

**International Labour Office**  
**Tripartite Meeting of Experts to Adopt Port State Control Guidelines for**  
**Implementation of the Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 (No. 188)**  
**(Geneva, 15 – 19 February 2010)**

**Opening remarks by**  
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Good morning. Welcome to the ILO and this Tripartite Meeting of Experts to Adopt Port State Control Guidelines for Implementation of the Work in Fishing Convention.

This Meeting is convened as part of the ILO's Sectoral Activities Programme, headed by my colleague, Elizabeth Tinoco. It seeks to improve the lives of men and women who work in specific sectors of the economy -- in this case, fishing.

Through "Social Dialogue" between governments, employers and workers, we seek to identify and reconcile legitimate but often divergent interests. Social Dialogue requires active listening, as well as speaking. Through open and frank discussion, coupled with mutual respect, we endeavour to craft pragmatic solutions to common problems and shared challenges. Social Dialogue is at the heart of ILO's work, and, in our view, is the best way to ensure meaningful progress towards achieving decent work within sustainable enterprises. Your meeting exemplifies the spirit of Social Dialogue.

The fishing sector brings to the world one of our most important sources of food. It is a challenging industry, and it is hard work.

As you know more than most, fishing is unique. Working at sea is not simply a job; it is a way of life. The marine environment can be unforgiving, as reflected in high rates of accidents and fatalities. Moreover, a fishing vessel is often not only a workplace but, for long periods of time, also a home. So conditions on board fishing vessels are particularly important.

Today, pundits speak of a globalized economy, but fishing has always been global. Centuries ago, your fishing forefathers were making incredibly long and dangerous voyages to faraway waters. And what of foreign crews? I am reminded that the great cod banks off Newfoundland were discovered in 1497 by an Italian sailing for English commercial interests – Giovanni Caboto, better known to history books as John Cabot.

Of course, in recent decades, fishing has become even *more* international. Vessels continue to spend long periods at sea, and many devote the majority of their time to distant waters, going in and out of foreign ports with greater frequency than their own.

As with other internationalized sectors, fishing calls for common and internationally agreed standards to govern the living and working conditions of its global workforce. Such standards help prevent labour conditions from becoming a negative competitive factor. In other words, they ensure that a fishing vessel owner who treats his or her crew well is not

penalized when competing against an owner who cuts costs by skimping on working and living conditions.

Several years ago, the ILO, fulfilling the classic role of an international, multilateral organization, took up the challenge of developing uniform working standards for fishing. In 2007, the annual International Labour Conference adopted the Work in Fishing Convention, No. 188. It was not easy to reach agreement on Convention 188, and accord only came about following intense Social Dialogue – not just at the Conference but also between its sessions.

At this juncture, I am delighted to report that Bosnia and Herzegovina has just become the first ILO Member State to ratify Convention 188. Congratulations to Bosnia and Herzegovina for its leadership.

The Conference, when adopting Convention 188, also recognized the importance of international cooperation in achieving its implementation. It adopted a Resolution on port State control. That Resolution, *inter alia*:

- noted that the uniform and harmonized implementation of port State responsibilities, in accordance with relevant provisions of the Convention, will contribute to its successful implementation; and, it
- considered that, given the global nature of the fishing industry, it is important for port State control officers to receive proper guidelines for the performance of their duties.

The Conference then invited the ILO's Governing Body (our executive board) to convene a tripartite meeting of experts. In doing so, it also requested that we seek the technical expertise of the IMO and FAO and other relevant international bodies.

The Governing Body accepted this challenge, and last year agreed to convene this meeting.

We were also fortunate that, with growing budgetary demands on the ILO, we were able to fund this meeting through the Norway-ILO Cooperation Agreement, a joint project on enhancing labour inspection worldwide. The ILO is most grateful to Norway for this generous and timely support.

Distinguished experts and observers, your task this week is clear. In five short days, we ask you to adopt port State control guidelines for the implementation of the Work in Fishing Convention.

The ILO, in keeping with the will of the Conference and Governing Body, has provided you with a report and draft set of guidelines that can serve as the basis for your work.

As experts, you will need to consider options provided by the ILO, and draft guidelines accordingly. This demands that you rather quickly determine which way forward respects the spirit and substance of Convention 188, while drawing on relevant port State control experience, and taking into account the special nature of the fishing sector.

This task is challenging, to be sure. But, the ILO is certain that you are up to it.

Our meeting will benefit from having as our Chairperson, Captain Nigel Campbell of South Africa. As has been already observed, he has extensive experience in the fishing industry, and in both flag and port State control. Notably, he successfully chaired the Committee on the Fishing Sector at the International Labour Conference in 2007.

We also will benefit from having quite a few experts and observers who participated in the development of the Work in Fishing Convention and Recommendation. These include representatives from governments, Employer and Worker organizations, intergovernmental bodies, and even a few non-governmental organizations. Several of you also participated in the development of the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, and its related port State control guidelines. We also have here today others whom we trust will bring a fresh approach and constructive perspective to our work.

All this experience will serve us well as long as we keep our eyes and minds on the objective of reaching consensus and adopting guidelines on port State control of Convention 188 by the end of this week. That is our “catch,” and only when it is safely on board will we be ready to set sail for home.

So, with these words of warm welcome and encouragement, and I am pleased to turn the proceedings back to Captain Campbell. Sir, you may take the helm.