Committee on Sectoral and Technical Meetings and Related Issues

EIGHTH ITEM ON THE AGENDA

Other questions

Report of the Tripartite Meeting of Export Processing Zone-Operating Countries
(Geneva, 28 September-2 October 1998)

1. The Tripartite Meeting of Export Processing Zone-Operating Countries (EPZs) was held in Geneva from 28 September to 2 October 1998, chaired by Mr. Washington Gonzales Niña (Dominican Republic).

2. The Meeting was held as part of an Action Programme on Social and Labour Issues in Export Processing Zones. It had before it a report entitled Labour and social issues relating to export processing zones, prepared by the International Labour Office. (1)

3. The Meeting unanimously adopted a report of its discussions, and conclusions in the form of priorities and guidelines for improving social and labour conditions in EPZs ( appended to the present document in the Note on the proceedings). The conclusions adopted call, inter alia, for certain action by member States and by the Office.

4. The conclusions include a call on governments, employers' and workers' organizations to respect, promote and realize the principles contained in the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its Follow-up particularly as regards freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining in EPZs (paragraph 11). The conclusions provide guidance in the areas of labour standards, labour-management relations, human resource development, retraining and re-employment, wages and working conditions, social infrastructure and women workers. In view of the fact that EPZs are one of the major sources of formal sector employment for women in
many countries, the Meeting focused in particular on a number of important issues relating to women workers, and how to improve their situation.

5. The Office is called upon to develop its advisory services and technical assistance projects to assist EPZ-operating countries in improving labour and social conditions, especially countries that have difficulty in fully respecting the fundamental rights reaffirmed in the *ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its Follow-up*, in response to the countries' expressed needs.

6. The Committee on Sectoral and Technical Meetings and Related Issues may wish to recommend that the Governing Body authorize the Director-General to communicate the Note on the Proceedings containing the texts mentioned in paragraph 3 above:

   a. to governments, asking them to communicate these texts to the employers' and workers' organizations concerned;
   b. to the international employers' and workers' organizations concerned;
   c. to the international organizations concerned.

7. The Committee on Sectoral and Technical Meetings and Related Issues may wish to recommend that the Governing Body request the Director-General to bear in mind, when drawing up proposals for the future programme of work of the Office, the wishes expressed by the Meeting in paragraphs 30 to 32 of the conclusions.


**Points for decision:**

Paragraph 6;
Paragraph 7.

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