrated with other existing national action plans supported by the ILO and other United Nations agencies to limit overlap and maximize outcomes, particularly with respect to decent work pilot programmes and national plans of action for decent work.

124. The representative of the Government of Indonesia thanked the Office for the excellent paper. She detailed Indonesia’s tackling of the issue through a comprehensive and coherent policy involving the tripartite structure as well as civil society. The Government had set up a programme in 1995 (Professional and Self-Sufficient Youth Employment) to enable youth to acquire training, which had already shown success. However, the programme was still insufficient, especially in rural areas where the problem was most prevalent. The Government was developing its national action plan, with a broad-based, countrywide approach involving all stakeholders. She also recalled that Indonesia was one of the six lead countries to have come forward to pioneer national action plans, as called for by the high-level panel. The ILO had a leading role to play given its expertise and experience. She called on the ILO to provide technical assistance to those countries which had already begun promoting youth employment policies, and to indicate clearly how much assistance it was prepared to offer. She expressed gratitude to those donor countries that had supported the YEN and hoped that others would be encouraged to follow their example, in view of what was at stake for young people of developing countries.

125. The representative of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran stated that the rate of youth unemployment was twice or sometimes three times as much as that in other categories. It needed to become the focus of international plans and an integral part of the Global Employment Agenda and PRSPs. Resources should be pooled to respond to this vital issue. He noted the ILO’s leadership role in the YEN. The more than 1 billion young people vulnerable to poverty awaited the translation of this programme into action plans at national level.

126. The representative of the Government of India expressed his thanks for the paper prepared by the Office. He noted the recommendations of the Youth Employment Network High-Level Panel as summarized in paragraph 9. Highlighting the YEN’s achievements to date, he indicated his delegation’s appreciation for the leading role the ILO had taken. He outlined the youth employment situation in his country and pointed out that there was a need to expand employment opportunities for women. In order to meet the unemployment challenge, the Government had taken several steps, including constituting two committees to examine employment generation and to suggest strategies and programmes for the creation of 10 million jobs per year over a period of ten years. He agreed that there was a clear need for more emphasis on skills training, in tune with the demands of the labour market, in order to generate decent work, and for special programmes for those living below the poverty line.

127. The representative of the Government of South Africa, quoting former President Nelson Mandela’s State of the Nation Address (Cape Town, 24 May 1994), underlined his country’s resolve to view young people as an asset for socio-economic development. A youth commission had been set up in the President’s Office in order to provide a voice at the highest level of government. He indicated that a high-level body such as this could usefully be set up in other countries. The work of the YEN should be integrated into the Global Employment Agenda. With regard to the budgetary question, he suggested tapping into resources within the regions, while maintaining the focus of these activities under the overall umbrella of the YEN. He requested that it be placed on record that the ILO should assist its constituents in their efforts to promote youth employment.
128. The representative of the Government of Japan welcomed the ILO’s efforts to tackle the issue of youth employment and expressed the hope that the YEN would have a positive impact on improving the employment situation of young people. In his country, the high rate of youth unemployment was a major problem. He supported the positions of the representative of the Government of the United States and of the Worker Vice-Chairperson, underlining that the Global Employment Agenda should be given high priority and that the issue of youth employment should be integrated into the Agenda. He added that employability must be tackled, together with stimulating entrepreneurship.

129. Stressing the importance of the problem of youth employment, the representative of the Government of Italy encouraged the Office to support governments in elaborating national action plans on this issue and to undertake a worldwide analysis and evaluation of progress made. His delegation also encouraged the Organization to improve coordination mechanisms in order to increase the effectiveness of its activities in this field.

130. The representative of the Government of Cameroon thanked the Office for the paper. She indicated that it was not possible to speak of employment in the context of the Global Employment Agenda without incorporating issues of youth employment, which were of major concern to the majority of developing countries and notably to African countries. The Committee should send a clear signal to the Programme, Financial and Administrative Committee for substantial funding to be made available in order to ensure that the recommendations made in paragraph 19(b) could be carried out.

131. The representative of the Government of Belgium underlined the importance of the subject with respect to issues of demography, human capital and long-term unemployment. He indicated his Government’s support for the United Nations resolution on promoting youth employment, adding that, subject to allocation of resources, paragraph 19 seemed to be realistic as drafted. In his view, the issues of youth unemployment should be evaluated in the context of the Global Employment Agenda. The recent aggressive youth employment policies in Belgium were bearing fruit, thanks to constructive social dialogue. Belgium’s policies were in line with the European Employment Strategy, the main principles of which were similar to those identified in paragraph 9. An evaluation of national policies showed clearly that the difficulty resided not in the principles themselves, but rather in their implementation. The mainstreaming of youth employment was of great importance. Questions of gender imbalance should be carefully examined, since misconceived vocational guidance for women led to wastage of human resources. The question of formal qualifications, when compared with the skills actually required by employers, often constituted a problem, and the input of employers would be useful in resolving this impasse. He congratulated the Office on its paper and suggested that a further paper be prepared, describing activities undertaken, identifying the problems and difficulties most frequently encountered, and taking into consideration the context of youth employment in the informal economy.

132. The representative of the Government of the United States remarked that there was no fixed budget for youth employment activities, simply various “pies” of resources to which the Office could have recourse. He was of the opinion that the Global Employment Agenda should be used to set priorities and provide guidance as to how these “pies” of resources could best be allocated, to ensure that activities be carried out in a sequential manner. He added that the ideas were good but that there were constraints as to how much the Office could undertake.

133. The Employer Vice-Chairperson noted that several speakers had suggested the integration of the YEN into the Global Employment Agenda. He pointed out that the YEN, as an initiative carried out under the auspices of the United Nations and involving the World Bank and the ILO could not be integrated into the Global Employment Agenda. The ILO’s
youth employment activities proper were quite different. It was appropriate that the latter be integrated into the Global Employment Agenda.

134. The representative of the Government of Nigeria expressed her appreciation for the detailed information contained in the paper, particularly in paragraphs 11 and 12. She mentioned that all the social partners should be involved in the important issue of youth employment, adding that the magnitude of youth unemployment was alarming and posed a threat to communities. For this reason her Government highly appreciated the co-sponsoring by 106 United Nations member States of the General Assembly’s resolution on promoting youth employment, as described in paragraph 13. The strategic implications of the resolution should be of primary importance to the social partners and to the Office. The latter should view in particular paragraph 15 as a challenge to enhancing its programme on youth employment. She stated the Nigerian delegation’s support for the Africa group’s proposal that follow-up action by the ILO on the outcomes of the Johannesburg Summit be considered by the ESP Committee in its November 2003 session. Thanking the Office for its support to developing countries, she indicated her country’s need for cooperation and assistance with the various programmes on youth employment on which the Nigerian Government had embarked.

135. The Chairperson sought clarification from the Office on two issues that had been raised. First, there was the question of the availability of resources for such an important programme. The second issue, mentioned by the Employers, was how the ILO’s youth employment programme could be integrated into the framework of the Global Employment Agenda.

136. A representative of the Director-General, Mr. Hultin (Executive Director, Employment Sector), confirmed that the YEN was a United Nations initiative, the secretariat of which had been established in the ILO. Since the ILO had been asked to take a lead role for the network and itself had a substantial contribution to make, there were indeed linkages with the Global Employment Agenda. As to funding, he confirmed that there were no specific resources for this purpose and that the Office had to respond to the growing number of requests for assistance according to its possibilities. He indicated that, as mentioned by the Worker Vice-Chairperson and representatives of a number of Governments, the question of combining resources, by integrating the ILO’s youth employment activities proper into the Global Employment Agenda, would achieve some economies of scale. Since the timing of the 2005 World Employment Report coincided with the time at which the YEN was to provide to the United Nations a global analysis and evaluation on progress made, here again there would be efficiency and streamlining in the use of resources. Opportunities for cross-sectoral synergies would be sought, which could lead to input and activities of other sectors. As the representative of the Government of South Africa had mentioned, the Office was in a zero-growth situation; however, owing to decentralization more funding was available at the regional level, some of which could be used for youth employment issues. He expressed his gratitude to the Government of Sweden for its initial funding and mentioned that the mobilization of extra-budgetary resources was being pursued with other potential donors. He welcomed the Committee’s support for resource mobilization efforts, in order to meet the huge increase in demand for assistance in the field of youth employment.

137. In summarizing the discussion, the Chairperson asked the secretariat specifically to take note of the resolution concerning youth employment, sponsored by the IOE, which had been adopted at the 86th Session (1998) of the International Labour Conference, and of programmes for promoting youth employment launched by employers’ and workers’ organizations. He took note of the Office’s commitment to seek to ensure funding for work in this area, including from regional allocations and extra-budgetary resources as well as
through efficiency improvements in order to ensure that the programmes could be implemented.

138. The representative of the Government of the United States emphasized that this Committee did not have the mandate to take decisions that had budgetary implications.

139. The Chairperson noted that the intention was to seek the Office’s assurance that efforts would be made to ensure the implementation of these important activities. On the second issue, the Office had now clarified that it was its own youth employment work that would be integrated into the Global Employment Agenda.

140. The Committee on Employment and Social Policy recommends that the Governing Body:

(a) take note of the United Nations General Assembly resolution on promoting youth employment (A/RES/57/165);

(b) request the Office to assist and support, upon request, the efforts of governments in the elaboration of national reviews and action plans on youth employment, and to undertake, by May 2005, a global analysis and evaluation of progress made in this regard;

(c) request the Office to report to it periodically on progress made by the Youth Employment Network in the implementation of the United Nations resolution on promoting youth employment.

VI. First ILO gender audit
(Sixth item on the agenda)

141. A representative of the Director-General (Ms. Zhang, Director, Bureau for Gender Equality) introduced the Office paper.6 She described the mandate for biennial gender audits on ILO programmes, with reporting of results to the Governing Body, as mandated in the ILO Action Plan on Gender Equality and Gender Mainstreaming. The main objectives of the audit were to promote organizational learning, establish a baseline on gender mainstreaming in the ILO, and identify good practices and areas to improve. The methodology of the process – especially its participatory and self-assessment approach – meant that some 450 persons were involved across eight regional offices and seven programmes at headquarters. In addition, over 30 male and female audit facilitators had been trained, and some 700 ILO documents had been analysed. Findings of the audit included the boost to promoting gender equality at the ILO by commitment of high-level management and strategic results-based budgeting, as well as the increasing number of good practices and products identified. However, there was still confusion about basic gender concepts. There was a continued need for capacity building and tools development. Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, as well as accountability in gender mainstreaming, were inadequate. Recommendations of the ILO gender audit 2001-02: Final report included the need to identify priority issues related to gender in the four strategic areas in the regional and national contexts, regularly publish sex-disaggregated data to inform policy and programme design, strengthen monitoring and accountability mechanisms, and focus on outreach with constituents and inter-sectoral activities

6 GB.286/ESP/6.