

Committee on the Application of Standards

Date: 15 May 2026

Governments appearing on the list of individual cases have the opportunity, if they so wish, to supply written information to the Committee.

▶ Information on the application of ratified Conventions supplied by governments on the list of individual cases

Panama (ratification: 1958)

Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87)

The Government has provided the following written information.

Panama, in accordance with articles 40, 68 and 76 of the Political Constitution, recognizes and guarantees the exercise of freedom of association and the effective protection of the right to organize of workers and employers, as fundamental pillars of the social rule of law. The Government, through the Ministry of Labour and Employment Development (MITRADEL), acts in strict accordance with the Political Constitution and the international labour standards ratified by the country. Pursuant to section 1 of the Labour Code, the relations between the enterprise and workers are regulated on the basis of the principles of social justice, guaranteeing State protection for workers, promoting full employment and creating conditions that ensure a decent existence for workers and offer fair compensation for the capital invested in the enterprise.

In this context, Panama reaffirms its commitment to promoting social justice, respecting fundamental rights at work and strengthening social dialogue, in line with Sustainable Development Goals 8 and 16 related to decent work, economic growth and strong institutions. In this regard, the protection of freedom of association is enshrined in section 379 et seq. of the Labour Code, which include guarantees aimed at preventing acts of interference, discrimination and undue influence concerning the exercise of trade union activity. In accordance with section 334, the State recognizes and protects the right to organize as an effective means of contributing to the economic and social development of the country, the strengthening of a culture of democracy, and sustained social peace.

For the Government, social dialogue is a State policy aimed at guaranteeing freedom of association, transparency and the peaceful settlement of labour disputes. Through institutionalized forums for tripartite consultation, the Government has promoted the autonomous, free and representative participation of trade union organizations and

employers' organizations, strengthening the development of sustainable consensus, in full conformity with international labour standards.

Panama also has strengthened guarantees in place for the protection of trade union activity. Panamanian legislation explicitly recognizes trade union immunity which prohibits dismissals, harassment, persecution and any form of retaliation against workers and trade union leaders in relation to the exercise of trade union functions. These guarantees constitute specific mechanisms for the protection of freedom of association and ensure the free, independent and effective exercise of trade union activity in accordance with the Political Constitution, the Labour Code and the international conventions ratified by the Republic.

To fulfil these commitments, the Government has implemented public policies and strategic actions to promote decent and freely chosen work, with the aim of reinforcing an institutional environment that fosters balanced labour relations, stability in employment and the well-being of the productive sector, in accordance with the principles enshrined in international labour instruments.

In this regard, the exercise of social dialogue and collective bargaining in Panama is reflected in the following actions and concrete results, with the participation of MITRADEL.

Between July 2024 and April 2026, 177 collective agreements and accords were registered, directly benefitting 69,004 workers, and 120 lists of claims were submitted, with no strikes recorded.

Meanwhile, the labour market remained dynamic, with an 11 per-cent increase in recruitment nationwide, which represents over 30,700 additional contracts, when comparing 2024 with 2025. This reflects a sustained recovery and favourable conditions for formal employment.

MITRADEL is continuously strengthening labour inspection, conciliation and tripartite dialogue mechanisms to prevent, investigate and address complaints related to harassment or violence against trade union leaders or any other violation of their rights, ensuring institutional follow-up and effective protection in accordance with the existing legal framework.

Between July 2024 and February 2026, over 24,000 inspections were conducted, covering over 600,000 workers. These actions were not restricted to formal checks, but also included preventive and corrective measures aimed at promoting regulatory compliance.

The exercise of social dialogue, in the context of the ruling declaring unconstitutional the legislative contract signed between Panama Ports Company and the Panamanian Government, with intervention by the executive branch, mediation by MITRADEL and the strengthening of social dialogue channels, were key mechanisms for maintaining labour continuity and stability and respect for the rights of workers, following a change of employer.

Regarding the expiry of the concession for Revisalud San Miguel, S.A., which is responsible for waste management in one of the districts in Panama City, the mediation by MITRADEL contributed to ensuring the payment of employment benefits and the protection of workers' acquired rights.

In the banana sector in the province of Bocas del Toro, the actions carried out to boost employment in 2025 enhanced the stability of formal employment, representing over 1,600 contracts in force and 967 duly registered contracts.

The historic consensus reached on the minimum wage is an act of social justice that reaffirms the Government's commitment to defending workers' rights and to promoting

sustainable and inclusive economic and social development. The agreement reached has a direct impact on 27 per cent of employees in the private sector and prioritizes the protection of existing jobs and the sustainability of enterprises.

The signature of the Panamanian Construction Industry Board (CAPAC) collective agreement 2026–29, which guarantees the continuity of acquired benefits and incorporates new wage and labour adjustments, contributed significantly to strengthening social peace in a strategic sector such as construction.

The launch of the “Juan Albañil” programme, which was a result of the alliance between MITRADEL and the Caja de Ahorros (Savings Bank), represents a landmark step towards financial inclusion by facilitating access to mortgage loans for workers who were historically excluded from the banking system, due to the intermittent nature of construction contracts.

The Government has implemented training and awareness-raising programmes aimed at employers and workers, which are organized by the Panamanian Institute of Labour Studies, in order to strengthen their knowledge of labour-related matters, clarify queries on fundamental aspects of the employment relationship and contribute to a proper understanding and application of labour regulations.

These training activities represent concrete support for the principle of tripartism and gave rise to the institutional initiative *Diálogo que Produce* [Dialogue that Gets Results], which is a strategy aimed at strengthening labour relations in the productive sector through training processes for both employers and workers. The project promotes social dialogue, understanding of the labour law framework and the peaceful settlement of disputes.

In the area of occupational safety and health, since June 2025, the National Council for Occupational Safety and Health, which is a tripartite body, has developed various activities aimed at strengthening its institutional functioning, consolidating the participation of the social partners and moving forward with the development of national instruments in this area, with the technical assistance of the ILO.

The Council made progress with the interinstitutional coordination and the development of a national occupational safety and health profile. During this period, briefings and plenary sessions were held to present the developments in the consultation process on the profile, tripartite communication mechanisms were strengthened, and regulatory, statistical and prevention-related issues were discussed across various productive sectors.

The Council is working on the national occupational safety and health profile as an evidence-based technical tool to guide public policy on the matter.

In the education sector, ongoing dialogue was maintained with teachers' organizations through working groups regarding the development of the new regulations of the Teachers' Union Training Fund, the organization of elections for teaching representatives to the board of directors of the Self-Funded Early Retirement Plan, and the analysis of legislative initiatives aimed at enhancing the employment stability of teachers, including mechanisms for the competitive appointment of teachers who have held temporary or interim positions.

It is also important to underscore the sustained actions of the National Government, through the Ministry of Education, given that, between April and July 2025, in response to the work stoppages reported in certain educational institutions by some teachers' unions, the Government consistently maintained an institutional approach that was open, proactive and focused on preserving channels of communication with teachers' organizations. Throughout, the Ministry of Education remained committed to social dialogue, understanding and

consensus-based solutions, with the aim of ensuring the continuity of the education service and the protection of the right to education of students.

As a result of these institutional efforts, on 11 July 2025, during a meeting with teachers' organizations, a declaration of principles regarding education and the immediate and uninterrupted return to class was signed, which reflected the shared willingness of the parties to fully return to academic normality. This agreement led to resumption of educational activities in those teaching institutions in which service disruptions persisted, enabling the restitution of the right to education of children and young people under conditions of continuity, stability and the protection of the best interests of the child.

The Ministry of Education continued to strengthen social dialogue by holding six further meetings with teachers' organizations and their leaders, in which matters of educational and professional interest were addressed, to promote the continuity, openness and sustainability of institutional dialogue mechanisms.

The actions undertaken reflect the importance that the Panamanian Government gives to social dialogue, the active participation of trade union organizations and the protection of the right to organize, in different sectors of the economy.

In the exercise of the regulatory authority provided for by the Constitution, the executive body adopted Executive Decree No. 11 of 11 November 2025, which elaborates on provisions contained in the Labour Code pertaining to the provision of essential public services. This instrument does not create new restrictions and does not modify the substantive content of the legislation in force, but rather sets out implementation criteria consistent with the principles of proportionality, reasonableness and continuity of essential services.

The legality of this instrument is currently under review by the Supreme Court of Justice, following the filing of an administrative action to annul it, which is evidence that the matter has been subject to the judicial review of legality provided for in the Panamanian legal system, in strict observance of the principle of separation of powers.

The Government has a robust regulatory and institutional framework, grounded in the Constitution, the Labour Code, ratified international treaties and conventions and the applicable supplementary regulations, which guarantee freedom of association. This framework enables workers and trade union organizations to exercise their rights peacefully with protection from acts of violence, with a view to preserving public order, under the principles of proportionality and due process.

The Government of the Republic of Panama, through MITRADEL, reaffirms its regional leadership on social dialogue, institutional strengthening and the promotion of decent work. The fact that Panama is chairing pro tempore the Council of Labour Ministers of Central America and the Dominican Republic, is soon to chair the Ibero-American Network of Labour Inspections, and will also chair the Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labour of the Organization of American States (OAS) for the period 2027–29, demonstrates the recognition of the country's institutional capacity and sustained commitment to democratic labour governance.

This progress reflects the Government's ongoing commitment to consolidating balanced labour relations, promoting decent work, strengthening social dialogue as an essential tool for democratic governance and social peace, respecting freedom of association, creating jobs, effectively protecting fundamental rights at work, and reaffirming its commitment to regional cooperation.