

**FOR INFORMATION**

FOURTH ITEM ON THE AGENDA

**Technical cooperation programme
for Colombia**

1. As was reported at the 295th Session (March 2006) of the Governing Body,¹ the resources allocated to the special technical cooperation programme for Colombia were used up by the end of 2005. At the same session, it was reported that the Subregional Office for the Andean Countries, in consultation with the Government and employers' and workers' organizations in Colombia, would draw up four proposals for technical cooperation projects. In that regard, the Government of Colombia expressed its willingness to contribute approximately US\$4.3 million over the next four years to fund these projects, which make up a substantial part of the activities being developed under the "Tripartite Agreement on Freedom of Association and Democracy" and constitute the Decent Work Country Programme for Colombia. The agreement was signed by the social partners and the Government of Colombia, and was submitted to the Committee on the Application of Standards at the 95th Session (June 2006) of the International Labour Conference and to the 297th Session (November 2006) of the Governing Body.² The Office also received US\$15,000 towards the "Tripartite Agreement" from the Trades Union Congress in the United Kingdom.
2. Under the "Tripartite Agreement on Freedom of Association and Democracy", the Government of Colombia undertook to enter into an agreement with the ILO, supported by the social partners, on a renewed presence of the Organization through a representation for promoting decent work, and for promoting and defending the fundamental rights of workers, their trade union leaders and their organizations, specifically as regards their physical integrity, trade union freedoms, freedom of association and of speech and collective bargaining, as well as free enterprise for employers.
3. The representation's mandate was defined jointly with the Government and employers' and workers' organizations in Colombia and was submitted to the 297th Session (November 2006) of the Governing Body.³ The Office accordingly established a representation in Bogotá at the end of 2006.

¹ GB.295/TC/5.

² GB.297/TC/5/2.

³ GB.297/TC/5/2.

4. Anticipating that the financial commitments made by the Government of Colombia and its own commitments would be honoured, the ILO allocated the last of the remaining surplus funds to activities aimed at implementing the “Tripartite Agreement on Freedom of Association and Democracy”; this was brought to the attention of the members of this Committee at the 297th Session (November 2006) of the Governing Body.⁴ At present, since it is not provided for in the Organization’s regular budget, the operation of the ILO representation in Colombia and the presence of the official in charge are being financed by funds from the Regional Office for the Americas and the Subregional Office for the Andean Countries.
5. The ILO representation in Colombia is headed by an official who took up his post in Bogotá on 15 January 2007, and works under the supervision of the Regional Director for the Americas, supported by the Subregional Office for the Andean Countries
6. One of the tasks of the official in charge of the ILO representation is to support the preparation and execution of the Decent Work Country Programme for Colombia. In fulfilling his mandate, he will benefit from the collaboration of ILO experts in the region and at headquarters, who will lend their know-how to activities in their particular field.
7. Since beginning work in Colombia, and on various missions he undertook before 15 December 2006, the officer in charge of the ILO representation has carried out the following activities:
 - He participated in meetings of the Standing Committee on Labour and Wage Policies which, among other things, was charged with setting the minimum wage.
 - He was invited to two meetings with the President of the Republic of Colombia which were attended by the highest authorities from the Ministry of Social Security, trade union leaders from Colombia’s three national trade union confederations and representatives of the chambers of commerce and at which were discussed labour matters of interest to the three sectors.
 - On the second of these occasions, it was proposed that monthly meetings be held with representatives of the sectors present to discuss matters of particular interest or concern to them all. There was also discussion of the need for the Standing Committee on Labour and Wage Policies to meet more regularly and with a proper agenda, so that the matters it discussed could be raised at the monthly meetings convened by the President of the Republic.
 - He has had individual meetings with officials of employers’ and workers’ organizations, as well as with the Minister of Social Security and the Deputy Minister for Labour Relations, with a view to reviving the Special Committee on Disputes submitted to the ILO, so that the many complaints lodged so far by Colombian workers’ organizations can be dealt with as swiftly as possible.
 - He met several representatives of workers’ organizations at the representation’s offices who briefed him on various disputes. It is hoped that the Special Committee on Disputes submitted to the ILO, which is intended as a forum for dialogue and will be attended by the ILO official, will be useful.
 - At the suggestion of some trade union sectors, he was invited to participate in seminars to inform members of Parliament about the content of certain ILO instruments and thereby enrich their discussion of draft legislation.

⁴ GB.297/TC/5/2.

- A meeting is being planned with civil servants from the human rights section of the Ministry of Social Security to prepare a timetable that will enable him, through meetings with officials from the Office of the Attorney General, to learn about the current state of investigations into attacks on members of Colombia’s trade union movement. It is also hoped that the official in charge of the permanent representation will conduct missions into the interior of the country with the same aim.
 - He met the United Nations Resident Coordinator for Colombia with whom he exchanged information on the joint activities being carried out with the heads of agencies in the country.
 - He has begun his meetings with the heads of diplomatic missions and officials from international cooperation agencies to brief them on the role of the ILO representation and to encourage them to help finance or co-finance the projects and other activities defined under the “Tripartite Agreement”.
- 8.** In accordance with the mandate assigned to him by the tripartite constituents at the end of 2006, the official in charge of the ILO representation will prepare a biannual report, for submission to the Standing Committee on Labour and Wage Policies, on the progress made in implementing the “Tripartite Agreement on Freedom of Association and Democracy”. The first report will be submitted in mid-2007 and it is hoped it will show progress in the participation of the social partners in the social dialogue forums described in this document, thus enabling them to collaborate with the Government in defining, implementing and evaluating labour policies so as to guarantee the rights and protect the interests of the trade union movement and employers in Colombia.
- 9.** Lastly, the Government of Colombia and the senior officials of employers’ and workers’ organizations, both nationally and internationally, are to be thanked for their goodwill and cooperation in helping the official in charge of the ILO representation embark upon his mandate.

Geneva, 16 February 2007.

Submitted for information.