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SPEECH BY VICE-PRESIDENT H. VREDELING TO THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANISATION - GENEVE, 15 June 1978.

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Mr. Chairman,

This year we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the cooperation between the International Labour Organisation and the European Communities. This cooperation has been very fruitful in the past and I am convinced the future of it looks good. Certainly, I realise our organisations have their difficulties, but we should bear in mind international cooperation is and has always been difficult. We have to fight for it. If we give in, we put the future of the world at stake. The world is becoming smaller and smaller and the problems countries are confronted with are - more and more- internationalised.

It is a long time ago peace and security, and trade were the only matters dealt with in an international framework. Nowadays I can hardly think of a matter which has not an international dimension and need a solution on an international level. Not in the least social problems.

Too often we have to be satisfied with small steps, compromises; but even sad compromises are better than nothing. We all in person have to make sacrifices to succeed. All of us. And we should be grateful to people like Albert Thomas, who contributed so much to the work of the I.L.O. in the past.

Today in difficult circumstances Mr. Blanchard is continuing his work in an admirable way. I want to pay tribute to him as well.

I am glad Mr. Blanchard and I were able to reaffirm the necessity and importance of our cooperation by way of an exchange of letters. Moreover, we agreed to concentrate our efforts on a couple of subjects for reasons of efficiency and effectiveness. In particular I want to mention the cooperation for the preparation of the Third European Regional Conference of the I.L.O. in 1979, which has on its agenda : Youth and Employment and the Safety and Security on the workplace. On both subjects the Community is developing its policy; I hope the Council of Ministers will adopt the Commission's proposals in those fields by the end of this month. In relation with the AMOCO-Cadiz accident the Commission proposed to the Council of Ministers that Member States should ratify Convention No. 147 of the I.L.O. concerning minimum norms on marchand vessels in a harmonised way. The effectiveness of your Convention will be greatly enhanced.

Another subject of joint interest is that of the industrial relations and the participation of workers. For the protection of workers the Commission considers to propose to the Council of Ministers of the European Communities the adoption of a directive on the consultation and information of workers in transnational companies. The knowledge of the I.L.O. in this field will certainly be used in the preparation of the proposal for a directive, which as you may know, is a binding instrument within the Community framework.

In the field of social security our long standing cooperation could be geared to the development of a health card. I want this idea to be developed so that it could lead to a greater freedom of the people to move across their frontiers,

The social objectives of our organisations are very similar. No automatism guarantees the realisation of our objectives : economic expansion, the fight against unemployment, and social justice.

We have to put this in its international context. The unacceptable high rates of unemployment - we have nowadays - form an international plague, for which international solutions should be found. In this context I want to make it cristal clear : protectionism is not a solution. The European Community is strongly committed to the maintenance and extension of the World's open trading system. We recognize that it has been the basis of our post-war prosperity, and it will be the basis of future growth and prosperity for us all. The Community accepts the inevitable shift of some industries to countries in development. This implies a change in trading patterns : exports of capital goods and know-how from the Community and imports of finished goods.

In order to develop a policy of adjustment the Community is forced to develop its growth possibilities in a selective way. The European Council will discuss the growth sectors and with the social partners we are discussing the significance of the tertiary sector for the employment.

Adjustment, inevitable as it may be, takes time and causes social difficulties. Our actions should ensure that the run down of the steel, shipbuilding, textiles and shoe industries is done in a way which permits social adjustment and retraining.

Since unemployment is high and persistent in the European Community, the sharing of work over more people, who want to work, is in study within Community as an interim-measure to a more satisfactory employment-situation.

All these problems, which need close consultation between social partners and governments, shall be dealt with on the Tripartite Conference, which will take place the end of the year.

As I said adjustment is socially very often a painful operation. This could hamper the development of our relations with other countries. For reasons of social justice one should avoid to give aid or preferential treatment to countries which donot respect certain fundamental international norms concerning working conditions. It is necessary that an understanding on those fair labour standards should be reached on an international level. The scheme should favor social development in the countries concerned and equality between them with respect to access to our Market. I have to stress the scheme doesnot cover the access itself, but only relates to the granting of preferential treatment and aid.

The Commission taking also into account the existing conventions of the I.L.O., will very soon present a communication on Fair Labour Standards to the Council of Ministers, in order that this matter could, in due time, also be treated in the negotiations for a new LOME-Convention. I am certain we will get the necessary support from the social partners.

Moreover the Commission is of the opinion that aid to investors in countries in development should be conditioned. The companies enjoying aid, should perform according to norms of good behaviour. This also is a matter familiar to the I.L.O., which could, amongst others, be worked out in the LOME-Convention. I hope a fruitful cooperation between our organisations in those vital problems will lead to a success.

### Conclusion

The Commission has never doubted the principles which lead to the creation of the I.L.O. The I.L.O. and its tripartite structure, inspired us in our thinking, as I showed you. I am certain the contribution of the European Communities to your work, could be more successful when the European Communities would act, even more than it does at the moment, as an entity.

In a relative short period I covered a lot of subjects. I think this is due to my feeling we should push hard when progress is slow. In all fairness I must admit however, the step we did this year was a solid one.