Question 1: Why is there a decline in the union memberships of young workers?

Mr Peak explained that some of the challenges for organizing young workers resulted from changes in the economy, for instance, it was more difficult to organize in sectors which have not traditionally been organized (e.g., services sector). In addition, the increasing labour market mobility created challenges to traditional forms of organizing. Mr Cognac said that young workers often had less access to rights and needed a better understanding about their rights at work and the role that unions played in ensuring these rights. He also mentioned the challenge faced by unions to organize in times of industrial and technological change. Ms Nathan stressed the particular difficulties faced by unions in developing countries, such as large informal sectors, low rates of full-time employment and high labour market mobility. She added that young workers did not know about their rights and needed the trade unions more than ever. However, Ms Nathan explained that we needed to look at the environment in which unions operated as the legal situation was not always conducive and workers could be sacked the moment they joined a union. Therefore it was absolutely critical for governments to ratify the ILO Core Conventions 87 and 98 which give workers the rights to the freedom of association and collective bargaining, respectively. Further, Ms Nathan stressed that there was a very low ratification level of these conventions in Asia-Pacific and that without ratifying these conventions organizing workers in Asia’s large informal sector would be very difficult and sometimes illegal. In addition, the changing nature of employment relationships, such as, sub-contracting and ‘disguised employment’ practices kept workers from joining unions.
**Question 2: How can we create awareness among young people about their labour rights and the role of unions?**

Mr Cognac said that it was part of the ILO’s mandate to create awareness through trainings and workshops which exposed young people to the rights at work. He added that the ILO in Indonesia had prepared a manual “Youth Rights at Work” which was now being translated into other languages. He added that we must also include youth in the policy discussion as was done, for example, at the 101st ILC and that hearing youth voices through their involvement in trade unions was an essential part of this process. Mr Peak mentioned that it was important to campaign on issues that were relevant to young workers and speak the language of young people. He added that unions must take into account the changing work environment and respond to the needs directly. Mr Peak mentioned that 65 per cent of the members in his own organization were under the age of 26. One his organization’s successful strategy for organizing young people was a free service hotline for young workers which they could call and receive free information and counseling and which made them aware of the role and functioning of trade unions.

**Question 3: Are young people being discriminated against in the labour market?**

Mr Cognac said that there were incidences in which young people were being discriminated against in the labour market. For instance, sometimes young people were paid less for performing the same work as their older counterparts. He explained further that this was often the issue with internships and apprenticeships. He stressed that while it was important to expose young people to the world of work at an early age, this must not compromise the rights of young workers. Ms Peak strongly agreed and said that Australia’s youth wage was an example of discrimination against young workers. Ms Nathan emphasized that labour laws covered all workers, irrespectively of age and employment relationship. Unions needed to raise awareness that there was no separate law for young workers.

**Question 4: What can be done to address the youth jobs crisis from a union perspective?**

Ms Nathan said that the trade unions very much agreed with public works programmes to create work for young people. She emphasized, however, that the work created through those labour-intensive projects must fall under the decent work agenda. She also added the critical role of social dialogue in this process as sustainable solutions could only be found together. Mr Cognac agreed and said that we must look beyond the numbers and figures of jobs created through public works and youth entrepreneurship and must focus on the creation of decent work. Mr Cognac concluded by saying that “The idea of having a job was better than no job is an idea of the past”