

Vatican official says labor, trade practices should protect worker

GENEVA (CNS) — Labor, trade and investment policies and practices should value and protect the worker, a Vatican official told delegates at an international labor conference.

Global labor standards that widen worker protections “should not be considered a burden on trade agreements but rather a concrete support for human rights of workers and a condition for more equitable competition on the global level,” said Archbishop Silvano Tomasi, Vatican representative to U.N. agencies in Geneva.

The archbishop spoke June 13 during an annual labor conference sponsored by the U.N.’s International Labor Organization, meeting May 30-June 15 in Geneva.

In 2006, some 195 million adults were unable to find work and 1.4 billion people were working jobs “that did not pay enough to lift them above the \$2 a day poverty line,” the archbishop said.

“Much of the restlessness and many of the conflicts that torment our society are rooted in the lack of jobs, in employment which lacks decent work conditions or living wages, and unjust economic relations,” he told the delegates.

The situation must be corrected by fighting discrimination and boosting social protections, he said, adding that the creation of new jobs is urgently needed “as the first means to prevent discrimination and poverty.”

He said work, business, “financial investments, trade and production should be rooted in a creative, cooperative and rule-based effort at the service” of people.

A worker’s personal talents should also be “invested for the common good,” he added.

Among the workers he said “deserve special attention in the new market” were women not receiving equal pay for equal work “and in need of fairness in career

advancement; people with disabilities;" migrants; people living with HIV/AIDS; and working parents trying to juggle their responsibilities to their employers and families.