

**Convocation of the Preparatory Technical Maritime Conference
(13-24 September 2004)**

It is my pleasure to inform you that, in accordance with the decision taken by the Governing Body of the International Labour Office at its 283rd (March 2002) Session, the Preparatory Technical Maritime Conference will open on **Monday, 13 September 2004 at 10 a.m.** It will be held at the *Palais des Nations* and ILO headquarters, Geneva, and will end on **Friday, 24 September 2004.**

The mandate of this Preparatory Conference is to propose a text for a consolidated maritime labour Convention with a view to its adoption by the International Labour Conference at its 94th (Maritime) Session, scheduled for the second half of 2005. The basis of discussions of the Preparatory Conference will be a draft Convention recommended by the High-Level Tripartite Working Group on Maritime Labour Standards. This draft has been developed by the Office under the guidance provided to it in a series of meetings of the High-Level Tripartite Working Group¹ and of its Subgroup². It is an instrument designed to replace almost all the maritime labour Conventions that have been adopted since 1920. It will place great emphasis on compliance and enforcement measures in order to ensure equitable conditions for all countries and shipowners that are concerned with providing decent conditions of work for seafarers. It will also contain a simplified amendment procedure allowing the technical details of the Convention to be rapidly updated. As this is the first time such an instrument has been proposed, the draft will be accompanied by a Commentary explaining the background and providing clarifications regarding some of its provisions. --- A table of contents is already attached to this letter.

The Governing Body has arranged for flexible procedures to permit discussions by the Preparatory Conference focused on provisions which, to date, have not been the subject of consensus. The draft Convention is to be examined in three technical committees. Considerable flexibility has also been built into the present draft and Governments should come prepared to identify provisions that could nevertheless be an obstacle to the prompt ratification of the Convention, in endeavours to ensure that the text resulting from the discussions will be generally acceptable to Seafarers, Shipowners and Governments on a worldwide basis.

--- I enclose a *Guide to the Preparatory Technical Maritime Conference* which includes detailed information on the Conference programme together with other relevant items, including procedures. The draft Convention will be sent to you with the afore-mentioned Commentary at least two months before the session, to allow their distribution to delegates, including non-government delegates and technical advisers, in time to enable them to prepare themselves adequately for the work of the Conference. These texts will also be accessible on the ILO website, as is the *Guide*, at the following address:

<www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/relm/maritime/index.htm>

¹ Meetings of: 17-21 December 2001; 14-18 October 2002; 30 June – 4 July 2003 and 19-23 January 2004.

² Subgroup meetings of: 24-28 June 2002 and 3-7 February 2003.

Special attention is drawn to section 8 (Participation) of the *Conference Guide*, which deals with the composition of delegations; these should be fully tripartite, consisting of **one** Government delegate, **one** Shipowner delegate and **one** Seafarer delegate, together with such advisers as might be considered necessary. Every effort should also be made to achieve a gender balance.

I should be grateful if you would kindly ensure that the credentials of your country's tripartite delegation are deposited with the Office of the Legal Adviser of the ILO before the deadline of **Monday, 30 August 2004**. The form for credentials of delegations is attached. The *Guide*, in its section 8, gives detailed instructions on the deposit of credentials.

You are urged to take careful note of section 9 of the *Guide*, which concerns the health and safety of participants during the Conference.

The Official Relations Branch will provide any further information you may require concerning the Preparatory Technical Maritime Conference. The contact numbers for this Branch are given in Appendix I to the *Guide*.

Yours faithfully,

(signed)

Juan Somavia
Director-General