
300th Session of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office (November 2007)

EIGHTH ITEM ON THE AGENDA

GB.300/8(& Add.)

Conclusions concerning Myanmar

1. The Governing Body considered all of the information before it including the comments and information provided by the Permanent Representative of Myanmar. It noted the progress reported in the operation of the Supplementary Understanding (SU) up to the time of public demonstrations and their suppression at the end of September 2007, including the educational activity that had been jointly undertaken by the Ministry of Labour and the ILO.
2. The Governing Body, however, expressed its serious concern at the Government's crackdown in response to the recent peaceful protests. In this respect, it noted with deep regret the imprisonment of persons exercising their fundamental right to freedom of association and the freedom of expression it entails, and called on the Government to comply fully with its responsibilities in accordance with Convention No. 87, which it has ratified. The long prison sentences given on 7 September 2007 to six activists should be reviewed and the persons concerned released. The Governing Body also noted with concern the detention of persons associated with the facilitation of forced labour complaints under the SU. This clearly contradicted the sense of the SU and the Governing Body called on the Government to immediately release those persons, in particular Daw Su Su Nway and U Min Aung.
3. The Governing Body expressed its full support for the United Nations Country Team in Myanmar and its leadership, expressing its deep regret at the Government's recent decision that the Resident Coordinator should leave the country.
4. The Governing Body recognized that the situation in Myanmar is unstable. It urged the Government to continue the dialogue process, in a balanced and results-orientated manner, towards domestic reconciliation and forward-looking solutions to the current difficulties. It was too early to fully assess what impact the recent civil unrest and its suppression has had on the current and future operational prospects of the SU. The Governing Body further agreed that, whilst the ILO activity for the eradication of forced labour was an important contribution to efforts to improve the rights and lives of citizens in Myanmar, it cannot be considered in isolation and is dependent on the general environment and the evolution of current dialogue initiatives.
5. The Governing Body therefore called on the Government of Myanmar to make at the highest level an unambiguous public statement that all forms of forced labour are prohibited throughout the country and will be duly punished. The Government should ensure that the mechanism provided by the SU remains fully functional with no further detention or harassment of complainants, facilitators or others, and that it fully applies to the military authorities. Full attention should be given to preventing the recruitment of child soldiers.

6. The Governing Body further called for the putting into place of an appropriate network towards ensuring the nationwide application of the SU, including in the combat zones, and to ensure that forced labour victims are able to easily access the complaints mechanism. It is understood that the SU concluded on 26 February 2007 may be extended. It instructed the Office to undertake a full review of the operation of the SU for submission to the Governing Body at its March 2008 session together with recommendations for both the SU's future and the ILO's ongoing role in Myanmar.
7. Finally, the Governing Body again reminds that all these activities have to serve and strengthen the objective of ending forced labour in Myanmar through the full implementation of the recommendations of the 1998 Commission of Inquiry and all of the related decisions of the International Labour Conference and the Governing Body.