



FIFTH ITEM ON THE AGENDA

**Review of the activities of the  
multidisciplinary teams in  
relation to standards**

***Contents***

	<i>Page</i>
I. Promotion of fundamental Conventions .....	1
II. Constitutional obligations .....	2
III. Social dialogue and labour legislation .....	2
IV. Activities with the social partners and other representatives of civil society.....	3



1. Since 1994, the Office has submitted to the second annual session of this Committee a document setting out the principal activities of the multidisciplinary teams (MDTs) in relation to standards. All the teams have contributed to this document. However, the document is not an exhaustive report on all the initiatives by teams working in the field and the International Labour Standards Department (NORMES) in Geneva to provide effective assistance to the ILO's constituents in the area of standard setting. The Office receives many requests, both at headquarters and in the field, through all channels of communication, for information on various aspects of the supervisory system and on standards in general.
2. The teams in Abidjan, Addis Ababa, Bangkok, Beirut, Dakar, Harare, Lima, Manila, Moscow, New Delhi, Port-of-Spain, San José, Santiago (Chile) and Yaoundé all have specialists on international labour standards, sometimes assisted by an associate expert. The Budapest and Cairo teams have no such provision, and any missions and assistance needed in the area of standards are organized by headquarters. All the standards specialists, together with the specialists on industrial relations and labour administration and a number of specialists on activities with workers' and employers' organizations, were invited to headquarters just before the 88th Session of the International Labour Conference (May-June 2000) in order to participate in meetings with various technical departments.

## I. Promotion of fundamental Conventions

3. The campaign to ratify the fundamental Conventions<sup>1</sup> is based largely on the promotional activities of the MDTs whose specialists participate actively in publicizing the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its Follow-up. The specialists also collaborate closely with their IPEC colleagues in the field to promote ratification and application of the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182). The San José team organized activities in each country in Central America and in Mexico with a view to promoting ratification of those two instruments. The Yaoundé team organized a subregional tripartite activity to raise awareness among our partners with regard to the problem of child labour and promote ratification of the two Conventions in countries which, in many cases, are emerging from conflict. In general, activities aimed at promoting the Declaration take place in parallel with initiatives to encourage implementation of the fundamental Conventions. For example, a subregional tripartite workshop on the Declaration was held in Dakar in October 1999 for the African countries that have ratified at least five of the fundamental Conventions. The Beirut team's specialist took part in the technical committee meeting of the Executive Bureau of the Council of Ministers of Labour and Social Affairs of Gulf Cooperation Council Member States in Bahrain in May 2000, with a view to promoting ratification of the fundamental Conventions and the Declaration.
4. Among other specific initiatives to promote fundamental Conventions and the Declaration, mention should be made of the tripartite awareness-raising workshops on the ratification and application of the fundamental Conventions which have taken place in Indonesia (some 68 such workshops during the period 1999-2000). The seminar participants included representatives of governments, workers' and employers' organizations, as well as

<sup>1</sup> See document GB.279/LILS/4.

representatives of the military, police and non-governmental organizations.<sup>2</sup> A tripartite delegation from Cambodia also took part in the seminars in Indonesia, in particular the seminar organized specifically for members of the armed forces. Activities to promote the Declaration and labour standards in general were carried out by all the teams for the benefit of the ILO's constituents and other interested social sectors, often at the highest level. For example, in April 2000 the Port-of-Spain team addressed the Caribbean Labour Ministers' Meeting to draw attention to the fundamental Conventions and the progress made with regard to ratifications in the Caribbean region.

## II. Constitutional obligations

5. The specialists provide appropriate individual assistance to each of the constituents to help them meet their constitutional obligations with regard to the submission to parliaments of instruments adopted by the International Labour Conference and the presentation of reports on ratified Conventions under articles 19 and 22 of the Constitution. For example, between March and April 2000, tripartite advisory services on standards were made available to constituents in Cameroon, Gabon, the Central African Republic and Senegal. At the request of the administrations concerned, specialist missions were conducted in a number of countries including Botswana, Cape Verde, El Salvador, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Namibia, Saint Lucia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Trinidad and Tobago, Yemen and Zambia, to provide assistance with reports and replies to questions formulated by the supervisory bodies. Assistance provided by specialists also enabled the Government of Papua New Guinea to meet its obligations with regard to submission, which unquestionably facilitated the ratification in June 2000 of six new Conventions, including four fundamental Conventions. Initiatives undertaken by the Dakar and Port-of-Spain teams facilitated the first ratifications by Gambia and Saint Kitts and Nevis.
6. Questions raised by the supervisory bodies were also given priority attention by the standards specialists. In its last report, the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations emphasized the crucial role of standards specialists and multidisciplinary teams in promoting and monitoring the most exhaustive possible application of all the international labour standards. That role was also highlighted during the discussion of the Committee on the Application of Standards during the May-June 2000 Session of the International Labour Conference.

## III. Social dialogue and labour legislation

7. The headquarters meetings between standards specialists and their counterparts in the areas of industrial relations and labour administration explored the practical synergies which might enhance the impact of the Office's activities to promote social dialogue. The demand among the social partners for technical advice and assistance on labour legislation continues to grow. The Budapest team's specialist on industrial relations and labour law conducted a number of missions to offer advice on current legislative reforms, in particular to members of Parliament in Ukraine and to constituents in Croatia, Estonia, Lithuania, Poland and Romania. The standards specialist of the Port-of-Spain team, with the help of the Government and Labour Law and Administration Department (GLLAD), assisted the

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<sup>2</sup> The ILO Djakarta Office and the Manila MDT in 1999 published a survey, available in English only, entitled *Demystifying the core Conventions of the ILO through social dialogue: The Indonesian experience*.

Government of Barbados in drafting legislation on employment, disputes settlement, safety and health at work and trade unions. A working group on labour law reform in Saint Lucia was also given assistance by the Office. A similar initiative was undertaken with the Botswana authorities to ensure that national law conforms to the fundamental Conventions. The Lima MDT, together with specialists from NORMES, worked actively with the social partners in Colombia to promote the adoption of new legislation on trade union rights, in accordance with the Conventions ratified in this area. The proposed new Labour Code, on which the GLLAD has provided comments, is currently being examined by the social partners in the Central African Republic. Measures to publicize the new fundamental labour law in Angola will be followed by a campaign to raise awareness of the fundamental standards. At the subregional level, the Yaoundé team is also assisting the secretariat of the Organization for the Harmonization of Business Law in Africa (OHADA) which, with the technical assistance of the GLLAD, is drafting a new harmonized labour code.

8. Revision of legislation on trade union rights and industrial relations in Indonesia continues, with the assistance of the Manila MDT, GLLAD and NORMES. In East Timor, the principal specialist for labour law and industrial relations has assisted the competent services of the United Nations and the constituents in drafting fundamental social legislation. With the participation of the standards specialist, a tripartite seminar was held in April 2000 to discuss proposed labour and industrial relations legislation and to establish a tripartite advisory group on social issues.
9. The regional project to promote social dialogue in French-speaking Africa (PRODIAF), which is financed by the Government of Belgium, is working in close collaboration with the multidisciplinary teams and in particular with specialists on employers' and workers' activities, standards and employment. In addition to activities at national level in more than 17 countries, PRODIAF, together with the Yaoundé team, in September 2000 organized a subregional tripartite workshop in Bangui for the constituents in the Central Africa Economic and Monetary Community (CAEMC). The purpose of this workshop was to raise awareness of the importance of tripartite consultations in decision-making within regional organizations. A similar initiative was carried out with the constituents of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA). As part of the programme on social dialogue in Portuguese-speaking countries (PRODIAL), a national tripartite meeting was organized in Cape Verde in August 2000; the participants undertook to carry out tripartite dialogue on a regular basis. PRODIAL will also contribute to a seminar organized by the Dakar team which is due to take place in Guinea-Bissau in November 2000 on the role of social dialogue in the reconstruction process, and will also hold a tripartite workshop in Sao Tome and Principe in October 2000.
10. The standards specialist in Santiago (Chile) produced a report on prospects for reforming the Council for Social Dialogue in Paraguay. The report has been submitted to the President of the Republic and his Cabinet. In Chile, the Santiago team participates as an observer in meetings of the Round Table for Social Dialogue.

#### **IV. Activities with the social partners and other representatives of civil society**

11. The standards specialists intensified their participation in activities for employers' and workers' organizations. This involved general presentations on standards or on particular aspects of the Conventions. For example, in November 1999, the standards specialist of the New Delhi MDT participated in a regional seminar on standards organized by the ICFTU in Kathmandu (Nepal) and in a workshop on standards for employers' organizations in Hyderabad (India). The Budapest team played an important part in facilitating the

establishment of the Tripartite Council on the ILO in Hungary. The specialist in Dakar chaired meetings on standards as part of a subregional workshop on child labour for employers' organizations. The standards specialist in Port-of-Spain organized national seminars for workers' organizations with a view to publicizing the contents of the fundamental Conventions and promoting their ratification and implementation in Jamaica, Guyana, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Suriname.

- 12.** New initiatives were undertaken to assist magistrates and labour law practitioners as well as parliamentarians. Seminars organized by the Lima team involved members of the judiciary of Ecuador and Venezuela; members of labour tribunals participated in a tripartite activity in San Bernardino (Paraguay). Members of labour tribunals participated in seminars organized by the San José team in Guatemala, the Dominican Republic and Mexico. Efforts to promote ratification of the fundamental Conventions gave rise to activities with parliamentarians in Namibia and Zimbabwe (and in collaboration with UNICEF, to promote ratification of Convention No. 182). The specialists of the San José team, in collaboration with representative organizations and local authorities, addressed the Mexican Senate to promote ratification of the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Convention, 1983 (No. 159). The Santiago team undertook two initiatives in Chile to publicize and promote the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169). That instrument was also the subject of a request by the Government of the Central African Republic concerning protection for the pygmy peoples. The specialist in Dakar organized a meeting with members of the Social Affairs Committee of the Sierra Leone Parliament to inform them of current standard-setting activities.
- 13.** As part of the subregional seminar organized by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the standards specialist of the Harare team introduced the ILO instruments concerning migrant workers and the fundamental standards.
- 14.** Gender equality issues were the central theme of a number of presentations by specialists and of activities organized by the teams, including those intended for the preparation of delegations which participated in the discussion on the new maternity protection instruments adopted by the International Labour Conference in June 2000. Mention should also be made of the various initiatives by standards specialists with regard to HIV/AIDS in the workplace. For example, the standards specialist of the Port-of-Spain MDT participated in various recent subregional meetings involving the ILO, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the World Bank to discuss HIV/AIDS-related issues. At a national tripartite workshop on standards which took place in Guinea, the Dakar specialist devoted one session to a presentation on the ILO's initiatives concerning HIV/AIDS in the workplace.

Geneva, 29 September 2000.