

CLOSING REMARKS BY
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MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND IMMIGRATION

on the occasion of
THE HEMISPHERIC CONFERENCE ON WIDE AND
RAPID IMPLEMENTATION AND EFFECTIVE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MARITIME LABOUR
CONVENTION

September 10, 2009

Barbados Hilton Hotel

Vice Chairperson of the ILO Governing Body and President,
Congress of Trade Unions and Staff Associations of Barbados, Sir
Roy Trotman;
Director International Labour Standards Department, Dr. Cleopatra
Doumbia-Henry

Regional Maritime Adviser (Caribbean) International Maritime
Organization, Mr. Colin Young,
Delegates to this Hemispheric Conference
Course Facilitators

It will be recalled that on Monday the Barbados Minister responsible for shipping provided general remarks at the Opening Ceremony and the Minister responsible for labour delivered the Feature Address and declared this Conference open. That fact alone demonstrates the collaborative effort which is required for successful implementation of the MLC 06. This will be over and above the tripartite arrangements which are the hallmark of the ILO.

The purpose of this Conference, as stated, was to deepen the understanding of participants of the MLC, 2006 and, in the light of existing law and practice of countries in the region, to discuss solutions to any issues arising in the process of ratification and implementation, as well as possible regional cooperation.

It is the view of the Barbados delegation, which I am sure is shared by the majority of delegates, that the aims and objectives of the Conference were achieved. The working sessions, both the presentations of the experts and the interactive sessions amongst the participants were planned to maximize the results of the Conference.

The highlighting of the more significant provisions of MLC 2006 was certainly welcomed by delegates, who took advantage of the opportunity by sharing experiences and discussing their varying interpretations of specific issues of MLC 2006. The critical benefits to seafarers in particular and the maritime industry in general were clear, namely:

- Modernised standards to ensure that all seafarers, whatever their nationality, serving on a ship to which the convention applies, whatever flag it flies, will have access to decent working and living conditions, and an ability to have their

concerns addressed where the conditions of work do not meet the requirements of the Maritime Labour Convention.

- Compliance and certification mechanisms to ensure to the greatest extent possible that the convention requirements are respected, even on the ships that fly the flag of countries that do not ratify the convention.

The ILO, like the International Maritime Organization, has long recognized the importance of the human element in ensuring the success of the maritime industry. Consequently, it was therefore interesting that, notwithstanding the tripartite nature of ILO membership, there was unanimous recognition that existing conventions dealing with maritime labour had become obsolete and did not reflect contemporary working and living conditions on board ships. Further that a more rigorous compliance system was urgently needed which would work in tandem with the well-established system for the enforcement of international standards for ship safety, security and the prevention of marine pollution. As

we know the result is history – the adoption of the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Barbados has a well-developed system of legislation relating to labour, recruitment, immigration, trade unionism and health and safety in the workplace as well as a national insurance scheme.

Several pieces of legislation are in place to govern labour relations including the Severance Payments Act and the Holidays With Pay Act. The National Insurance and Social Security Act provide medical assistance for employees in the event of illness, maternity leave and accidents. They also provide unemployment, disability and pension benefits. Barbados has twelve paid public holidays. In addition, all workers have a statutory right to twelve weeks of maternity leave and three weeks of annual vacation with pay, which increases to four weeks after the fifth year of steady employment.

Similarly, Barbados is committed to ensuring that all crew on each of these vessels have decent conditions of employment, accommodation, recreational facilities, food and catering, health, medical care, welfare and social security protection and that the shipowners honour all their obligations under the Convention. We also remain dedicated to the well being of Barbadians at sea and foreign seafarers and through port state control verifying that foreign ships calling at our port comply with the requirements of international regulations.

Ladies and Gentlemen – in my view – today’s session on ‘national next steps’ by participants was invaluable in identifying the way forward to ensure rapid and effective implementation of the Convention. The main themes which emerged:

- The need for collaboration to ensure wide and harmonised implementation.

- The requirement for technical co-operation in relation to a gap analysis and the closing of any such gaps; training and model legislation.
- The maintaining of a tripartite approach and continued sensitization of all stakeholders as the implementation process continues.
- The need for guidance material for effective implementation and operation of the Convention.
- The importance of swift action to improve the systems which deal with the welfare and social security of seafarers.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it would be remiss of me not to make the practical observation that, whilst we are proceeding to implement this mandatory Convention, there should similarly be a strong effort to ensure that our people are able to enjoy successful careers as seafarers in the whole range of jobs e.g. deck, engineering and hospitality.

Finally, I wish to compliment ILO for convening this Conference and providing the relevant subject matter experts. In addition, the Governments; employer and worker organizations of the region for their significant representation at this Conference and to thank delegates for their very active participation. Thanks is also extended to the officers of my Ministry and other agencies for the successful co-ordination of this Conference and the Barbados Hilton for the excellent arrangements made.

I urge distinguished delegates to continue to foster intra-regional co-operation and collaboration. In this respect, I will stress the virtue of self-determination which is essential in achieving full implementation of MLC2006 at regional level.

Finally, I say Godspeed to those delegates who leave our shores in few days and hope that you will take the time left here to enjoy some of our attractions.

I now declare this Conference closed.