



## FOURTH ITEM ON THE AGENDA

**Developments concerning the question of the observance by the Government of Myanmar of the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29)*****Addendum***

1. Following her arrival in Yangon on 8 October, Ms. Hông-Trang Perret-Nyuyen has been able to have a range of contacts and meetings that will be of interest to the Governing Body.<sup>1,2</sup> Any developments following the finalization of this document will also be communicated to the Governing Body.<sup>3</sup>
2. *Meeting with the Minister for Labour.* In a meeting on 11 October with the Minister for Labour, the Liaison Officer had the opportunity to follow up on the discussions that had taken place between the interim Liaison Officer and the Myanmar authorities by presenting

<sup>1</sup> The Office of the Liaison Officer is fully established and operational, except that it has not yet proved possible to obtain telephone lines; temporary arrangements for telephone communication have had to be made. As regards local staff, the Office is finalizing the recruitment of a national administrative officer to take over from the current temporary appointee; a receptionist/secretary had already been recruited.

<sup>2</sup> At the time this report was finalized, a total of 17 meetings had been held, including with the Minister for Labour; the diplomatic community; the United Nations Resident Coordinator; the United Nations Country Team (as well as separate meetings with representatives of individual United Nations agencies); Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the General-Secretary of the National League for Democracy; representatives of six international NGOs; and the ICRC. The Liaison Officer also had the opportunity to meet with the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar, Prof. Pinheiro, during a visit he made to Myanmar. There has been some interest from the press, and the Liaison Officer has given a number of interviews, including to a Japanese television station (NHK), a semi-official weekly newspaper (the Myanmar Times, which published an article in its English version), to BBC radio (Burmese-language service), and to Agence France-Presse.

<sup>3</sup> The Governing Body will no doubt also be interested in developments in the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Following the adoption of a resolution during its June 2001 session, ECOSOC further discussed the situation in October 2002.

some further ideas on the form that cooperation between the ILO and the Government of Myanmar might take. She stressed that while the appointment of an ILO Liaison Officer in Yangon was a positive step, there was a need to demonstrate concrete progress on tackling forced labour. One way to achieve such progress was through the development of a coherent “plan of action”, as had been mentioned by the ILO Director-General in his letter of 22 July and raised with the authorities by the interim Liaison Officer. Important issues that needed to be addressed included the establishment of a credible mechanism for investigating allegations, including those that concerned the military, and consideration of how ILO technical assistance could have an impact on the forced labour problem. Pending the establishment of such a mechanism for investigating allegations, it would be useful to publicize the presence of the Liaison Officer as widely as possible, as this would provide a potential channel for complaints to be submitted; these complaints could then be passed on to the authorities. Concerning ILO technical assistance, one immediate possibility would be for the ILO to assist the Ministry of Labour in the translation into ethnic languages, and dissemination of information about the Orders prohibiting forced labour. This was an issue that had been raised both by the High-Level Team and by the Committee of Experts. The Minister replied that there was no need to publicize the presence of the Liaison Officer, as this was widely known, even in remote areas. Concerning the Orders, his Ministry was working with the Ministry of Information on translation into ethnic languages, but he did not feel this would be useful since ethnic people did not make much use of their languages, preferring to use the Burmese language. On the question of an investigation mechanism, he suggested that allegations of forced labour be transmitted to the Implementation Committee, who would then investigate them.

3. The Liaison Officer has also requested meetings with the ministers for Home Affairs and Foreign Affairs, and with a minister at the Prime Minister’s Office, as well as with Secretary-1 of the State Peace and Development Council, General Khin Nyunt. At the time this report was finalized, no answers to these requests had been received. A meeting that was scheduled with the Implementation Committee was postponed at the request of the Liaison Officer as a number of members of the Committee, including its two co-chairs, could not be present. No new date for this meeting has been fixed.
4. On 1 November the Liaison Officer, accompanied by her assistant, made a one-day visit to some towns and villages near Yangon, in order for her to start gaining an impression of the general situation.
5. *Meeting with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.* The Liaison Officer had a meeting on 30 October with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the General-Secretary of the National League for Democracy (NLD). Daw Aung San Suu Kyi welcomed the appointment of an ILO Liaison Officer in Yangon, and hoped that the NLD would have regular contact with the Liaison Officer. She felt that while substantial progress on the forced labour issue ultimately required progress in the reconciliation process, the ILO might nevertheless be able to bring about improvements in some areas. The NLD had noted some decline in the use of forced labour, but also had information on continued recourse to the practice, including cases that she had come across herself.
6. *The possible visit of an ILO mission.* The question of a high-level ILO mission visiting Myanmar in order to help develop a coherent plan of action, as mentioned in the Director-General’s letter to the Minister for Labour on 22 July 2002, had been discussed with the Permanent Mission of Myanmar in Geneva.<sup>4</sup> Following indications that such a mission would be welcome by the authorities, the Office confirmed its willingness to send such a

<sup>4</sup> See also GB.285/4, paras. 7-9.

mission at a mutually convenient time, provided there was an invitation from the authorities making clear that the purpose of the mission would be for specific discussions on such plan of action, and that adequate preparations were made in advance between the authorities and the ILO Liaison Officer. (Any further developments on the subject will be presented orally to the Governing Body.)

Geneva, 11 November 2002.