

EC funded ILO Technical Cooperation Project:
 “Strengthening Social Dialogue in the Process of Structural Adjustment and
 Private Sector Participation in Ports in Bulgaria, Croatia and Romania”

National Tripartite Workshop in Croatia

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| <p>Opening ceremony Monday, 29 June 2009 Port of Rijeka, Riva 1, Rijeka THE WHITE SALON</p> |
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Address by George Dragnich, Executive Director,
 Social Dialogue, ILO

- Honorable Mr. Leo Begović, State Secretary of the Ministry of Economy, Labor and Entrepreneurship.
- Honorable Captain Mario Babić, Assistant Minister of the Ministry of Sea, Transport and Infrastructure
- Mr. Vitomir Begović, Head of the Office for Social Partnership in Croatia, and
- Mr. Denis Vukorepa, President of the Board of the Port of Rijeka.
- Fellow participants, guests, friends,

I am delighted be in Croatia and especially here at the port of Rijeka. It is an honor for me and the International Labour Organization to help open this vital workshop.

At the ILO in Geneva, I am responsible for one of its four so-called “pillars” -- Social Dialogue, the broad theme and purpose of our endeavors this week. Under the ILO’s unique tripartite structure that includes joint participation by governments, trade unions, and employers, my team encourages all three to work together in partnership to address socio-economic issues of common concern.

My division has several components, including labour law, administration and inspection, industrial relations, separate bureaus for Workers and Employers programs, and – for the purpose of this event -- sectoral activities. This latter

department includes industry-specific programs, among them ports and shipping. In fact, you know far better than I that a seaport is a complex technical, social, and economic system that draws on every aspect of Social Dialogue and its inter-related fields to function smoothly and effectively.

But let me take a minute to address the current economic crisis that no one foresaw when we began planning this event. Last Friday, I represented the ILO in Rome at the G8 Social Partners Meeting with Prime Minister Berlusconi. Employer and trade union representatives alike urged the coming G8 Summit to address the jobs crisis from the perspective of the enterprises and workers who have been so hard hit by the global economic downturn.

Two weeks ago, at the ILO's annual conference, governments, workers, and employers, jointly adopted a Global Jobs Pact following a three-day Jobs Summit that included more than 10 Heads of State and Government, numerous Ministers of Labour, and workers' and employers' representatives. In fact, the ILO Global Jobs Pact is the first truly coordinated, global response to the global economic crisis – 183 member states and their Social Partners acting together to help shape national and international policies aimed at stimulating economic recovery, generating jobs and providing protection to working people and their families everywhere.

The Global Jobs Pact is a common-sense accord on common policy approaches. It calls on governments, and organizations representing workers and employers, to collectively tackle the global jobs crisis through policies consistent with the ILO's Decent Work Agenda. Following the adoption of the Jobs Pact on 19 June, ILO Director General Juan Somavia noted, and I quote,

“We need to give life to this commitment. We all have a collective responsibility to the future. Together we can make good on our common aspirations. We have a mandate to act now, and working together we will certainly succeed.” End quote.

In the context the worldwide economic and jobs crisis, the theme of this week's activity -- “social dialogue in ports” -- could not be more topical. Seaports have come to symbolize globalization, and it is no surprise that your sector should find itself bearing the brunt of the downturn in global trade and the maritime transport upon which it depends. In response, capacity building, promotion and strengthening of social dialogue in the port sector in Croatia -- the objective of this national tripartite workshop -- will contribute to joint efforts between the Government, trade unions, and employers to forge socially responsible solutions to current problems in the port

sector, and craft a sustainable path forward to greater competitiveness once world trade returns, as it eventually but surely will.

This five-day National Tripartite Workshop on social dialogue in ports is the main activity in Croatia of a European Commission and ILO Technical Cooperation Project, whose funding from the EC we gratefully acknowledge. It is being implemented by the Sectoral Activities Department of the ILO in partnership with the European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF) and the Federation of European Private Port Operators (FEPORT). Their enthusiastic support has been key to its formulation.

The activities of this project in Croatia are steered by a National Tripartite Project Steering Committee, which comprises two Government, two Employers' and two Workers' representatives. Its implementation has been both timely and successful. Undoubtedly, this solid performance is attributable to the fact that all project-related matters that have been brought before the committee have been addressed through constructive dialogue. The ILO trusts that this tripartite dialogue will continue beyond the framework and scope of this project.

The Republic of Croatia joined as a Member state the ILO on 6 August 1992. To date it has ratified 57 ILO Conventions, which include all eight Fundamental ILO Conventions that cover the four principles concerning fundamental rights at work. These are:

- **Freedom of association and effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining;**
- **The elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labor;**
- **The effective abolition of child labor; and**
- **The elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation**

The ILO was established in 1919 – ninety years ago this year – out of the ashes of the First World War. Since then, it has adopted 188 Conventions. I take this opportunity to encourage the Croatian government to consider ratifying more ILO Conventions, thereby further demonstrating its adherence to international labor standards and good governance.

More specifically, I would draw your attention to the **ILO Occupational Safety and Health Convention 152 of 1979 on dock work**. The practical application of this convention would undoubtedly reduce safety and health hazards, and consequently accident rates, in all port-related activities in Croatia -- thereby contributing to the

improvement of the working and living conditions of portworkers and the efficiency of port operations.

The ILO invites the Ministry of Economy, Labor and Entrepreneurship -- responsible for safety and health at all workplaces in Croatia -- and the Ministry of Sea, Transport and Infrastructure -- responsible for the port sector in Croatia -- to jointly examine the possibility that Croatia could ratify Convention 152 in the near future.

Before I conclude my remarks, I would like to especially thank the Port of Rijeka for the invaluable support that it has provided to this ILO project, which includes local transfers, the hosting of the workshop and of this ceremony at its premises and many other arrangements.

Finally, I wish to express the ILO's satisfaction for the professional collaboration that the Government of Croatia has provided in the design, preparation and implementation of this EC-funded ILO project. And I congratulate the Chairperson of the National Tripartite Project Steering Committee, Mrs. Nina Perko of the Ministry of Sea, Transport and Infrastructure, and also all of the members of this Committee for their excellent work.

This project should strengthen the capacity and institutions for social dialogue in Croatia's vital port sector. In turn, it should enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of port operations, while improving the working conditions of port workers. In so doing, it will enhance economic and social development in Croatia more generally.

I wish the workshop participants and facilitators a most enjoyable and successful week.

I will now to pass the floor to my colleague, Ms. Elizabeth Tinoco, Director of the Sectoral Activities Department, which is the ILO implementing unit for this EC-funded project.