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NOTE

from: Presidency/ Commission
to: Council (EPSCO)

Subject: International Labour Conference 2014
-Information from the Presidency and the Commission

Delegations will find attached a note by the Presidency and the Commission on the above subject, with a view to the EPSCO Council on 19 June 2014 (AOB item).

International Labour Conference

(Geneva, 28 May - 12 June 2014)

The key outcome of the 103rd International Labour Conference (ILC) was the adoption, on 11 June 2014, of a new legally binding Protocol and of a Recommendation, designed to strengthen global efforts to eliminate forced labour and to fill the gaps in implementation of the ILO Forced Labour Convention No. 29 from 1930.

The Protocol aims to advance prevention, protection and compensation measures, as well as to intensify efforts to eliminate contemporary forms of forced labour and trafficking in human beings for forced labour. There are currently estimated 21 million forced labour victims worldwide. The Protocol strengthens the international legal framework with binding measures to prevent and eliminate the use of forced labour and compulsory labour, to provide victims with protection, assistance and support as well as with access to effective and appropriate remedies, such as compensation. It also provides for international cooperation in this matter. The Recommendation provides technical guidance on the implementation of these principles.

The ILC further approved amendments to the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC), following their adoption by the Special Tripartite Committee in April this year. The amendments concern the liability of shipowners with respect to compensation for claims due to death, personal injury and abandonment of seafarers, thus improving the protection of seafarers worldwide. At the eve of the ILC, the Council adopted a Decision approving the amendments stemming from the Special Committee.

Following the work of the Committee on employment policies for sustainable recovery and development, the ILC adopted conclusions which foster pro-employment macroeconomic policies, stress the importance of social dialogue and labour market policies and advocate a goal on employment and decent work in post 2015. The conclusions also provide for ILO mandate to continue on analytical work, notably on trade impact, on youth employment, skills and in G20. The ILC further discussed the report of the ILO Director General on fair migration.

Moreover, the ILC agreed to conclusions with a view to negotiating and adopting, at the ILC in 2015, a Recommendation on facilitating transitions from the informal economy to the formal economy. The conclusions recognise the need to address undeclared work with specific measures, but leave some of the key aspects, such as the definition of economic units, access to natural resources, supply chains and subcontracting, for the next years' negotiations.

Last but not least, the Committee on Application of Standards (CAS), reviewed the application of international labour standards on minimum wages and on individual country cases. The EU spoke against human rights violations and made proposals for progressing in the implementation of core labour standards in Belarus, Cambodia, Niger, Swaziland and Yemen. It supported the implementation of the EU Sustainability compact for Bangladesh concluded last year with the government and the ILO on labour law, safety inspections and responsible business conduct. The situation of other ILO members was further discussed, including three EU Member States. However, following a dispute between employers and workers on the right to strike in the standard supervisory system, the ILC was not able to adopt conclusions on 19 out of the 25 country cases examined.