

From: Mário Mourão <mario.mourao@ugt.pt>
Sent: 04 October 2023 14:10
To: JUR, OFFICE
Subject: Right to strike

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Dear Director General,

We thank you for your letter to all ILO Member States dated 31 August that was brought to our attention. In this letter you confirmed that you have received the request from the ILO Workers' group of 12 July 2023 for the urgent referral of the dispute over the interpretation of the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize Convention, 1948 (No 87) (C.87) in relation to the right to strike to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for decision, in accordance with article 37(1) of the ILO Constitution. The Workers' group also requested this matter to be put urgently on the agenda of the Governing Body for decision. This request has in the meantime received support from 36 Governments from different regions, recognising the importance of legal certainty on this issue for all constituents.

We also express our appreciation for the background report that was prepared by your Office to inform the decision during the Special Meeting of the Governing Body on 10 November 2023 and welcome your invitation to all Governments and employers' and workers' organisations concerned to send in comments.

Indeed, the right to strike is of the utmost importance for workers in Portugal and the inability of the ILO to supervise this right, as a consequence of the dispute, can potentially affect seriously labour relations in our country.

There is a clear link between C87 and the right to strike, you can't have freedom of association without freedom of action of trade union organisations, therefore the right to strike is a "basic right", as is supported by the long standing position of the ILO CEACR. Without the right to strike trade unions are seriously impaired in their capacity to defend the interests of their members, moreover a lawful strike shouldn't be substantially limited in order not to interfere in trade unions activities, one has to keep in mind that a strike is the consequence of a conflict of interests whose major challenge is to reach bipartite/tripartite agreement.

We, therefore, wholeheartedly support the request for a referral from our Workers' representatives in the Governing Body and call for an urgent decision by the Governing Body to ensure an immediate referral of the dispute to the ICJ. In addition, since we firmly believe that the right to strike is an essential part of freedom of association and already elaborated by the ILO supervisory bodies, there will be no added value in a protocol complementing the convention to qualify the right to strike. On the contrary, any such attempt would generate a conflict with C.87 already guaranteeing the right to strike as a fundamental principle and right at work. This would further exacerbate the dispute rather than solve it. We are convinced that legal certainty through an advisory opinion of the ICJ that is binding on the ILO is urgently required.

Yours sincerely,



Mário Mourão
General Secretary



MORADA (Sede)

Rua Vitorino Nemésio, nº5

1750-306 - Lisboa - Portugal

Tel. directo: +351 21 393 12 24

e-mail directo: secretario.geral@ugt.pt

Tel. geral: +351 21 393 12 00 | e-mail geral: geral@ugt.pt

site: www.ugt.pt