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In reply please quote:  
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**To all affiliated organisations**

*For information:*

**To all General Council Members**

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6 July 2007

**96th Session International Labour Conference and  
299th Session of the ILO Governing Body  
(Geneva, June 2007)**

Dear Friends,

This circular summarises the main decisions taken by the ILO Labour Conference and subsequent Governing Body, which met in Geneva on June 2007.

**Please take note of the following future dates!**

**1-15 November 2007, Geneva, 300th session Governing Body**

**6-20 March 2007, Geneva, 301st Session Governing Body**

**28 May-13 June, Geneva, 97th Session International Labour Conference**

The Conference was presided by Mr. Sulka (Deputy Minister of Labour of Albania) and Conference vice-presidents were Amb. Rocha Paranhos (Brazil), M. Barde (Employers) and Marc Blondel for us.

This session took place against the backdrop of the UN reform, which was echoed in several Committees, in particular in the discussion on the Programme and Budget (use of resources and reshaping of the field structure) and in the Strengthening of the ILO Committee. The Workers' Group discussed at length both the need to maintain the ILO and its tripartite structure firmly anchored among the UN leading agencies (welcoming for example the ILO-UNDP partnership initiative) and the need for unions to start an active engagement at country level (including involvement in decision making for the Decent Work Country Programmes).

The Conference was also conducted under new arrangements: the plenary session took place in the third week instead of the second. Workers felt that this was a judicious choice, since it gave people the possibility to properly follow the 2-week Committee work session. Too many keynote speakers were selected and the interactive sessions could be improved, but in general the scheme seems a good one and should be maintained.

### **Committee on Application of Standards**

The Committee examined 25 individual cases and held a special sitting on Burma. A serious impasse came unfortunately at the beginning of the Committee's work, with the refusal of the Employers to include Colombia in the list of cases. Workers had to make the difficult choice of saving the work of the Committee and adopting a negotiated list, but certainly it will be important to rediscuss thoroughly the issue with the employers prior to future sittings. The Group was anyway able to negotiate a text on Colombia which requested a High Level Mission to the country (which should take place at the end of August) in order to assess the strengthening of ILO action. Belarus was also in the list and the Committee adopted a special paragraph concerning the situation in the country, which will be reviewed by the November Governing Body. The Zimbabwe government refused to show up for the discussion of its case, citing "colonialist attitudes": it also got a special paragraph for the grave violations of trade union rights. We need to be vigilant towards both governments and employers' attitudes that could lead to a weakening of the supervisory system, which is – as always – the necessary complement to a functioning standard setting system (which together make a strong ILO).

### **Committee on Strengthening the ILO's Capacity**

The Committee did good work and we are satisfied with the conclusions of the General Discussion, which offered concrete ideas for strengthening working methods for both the ILO and the constituents, following the 2004 conclusions of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization. The Workers' Group had already publicly stated our commitment to the adoption next year of an "authoritative instrument" (in the form of a Standard or a Declaration) on Decent Work, with a follow up mechanism: while the final decision about the Conference's agenda will be made in November, we are fairly confident that the consensus will support the inclusion in the discussion of a draft Declaration on Decent Work, which could be potentially extremely beneficial, including in the context of the UN Reform. Several interim informal consultations, shaped on the experience of the '98 Declaration, are foreseen in order to smoothe a path towards the possible adoption of the instrument, which is certainly a complex exercise and requires multiple analysis. Other interesting ideas pertaining to the operational renewal of the Conference and the Governing Body were also discussed at length: from cyclical reviews of the DW components, to a more integrated approach to the strategic objectives (including in design, implementation and monitoring of Decent work Country Programmes), and from peer reviews in the Governing Body to better knowledge and data gathering and processing and greater coherence in the UN and multilateral system.

### **Committee on Sustainable Enterprises**

The general discussion on sustainable enterprises produced a tripartite consensus on the need for enterprises to adhere to the economic, social and environmental pillars of sustainable development. The conclusions acknowledge the need for a legislative and regulatory environment to guide enterprises towards socially and environmentally responsible activities. The Workers' Group welcomed the fact that international labour standards, the need to put employment at the centre of macroeconomic policies, labour legislation, social security, social dialogue and collective bargaining were recognized as key elements for the promotion of sustainable enterprises. Of equal importance is that in the future, ILO work on sustainable enterprises will be enshrined in the decent work agenda.

### **Convention and Recommendation on work in the Fisheries sector**

The instruments (which failed to be adopted two years ago by one vote) finally got almost unanimous support (only two employers voted against and few governments abstained). The new standards address specifically improved OSH and medical care, rest, protection of work agreements and social security. Since the Convention will come into force when ratified by at least 10 (including 8 coastal) States, it is important that a proactive stand is taken by both the Office and the constituents.

### **Programme and Budget**

The Conference adopted a P&B for 2008-09 of US \$ 641.7 million. The budget level was at zero nominal growth, but even this was considered too much by some of the major contributors (governments against: Australia, Canada, USA, Israel, UK; governments abstained: Mexico and Switzerland).

### **Credentials Committee**

The Committee examined many cases of non compliance with ILO rules. The ITUC challenged several nominations and in particular it should be noted that the Workers' Group decided to formally expel the Burma worker (in reality a "supervisor" nominated by the government) from its meetings. The Committee emphasised the low representation of women delegates and technical advisors: unfortunately our Group had again the worst record among the tripartite constituents on gender balance. I will, therefore, send a formal note to unions in those countries which did not strive to include enough women in their delegations in order to address this intolerable situation.

The Conference also saw the discussion of the Global Report on Discrimination as well as the award of the first Decent Work Prize, assigned to both Nelson Mandela (who sent a wonderful video message, now available on the ILO website) and Prof. Mesa Lago for his research on social security.

### **Governing Body**

The Conference was as usual followed by the brief session of the Governing Body, which elected the Ambassador from Sri Lanka as the new GB Chair for the upcoming year, while Leroy and Funes were re-elected as Chairs of the Worker and Employer Groups.

The meeting was taken up mostly by the discussion of the CFA, which at its May sitting examined 30 cases. The Committee formally drew the special attention of the GB to the extreme seriousness and urgency of the cases of Cambodia, Colombia (2489) and the Philippines. Important recommendations were also discussed about Korea, Iran and the Jersey Islands, UK.

Yours sincerely,

General Secretary