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THIRTEENTH ITEM ON THE AGENDA

Report of the Working Party on the Functioning of the Governing Body and the International Labour Conference

Oral report of the Chairperson of the Working Party

1. The Working Party on the Functioning of the Governing Body and the International Labour Conference (WP/GBC) met on the morning of Thursday, 17 March 2016. As Chairperson of the Governing Body, I presided over the meetings, while the Employer and Worker Vice-Chairpersons of the Governing Body, Mr Rønneest and Mr Cortebeek, were Employer and Worker spokespersons, respectively. The Office had prepared a document¹ for the Working Party, following the in-depth review by the Governing Body at its 325th Session (November 2015) of the two-week Conference format trialed in 2015. The document proposed a certain number of arrangements to improve further the preparatory and in-session processes of the Conference to better accommodate a two-week format. In his introduction to the paper, the representative of the Director-General (Deputy Director-General for Management and Reform) informed the Working Party that the theme of this year's World of Work Summit was to centre on youth employment. He also mentioned that elements from the report of the informal tripartite consultations on the working methods of the Committee on the Application of Standards would be included in the present report. As usual for this Working Party, I opened the floor to Government members first, and then asked the spokespersons of the Employers' and Workers' groups for their comments.
2. Many governments expressed support for the proposals contained in the document and all endorsed the proposed point for decision. Several governments made the point that the reform was not static, but ongoing, and constituents should always be able to propose improvements to procedures and processes. All governments supported the proposals made concerning dissemination of pre-Conference information, the arrangements to allow advance registration in committees, the continued use of individual committee web pages, with advance publication of tentative workplans, and indeed the enhanced use of information and communication technology in general. Conference preparation processes should start as early as possible. Regarding the early nomination of Conference committee chairpersons, they requested the Office to provide training and support for these persons, and make

¹ GB.326/WP/GBC/1(Rev.).

possible the desired early web posting of tentative committee workplans. The industrialized market economy countries (IMEC group) acknowledged that this early identification of chairpersons was largely a government responsibility. Governments agreed that the system put in place to reduce the length of the opening sitting had worked well. They expressed satisfaction at the functioning of the 2015 Committee on the Application of Standards (CAS), and looked forward to repeat this in 2016, stressing the importance of timely agreement on the list of cases for consideration by the Committee.

3. There was wide approval for closing the Conference on the Friday of the second week, rather than on the Saturday, particularly as this would allow time for Governing Body delegates to prepare for their post-Conference session. I noted general support for the proposed arrangements aimed at avoiding the situation where speakers delivered statements immediately before or after the adoptions of reports, or to an empty room in the evening. The Office's proposal to extend the interpretation services provided to regional group meetings, enabling the subgroups to benefit from them, was well received. Governments agreed that the Director-General should present a report on a social policy theme in the first year of a biennial period, as well as the Programme implementation report stipulated in the Conference Standing Orders. The proposed theme of youth employment for the World of Work Summit was welcomed, but efforts would need to be made to ensure the interactivity of the debate. All governments supported reducing side events to a minimum. Various suggestions were made in support of installing time limits for speeches, in plenary and in committees.
4. The group of Latin American and Caribbean countries (GRULAC) made the point that while the two-week format worked well, care should constantly be taken to ensure that the Conference, the supreme decision-making body of the ILO, should have the time necessary to perform this function effectively. In respect of the Office proposal to explore the possibility of creating password-protected pages to allow committee members access to restricted committee documents, GRULAC stressed the importance of access being assured to all accredited committee members. A further concern expressed by the group related to the choice of committee chairpersons on the basis of a "required profile". While acknowledging the desirability of appointing chairpersons with technical expertise in the particular field under discussion, the nominations should not be restricted only to persons with previous experience of chairing tripartite meetings. The use of email contact by the Officers of the Selection Committee should not rule out the possibility of physical meetings, where necessary. GRULAC observed that despite having raised this point earlier, the informal tripartite consultations on the CAS working methods would be held after the present Working Party, whereas the outputs of the informal tripartite consultations should feed into that of the Working Party. This error in programming should not be repeated. Governments in general regretted the difficulties encountered by the Credentials Committee in completing its work, and noted that the time limits for the submission of complaints and objections could be reduced no further. Employers and Workers should be encouraged to submit their complaints earlier. Governments of the Asia and Pacific group (ASPAG) pointed to the need for further ILO–UN coordination in respect of security matters.
5. In respect of the technical committees, GRULAC questioned whether the proposed webposting of their reports on Thursday, 9 June, would allow enough time for amendments to be submitted electronically, given that the Conference would close on Friday, 10 June. With regard to the *Provisional Records*, the IMEC group referred to the need to publish the records in three languages of the statements made by all speakers in plenary during the discussion of the Director-General's Report. This had not yet been done for the 2015 Conference and should not be forgotten. GRULAC insisted that the tripartite drafting group responsible for examining draft conclusions should be composed of eight representatives from each group, with respect for geographical distribution. Finally, GRULAC reiterated that it did not support the delegation of authority by which the Officers of each committee

are given the responsibility of approving the reports and conclusions of their respective committees.

6. *The Employer spokesperson* stressed the critical importance of optimal time management. As it was for committees to plan their own work, so they should also decide whether to establish a time limit for speeches. The group felt that the early identification of committee chairpersons was very important, and that efforts should continue in that regard. The Employers' group supported the theme of youth employment for the World of Work Summit and also welcomed the inclusion of elements from the report of the informal tripartite consultations on the CAS working methods in this report. The group supported the point for decision, highlighting the paragraph under which the Working Party was to commence its review of the functioning and role of Regional Meetings.
7. *The Worker spokesperson* agreed with government speakers regarding the usefulness of pre-Conference processes and dissemination of information. Advance registration in committees was more complex for trade unions, which first needed to coordinate their participation among themselves. No reduction should be made to the Workers' group meeting on the Sunday prior to the Conference or that on the opening Monday, which should be considered formally as part of the Conference. The group was concerned at the proposal to close the Conference on the second Friday rather than the Saturday. It did not share the positive assessment on the work of the CAS in a two-week session; the shortened time format had imposed considerable pressure on the Committee. There could be no reduction in the substance of its work. The group did not consider that programming the adoption of the CAS report on the same day as the World of Work Summit was wise, but this issue was to be discussed during the informal tripartite consultations on the CAS working methods. Holding the votes on the maritime questions on Wednesday, 8 June, was acceptable to the group. As the document suggested, it was not possible to further reduce time limits for submission of complaints to the Credentials Committee. The Workers agreed to make their complaints as early as possible, though this could be problematic and complaints would inevitably be submitted after the opening of the Conference. The group agreed with the Office's proposals concerning the scheduling of the drafting groups of non-standard-setting committees, and suggested that the Office could organize information sessions for them while their drafting groups were meeting, to avoid losing days. The proposals for the evaluation of the impact of the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization including panels with participation by multilateral organizations were acceptable, but a correct balance should be sought. It would be good to hold informal meetings of the Committee Officers each evening to determine key issues from the day's discussions for inclusion in the outcome document. The group agreed to the suspensions of Standing Order provisions set out in Appendix II to the Working Party paper, but could not approve the draft decision until after the informal tripartite consultations on the CAS working methods. The spokesperson stressed that his group had not yet endorsed the proposed programme and length of the Conference.
8. *The representative of the Director-General* addressed concerns raised by GRULAC. There were no formal criteria for the selection of committee chairpersons, though specific knowledge and experience were obviously useful. The Office would certainly seek to enhance interactivity at the Summit. In respect of the Selection Committee, much of its work was of a routine nature, but physical meetings of its Officers would be possible where required. The timing of the informal tripartite consultations on the CAS working methods after the Working Party was indeed regrettable, but had been inevitable due to scheduling clashes; as mentioned, the key outcome of the informal tripartite consultations would be added to the present report (see below). The proposed delegation of technical committees' responsibility to their Officers concerned the adoption of their reports, not of their conclusions. In respect of comments regarding security, the Office was working closely with the United Nations and taking more precautions than previously. Greater consideration could be given to time limits for speakers in committees, but the autonomy of the committees over

their own working methods should remain. As to the translation of the full *Provisional Records* of delegates' statements, these speeches had been made available on the Conference website in the language of delivery, together with digital oral recordings of the interpreted versions into English, French and Spanish. On verification, it was found that these files had not been accessed a single time. Other international organizations did not keep digital recordings of speeches at all. For these reasons, the Governing Body might consider that the money invested in the translation of these records, amounting to some US\$250,000 per Conference, might be better spent elsewhere. This could be the subject of a future discussion. The Office understood that the preparatory meetings on the Sunday prior to the Conference were integral to the Conference and included in its financial implications. The idea of information sessions for committee members not participating in drafting groups was a possibility, and the Office would welcome suggested themes for these sessions.

Informal tripartite consultations on the working methods of the CAS

9. Those consultations took place on Saturday, 19 March 2016. The meeting examined the implications on the work of the CAS of a two-week session of the Conference. It noted that, in 2015, the Committee had been able to complete its work within the framework of a two-week session. At the same time, it was recognized that the CAS members and the secretariat had to work under extreme time pressure. The CAS had to sit in the evening almost every day and two additional sittings had to be scheduled towards the end of the second week.
10. The meeting discussed possible improvements to time management. It agreed on the following measures:
 - strict time management should be ensured; in particular, sittings should start on time;
 - the speaking time limits and other modalities for time management adopted by the CAS for the examination of individual cases should also apply to the discussion of the General Survey;
 - in accordance with the established working methods of the CAS, the Chairperson, in consultation with the other Officers of the Committee, could decide on reduced speaking time limits;
 - when necessary, the Chairperson might also decide to announce, giving two minutes' notice, that the list of speakers for the case being examined would be closed; and
 - the list of speakers should be visible on a screen and early registration on that list of delegates intending to take the floor should be encouraged.
11. The meeting also considered the possibility for the CAS to set up subcommittees to examine certain matters, such as cases of serious failure by governments to respect their reporting and other standards-related obligations. This issue would require further examination.
12. The meeting further explored possible improvements to the modalities for the adoption of its report by the CAS. It agreed to implement a number of measures, in line with the need to streamline the production and distribution of paper documents and to make better use of technology, on an experimental basis.
13. With reference to the possible decision by the Governing Body that the Conference would conclude its work on the last Friday afternoon, instead of Saturday morning, the Workers'

group stressed that any further reduction in the duration of the Conference would be detrimental to the proper functioning of the CAS.

14. The meeting acknowledged that the modalities and criteria for the establishment of the list of cases which had been applied in 2015 had allowed for the timely adoption of that list. It therefore agreed that the same modalities should be applied in 2016. The preliminary list of cases should be available no less than 30 days before the opening of the International Labour Conference (i.e. 30 April 2016). The final list should be agreed upon by the Worker and Employer spokespersons on the Friday before the opening of the Conference (27 May 2016) and should be adopted after discussion and adoption in Employers' and Workers' groups, ideally no later than the second sitting of the CAS.
15. Regarding the preparation and adoption of conclusions, the meeting considered that the same modalities as those applied in 2015 for the preparation of conclusions should be applied in 2016. It examined possible improvements in this respect, in particular through better use of technology.
16. The meeting agreed that it had been useful to have dedicated sittings for the adoption of conclusions in 2015 and that this measure should be maintained in 2016.
17. Taking into account the outcomes of the informal tripartite consultations, as summarized in the above paragraphs, the following proposed decision is submitted to the Governing Body for adoption.

Draft decision

18. *The Working Party on the Functioning of the Governing Body and the International Labour Conference, having examined the proposed arrangements contained in document GB.326/WP/GBC/1(Rev.) and the proposed plan of work for the 105th Session (June 2016) of the Conference, recommends that the Governing Body:*
 - (a) *propose to the Conference that it implement the proposed arrangements for the International Labour Conference in June 2016;*
 - (b) *request the Office to prepare for the 328th Session (November 2016) of the Governing Body an analysis of the session of the International Labour Conference in June 2016, which would allow the Governing Body to draw lessons from this experience and take the appropriate decisions as regards the arrangements for future sessions of the International Labour Conference;*
 - (c) *request the Office to undertake a comprehensive review of the Standing Orders of the Conference with a view to submitting to the 328th Session (November 2016) draft amendments to the Standing Orders to the International Labour Conference; and*
 - (d) *request the Office to prepare for the 328th Session (November 2016) a background document on the conduct of the Regional Conferences (or Meetings) to enable the Working Party to commence its review of the functioning and role of the Regional Meetings, as agreed by the Governing Body in June 2011.*²

² GB.311/PV, para. 107(a) and GB.311/8, para. 4.