



ILO LIAISON OFFICE - BRUSSELS

Press Release

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SOUTH AFRICAN ELECTED NEW CHAIRMAN OF ILO GOVERNING BODY COMMITTEE ON FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION CITES CAMBODIA, DJIBOUTI, THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN, AND ZIMBABWE

GENEVA (ILO News) – The [Governing Body](#) of the International Labour Office (ILO) elected Mr. Membathisi Mphumzi Shepherd Mdladlana, Minister of Labour of the Republic of South Africa, as Chairman for its 2006-07 Session.

The 296th Session of the Governing Body also considered a range of other business, including a report of the ILO Committee on Freedom of Association.

Mr. Mdladlana replaces Carlos Tomada, who served as Governing Body Chairman during the 2005-06 Session. Mr. Mdladlana has held his current position as Minister of Labour since 1998.

In his first address to the Governing Body, Mr. Mdladlana referred to the ILO's decent work agenda as a global agenda. According to the Minister, "unemployment and poverty are the biggest threats to security and peace" in the world.

Sir Leroy Trotman, General Secretary, Barbados Workers' Union and spokesperson of the Workers' Group in the Governing Body, was re-elected Workers' Vice-chairperson. Daniel Funes de Rioja, President of the Social Policy Department of the Argentine Industrial Union and Chairman of the Employers' Group of the Organization of American States from 1995 to 1998, was re-elected as Employer Vice-chairperson.

The three will serve as Officers of the Governing Body during its 2006-07 Session. The Governing Body is the executive council of the ILO and meets three times annually in Geneva. It takes decisions on policy and establishes the program and budget of the 178 member States of the ILO.

Freedom of association

The Governing Body also approved the 342nd Report of the ILO Committee on Freedom of Association. At its June meeting, the Committee examined 31 cases. Altogether there are currently 102 cases before the Committee.

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The Committee drew special attention to the cases of Cambodia, Djibouti and Zimbabwe because of their serious and urgent nature.

In the case of **Cambodia**, the Committee reached interim conclusions for the second time concerning the murder of trade union leaders Chea Vichea, President of the Free Trade Union of the Workers of the Kingdom of Cambodia (FTUWKC) and Ros Sovannareth, a steering committee member of the FTUWKC, as well as serious allegations of continuing repression of trade unionists.

The Committee deplored the absence of reply from the Government to its previous recommendations and urged it to take measures in order to reopen the investigation into the murder of Chea Vichea and to institute immediately an independent judicial inquiry into the murder of Ros Sovannareth. Finally, the Committee firmly urged the Government to take measures to ensure that the trade union rights of workers in Cambodia are fully respected and that trade unionists are able to exercise their activities in a climate free of intimidation and risk to their personal security and their lives.

In the case of **Djibouti**, the Committee requested the Government to reply without delay to the serious allegations concerning government intervention in strike action, trade union elections, arrests and detention of trade union leaders and members, the barring from entry of an international trade union solidarity mission and the subsequent arrest and interrogation of an ILO official – the unique member of this mission who was allowed to enter the country.

The Committee also requested the Government to take measures concerning the reinstatement of trade union officials and workers dismissed following a strike and to launch an independent inquiry into allegations of harassment and unfair dismissal of trade union officials.

In the case of **Zimbabwe**, the Committee reached interim conclusions for the third time concerning serious allegations of attempted murders, assaults, intimidation, arbitrary arrests and detentions, as well as arbitrary dismissals and transfers committed against trade unionists and members of their families.

The Committee reiterated its deep concern with the extreme seriousness of the general trade union climate in Zimbabwe and requested the Government to accept a direct contacts mission.

The Committee also drew the attention of the Governing Body to the case of the **Islamic Republic of Iran**, where the Committee reached interim conclusions for the second time concerning allegations of arrest, detention and conviction of several trade union leaders and activists for their trade union activities and violent police repression of strikes, protests and a May Day rally in 2004.

While the Committee welcomed the latest information according to which four trade union officials had been acquitted of certain charges, it firmly urged the Government to drop all other

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charges. The Committee further urged the Government to institute an independent inquiry into allegations of interrogations, threats and harassment by the Intelligence Ministry against trade unionists and to keep it informed of the outcome.

On the issue of violent police repression of strikes, protests and a May Day rally, the Committee requested the Government to take measures to ensure that the competent authorities receive adequate instructions so as to eliminate the danger entailed by the use of excessive violence.

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