



## First sitting

Wednesday, 28 May 2008, 10.30 a.m.

*Presidents: Mr Jayatilleka, Chairperson of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office, and Mr Salamin*

### OPENING OF THE SESSION

Mr JAYATILLEKA (*Chairperson of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office*)

It is my privilege, ladies and gentlemen, as Chairperson of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office, to declare open this 97th Session of the International Labour Conference. I should also like to take the opportunity to wish all of you a warm welcome to Geneva.

### ELECTION OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE CONFERENCE

Mr JAYATILLEKA (*Chairperson of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office*)

Our first task is the election of the President of the Conference. I now call for nominations for the post. I give the floor to the representative of the Government of Argentina, Ms Rial.

*Original Spanish: Ms RIAL (Government, Argentina)*

It is an honour for me as a member of the Government group and of the Americas group to present the candidature of Mr Edwin Salamin, Minister of Labour and Social Development of Panama, attending the 97th Session of the International Labour Conference.

Mr Salamin is a lawyer by profession and has a solid legal background. He has had broad experience throughout his career, particularly in labour affairs. Since 2005 he has been Secretary-General and Vice-Minister for Labour in Panama, and in 2007 he was appointed Minister of Labour and Social Development.

I am confident that Mr Salamin has all the competence and skills needed to guide our work at this 97th Session of the International Labour Conference and will help us to achieve the goals we have set ourselves.

So it is an honour to put him forward as a candidate for President of the International Labour Conference.

*Original Spanish: Mr FUNES DE RIOJA (Employer Vice-Chairperson of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office)*

On behalf of the Employers' group, it is an honour and a privilege to support the candidacy, proposed by the Argentinean Government on behalf of the Americas group, of Minister Salamin of Panama for the presidency.

I have the honour of knowing him personally, and I have been able to assess his skills as a Minister and as an expert in labour affairs.

Mr TROTMAN (*Worker Vice-Chairperson of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office*)

We in the Workers' group have the distinct pleasure of having held one of our regional meetings of the International Trade Union Confederation in Panama just a couple of months ago. There we had a chance to see the labour movement at work and the social relationship and interaction with the employers and with the Government.

We are satisfied that in our region we can benefit from the significant energy which the social partnership in Panama is bringing to bear on the further development programme.

It is for that reason that we have great pleasure in giving our support to the nomination of the Minister of Labour of Panama as the President of the Conference.

Mr DONNER (*Government, Netherlands*)

I would like to state that the Government of the Netherlands supports the nomination of Panama. Thank you very much.

Mr JAYATILLEKA (*Chairperson of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office*)

The proposal made by Ms Rial on behalf of the Government group has been duly seconded. If there are no other proposals, I declare Mr Edwin Salamin, Minister of Labour and Social Development of the Republic of Panama, President of this 97th Session of the International Labour Conference. I offer him my warmest congratulations and invite him to come up to the podium to take the Chair.

*(Mr Salamin, Minister of Labour and Social Development of Panama, is elected President of the Conference and takes the President's Chair.)*

### PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

*Original Spanish: The PRESIDENT*

I should begin by thanking the Americas group, in particular the Argentine delegates, for supporting my nomination to the extraordinarily important post of President of this session of the International Labour Conference. I would also like to thank the Government Members of the European Union, through the representative of the Government of the Netherlands and the representatives of the Employers and the Workers, for having, in turn, supported

my candidacy. I would like to thank you all for appointing both myself and the Government of Panama to preside over this 97th Session of the International Labour Conference. I accept this important appointment on behalf of the Government, which is led by His Excellency Mr Martín Torrijos Espino. Our President lent his unfailing support to this candidacy, in order that Panama and the Americas as a whole be represented on what is a universal stage for worker-employer relations.

We also take up this role as a member of the Americas group. It is a shared responsibility and one we accept, firm in the belief that, together, we can achieve better conditions in terms of labour, health, education and social development.

I am certain that I can count on the support of all of you, Governments, Workers and Employers, representing, as you do, the social sector of labour in our society. I am sure that we will give due consideration to all the issues raised at this Conference, while working, in a spirit of good will, to achieve the objectives set out for this important international meeting.

This forum brings together the very highest authorities in labour, to discuss, analyse and resolve the most serious problems affecting working populations. We must address vital issues, such as the promotion of rural employment to reduce poverty, the increase of productivity, employment growth, economic and social development and, of course, the strengthening of the capabilities of the ILO's capacity.

The Government of Panama has adopted a political agenda which emphasizes social dialogue as a process of participation which involves all the social partners in order to achieve consensus and agreement. This process has proved indispensable in strengthening democracy and in the search for social peace in our country.

The Panamanian Government therefore considers that social dialogue is not just a method of dealing with sectoral problems and matters, which are certainly relevant, but that it is also a way of contributing to democratic governance, particularly at a time when we are moving forward with a series of changes. In this regard, Panama's new social dialogue agenda covers other subjects, such as labour market development, the eradication of child labour, gender equality, as well as integration into the workforce and increased opportunities for people with disabilities and young people (through youth employment projects). Vocational training and public employment services are also priorities for the Government, which aims to address productivity, competitiveness, investment and sustainable development.

We believe that it is of vital importance that "a new labour culture" be developed based on open and honest dialogue, particularly at a time when we are faced with the arduous task of widening the Panama Canal (a goal we hope to achieve within the boundaries of decent work). Our Government has stated that all bids for this major project must include an undertaking from the relevant companies to support and respect the principles of decent work. The aim of this clause is, in principle, to contribute effectively to the protection of the rights of the 7,000 or so workers who will be involved in this enterprise.

We are aware of the significant efforts being made by the ILO to achieve the objectives set in

terms of social development throughout the world. This work has given rise to a universal ILO agenda based on decent work. This is the best way towards strengthening social dialogue, not only as a means, but as an end in itself, and will allow us to maintain social stability. It also reflects the commitment we made to strengthen the legitimacy of the organizations of workers and employers.

One of the ILO's greatest achievements has been to maintain tripartism as a fair and efficient method of working, thus making this Organization a place where discussions are held on the basis of equality and fairness. Furthermore, I should like to add that there can be no tripartism without strong, legitimate organizations of employers with authority, without strong organizations of workers. There is no place in this process for governments, which suffer from weaknesses. Our governments must be based upon democratic governance. As a result, tripartism is more than worth its weight in gold.

We are certain, therefore, that, in important forums such as this one, we will have the opportunity to cooperate in the fight against the many scourges which afflict humanity, and which often prevent us from achieving the United Nations Millennium Development Goals.

Finally, let us seek to ensure that organizations, employers, workers and the ILO have not only a past but also a long future. Thank you all.

#### ELECTION OF THE VICE-PRESIDENTS OF THE CONFERENCE

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*Original Spanish:* The PRESIDENT

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The next point on the agenda is the election of the Vice-Presidents of the Conference, in accordance with article 25, paragraph 2, of the Standing Orders of the International Labour Conference. The Clerk of the Conference will now read out the nominations made by the groups.

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*Original Spanish:* The CLERK OF THE CONFERENCE

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The nominations to the posts of Vice-President of the Conference are as follows:

*Government group:* Mr Louh, Minister of Labour, Employment and Social Security (*Algeria*)

*Employers' group:* Mr Tabani (*Pakistan*)

*Workers' group:* Ms Diallo (*Guinea*)

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*Original Spanish:* The PRESIDENT

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We note that these three candidatures are of different nationalities as required by article 3, paragraph 1, of the Standing Orders. I see no objections. The Chair, therefore, deems that there is agreement within the Conference so that we confirm the candidature of these three Vice-Presidents for the 97th Session of the International Labour Conference.

May I take it that the proposals are adopted?

*(The proposals are adopted.)*

#### NOMINATION OF THE OFFICERS OF THE GROUPS

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*Original Spanish:* The PRESIDENT

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I now call on the Clerk of the Conference to read out the names of the persons who have been elected as Officers of the various groups.

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*Original Spanish:* The CLERK OF THE CONFERENCE

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The groups have chosen their Officers as follows:

*Government group:*

*Chairperson:*

Mr Palacios Arias (*Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela*)

*Employers' group:*

*Chairperson:*

Mr Funes de Rioja (*Argentina*)

*Vice-Chairpersons:*

Mr Suzuki (*Japan*)

Mr Makeka (*Lesotho*)

Mr Lima Godoy (*Brazil*)

Mr Potter (*United States*)

Mr Trogen (*Sweden*)

*Secretary:*

Mr Peñalosa (*International Organisation of Employers*)

*Workers' group:*

*Chairperson:*

Mr Trotman (*Barbados*)

*Vice-Chairpersons:*

Mr Ahmed (*Pakistan*)

Mr Zellhoefer (*United States*)

Ms Rantsolase (*South Africa*)

Ms Valkonen (*Finland*)

*Secretary:*

Ms Biondi (*International Trade Union Confederation*)

Apart from the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson, the officers of the Workers' group are as follows: Ms Diallo (*Guinea*), Mr Atwoli (*Kenya*), Mr Anderson Nevarez (*Mexico*), Ms Martinez (*Argentina*), Mr Gandour (*Sudan*), Mr Adyan Thaya (*India*), Ms Burrow (*Australia*), Mr Sidorov (*Russian Federation*), Ms Brighi (*Italy*).

#### **SUSPENSION OF CERTAIN PROVISIONS OF THE STANDING ORDERS OF THE CONFERENCE**

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*Original Spanish: The PRESIDENT*

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We now move on to the suspension of certain provisions of the Standing Orders of the International Labour Conference.

First of all, in accordance with article 76 of the Standing Orders, the President and the three Vice-Presidents of the Conference recommend that the Conference decide that the members of the Credentials Committee shall be directly appointed in plenary session and that the first paragraph of article 5 of the Standing Orders, regarding their nomination by the Selection Committee, shall accordingly be suspended.

At its present session the Conference will amend permanently certain provisions of its Standing Orders, one of them being the provision to which I have just referred.

Bearing in mind that under article 76 the Conference can only accept the suspension of its own Standing Orders at the sitting following that at which the proposal is made and since the next plenary sitting is scheduled for Monday, 2 June, we propose that the Conference immediately hold two consecutive plenary sessions.

In the first sitting, which is this one, the proposal will be made to suspend a number of provisions of the Standing Orders. The sitting will then be closed and, after a short interval, the second plenary sitting will begin, at which the Conference will adopt the decision to suspend all the provisions that have been proposed and will hear the nominations for the Credentials Committee. This procedure will be in compliance with the Standing Orders, and I thank all the delegations for their cooperation in the process.

Secondly, I shall refer to the Global Report that the Director-General presents each year under the follow-up to the 1997 ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. In order to implement the recommendations made by the Governing Body of the ILO at its 292nd Session in March 2005, we propose that the Conference decide that the discussion on that Report should not be affected by the limit laid down on the number of statements from each member State in plenary session. Paragraph 3 of article 12 of the Standing Orders shall accordingly be suspended. In the case of the Government delegations, the ministers or accredited Government delegates shall be given precedence in taking the floor.

We further recommend that the Conference decide that, within reasonable limits, the provisions governing the maximum duration of speeches not be applied to the discussion of the Global Report, and that paragraph 6 of article 14 of the Standing Orders accordingly be suspended.

We also recommend that, as far as necessary and in order to facilitate the exchange of views, the Conference decide not to apply the provisions of paragraph 2 of article 14 of the Standing Orders concerning the order in which the floor is given to speakers.

The discussion of the Global Report, *Freedom of association in practice: Lessons learned*, will take place on Friday, 6 June and will occupy two plenary sittings. On that day, there will be no other plenary sessions. There will not be an official list of speakers either, but participants can place themselves on the speakers' list as soon as the sitting is declared open, using the forms which will be available in the room. The order of speakers will be decided by the Chair and, at the beginning and end of the discussion, the floor may be given to those who wish to speak on behalf of a group. The purpose of this arrangement is so that we can hold an interactive discussion that will guide the future activities of the ILO, so as to promote freedom of association and trade union rights.

Thirdly, regarding the reply by the Director-General, and, as a consequence of the recommendation on the revised format of the International Labour Conference proposed unanimously by the Governing Body at its 297th Session in November 2006, the Director-General will not be in a position to respond to the Conference on all the issues raised during the general discussion in plenary. This is simply because there is not sufficient time to prepare a reply between the time when the general discussion ends and the time planned for the reply. The Director-General intends to reply exhaustively and in writing, to all the points raised during the plenary discussion, and this reply will be published in the final *Provisional Record* of the 97th Session of the Conference. This procedure calls for the suspension of paragraph 2 of article 23 solely for the purpose intended.

Fourthly, in accordance with the decision adopted by the Governing Body at its 301st Session in March 2008, and taking into account that there will not be a Resolutions Committee at the present session of the International Labour Conference, the references to this committee in paragraph 3 and paragraphs 4 to 10 of article 17 of the Standing Orders will therefore need to be suspended.

If there are no objections I shall consider that, as provided by article 76 of the Standing Orders, these

proposals will come into force as soon as they are adopted by the Conference at its next plenary sitting which will take place in a few moments.

*(It is so decided.)*

I now declare closed this first sitting of the 97th Session of the International Labour Conference.

*(The Conference adjourned at 11 a.m.)*

## Second sitting

Wednesday, 28 May 2008, 11 a.m.

*President: Mr Salamin*

### SUSPENSION OF CERTAIN PROVISIONS OF THE STANDING ORDERS OF THE CONFERENCE (CONT.)

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*Original Spanish: The PRESIDENT*

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I have the honour to open the second sitting of the 97th Session of the International Labour Conference. As has been said already, our first task is to adopt the proposal to suspend certain items of the Standing Orders of the Conference. If there are no objections, may I take it that this proposal is adopted?

*(The proposal is adopted.)*

### COMPOSITION OF THE CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE

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*Original Spanish: The PRESIDENT*

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I will now ask the secretariat to announce the candidatures for the Credentials Committee.

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*Original Spanish: The CLERK OF THE CONFERENCE*

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The candidatures for the Credentials Committee are as follows: for the Governments, Mr Kirigua (*Kenya*); for the Employers, Ms Horvatic (*Croatia*); for the Workers, Mr Edström (*Sweden*).

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*Original Spanish: The PRESIDENT*

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May I take it that these candidatures are adopted?

*(The proposals are adopted.)*

### CONSTITUTION AND COMPOSITION OF CONFERENCE COMMITTEES

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*Original Spanish: The PRESIDENT*

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Our next task is to consider the composition and constitution of the committees which will look at the issues submitted to the Conference. The Conference will no doubt feel it opportune to set up the following committees: the Selection Committee; the Finance Committee; the Standing Orders Committee; the Committee on the Application of Standards; the Committee on Rural Employment; the Committee on Skills; and the Committee on Strengthening the ILO's Capacity.

The appointments made by the groups set up by these committees can be consulted in a document available to all of you in the room. The lists will be published in the *Provisional Record* in the near future.

### COMPOSITION OF THE SELECTION COMMITTEE

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*Original Spanish: The PRESIDENT*

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The secretariat will now give us the names of the people who have been appointed by the groups to take part in the Selection Committee.

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*Original Spanish: The CLERK OF THE CONFERENCE*

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The composition of the Selection Committee and the appointments made by the respective groups in accordance with article 4 of the Standing Orders are as follows.

The 28 Government members are the titular members of the Governing Body of the following countries: Australia, Belarus, Brazil, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, China, Cuba, El Salvador, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Malawi, Morocco, Nigeria, Peru, Philippines, Romania, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Sri Lanka, South Africa, United Kingdom and the United States.

The Deputy Government members are from the following countries: Argentina, Barbados, Burundi, Cambodia, Côte d'Ivoire, Czech Republic, Ethiopia, Finland, Greece, Honduras, Hungary, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ireland, Jordan, Republic of Korea, Kuwait, Mexico, Mozambique, Netherlands, Pakistan, Poland, Senegal, Singapore, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Uganda, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Viet Nam.

The 14 Employer members are as follows: Mr Barde (*Switzerland*), Mr Dahlan (*Saudi Arabia*), Mr Ferrer Dufol (*Spain*), Mr Funes de Rioja (*Argentina*), Mr Jeetun (*Mauritius*), Mr Lima Godoy (*Brazil*), Mr Kaissi (*Tunisia*), Mr Moore (*United Kingdom*), Mr Nacoulma (*Burkina Faso*), Mr Potter (*United States*), Mr Suzuki (*Japan*), Mr Tabani (*Pakistan*), Mr Trogen (*Sweden*) and Mr Van Vuuren (*South Africa*).

The 14 Deputy Employer members are as follows: Mr Allam (*Egypt*), Mr Anderson (*Australia*), Ms Awassi Atsimadja (*Gabon*), Ms Coke-Lloyd (*Jamaica*), Mr Eremeev (*Russian Federation*), Ms Horvatic (*Croatia*), Ms Muñoz (*Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela*), Mr O'Reilly (*New Zealand*), Mr Oshinowo (*Nigeria*), Ms Regenbogen (*Canada*), Mr de Regil Gómez (*Mexico*), Ms Roiland (*France*), Mr Tomek (*Austria*) and Mr Varela (*Philippines*).

The 14 Worker members are those who were nominated as officers of the Workers' group. The Deputy Worker members are Mr Cortebeeck (*Belgium*), Mr Ritchie (*New Zealand*), Ms Yacob (*Singapore*) and Mr Patel (*South Africa*).

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*Original Spanish: The PRESIDENT*

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If there are no objections, may I deem the composition of this Committee to be adopted in the form in which it was read out by the Clerk of the Conference?

*(The proposals are adopted.)*

**DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY TO THE  
OFFICERS OF THE CONFERENCE**

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*Original Spanish: The PRESIDENT*

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The Conference will not meet again in plenary before Monday, 2 June, Monday, so that all of the day-to-day tasks concerned with the organization of the Conference, for the entire period indicated, can be carried out by the Officers of the Conference itself, if the Conference agrees to confer on them the necessary powers.

I shall now ask the Clerk of the Conference to read out the delegation of authority.

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*Original Spanish: The CLERK OF THE CONFERENCE*

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The General Conference of the International Labour Office hereby delegates to its President and three Vice-Presidents authority to take any deci-

sions or perform any functions within the competence of the Conference, with respect to any matter that needs to be dealt with before the Conference resumes its plenary sittings, unless the officers consider that the Conference should hold a sitting to discuss such matters.

Decisions taken under this delegation of authority will be set out in the *Provisional Records* of the work of the Conference. This delegation of authority shall take effect at the end of this sitting and shall terminate when the Conference resumes its plenary sittings.

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*Original Spanish: The PRESIDENT*

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If there are no objections, may I take it that this delegation of authority is accepted?

*(The delegation of authority is accepted.)*

The second sitting of the 97th Session of the International Labour Conference is now closed.

*(The Conference adjourned at 11.15 a.m.)*

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