Welcome note from Janice Bellace  
President of ILERA 2009 - 2012  

Dear Congress Participants,

It is an honor to welcome you to the 16th World Congress of ILERA in Philadelphia in 2012. The only previous World Congress held in the United States was in 1995 when Professor Thomas Kochan was President of this association (then called IIRA). Since that time, the world has changed greatly. The WTO started operations that same year, and since then, the extent of globalization has increased dramatically, such that it is not an exaggeration to use the term “globalized economy.” Today working persons worldwide confront the realities of a globalized economy, and since the Global Financial Crisis of 2009 this has become apparent to all.

In 1995, the world congress was held in Washington, D.C. This year, we will hold it in Philadelphia, the birthplace of the United States, where the Declaration of Independence (in 1776) and the Constitution of the United States (in 1787) were drafted and debated. It is a fitting place to consider governance – the theme of this year’s world congress.

Since our last world congress in Sydney in 2009, our association has changed its name: from the International Industrial Relations Association (IIRA) to the International Labour and Employment Relations Association (ILERA). The name change is meant to highlight the broad scope of our membership’s interests, and to acknowledge that in some countries, the term “industrial relations” has taken on a narrow meaning. ILERA still embraces the study of industrial relations, but we do wish to emphasize that we are interested in all aspects of work, labour, and the employment relationship. In configuring the five thematic tracks for this world congress, the congress Academic Director, Professor Anil Verma sought to highlight this breadth.

Since the impressive world congress in Sydney in 2009, led by Professor Russell Lansbury, there have been ILERA regional congresses around the world. In June 2010, we were in Copenhagen, Denmark for the European congress, where we focused on issues relating to labor markets in advanced market economies. In September 2010, the young Indonesian association organized an Asian congress in Bali, where we considered the issues facing developing economies. In January 2011, the African regional congress took place in Lagos, Nigeria, and the issue of the informal economy was prominent. In August 2011, the congress of the Americas was held in Sao Paulo, Brazil, a BRIC country, and thus a natural location for a discussion of government policies and how these can impact growth and an improvement in living and working standards.

It has been my privilege to participate in these regional congresses, and I have benefitted greatly from the research papers presented and the rich discussions at these regional congresses. I am very proud of our association, because the members of ILERA contribute to advances in the theory and in the practice of labour and employment relations, which in turn leads to improvement in the lives of working persons and their families.

Since the association’s founding, we have had a close working relationship with the International Labour Organization in Geneva. Although the concept of globalisation may be
over-used, it nevertheless remains evident that most countries in the world face similar pressures arising from the internationalisation of production and services. This Congress will explore how both developed and developing economies are dealing with new challenges arising from the impact of globalisation on the nature of work, organisations and institutions. In particular, new forms of voice and representation for workers will be examined as well as how families and communities are dealing with change.

During the four days of the Congress, you will have ample opportunity to renew acquaintances and meet new colleagues. I hope this Congress will not only be an enjoyable experience but also stimulate your thinking about important issues related to the world of work, organisations and employment. And I do hope you will take some time to walk the small streets of Philadelphia and see some of the historic sites, and come to understand why the inscription on the Liberty Bell says “Proclaim Liberty throughout the Land.”

Yours sincerely,

Janice Bellace
President, ILERA