

WELCOME ADDRESS
BY MR KRISH PONNUSAMY, SENIOR CHIEF EXECUTIVE ,
MINISTRY OF PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE, LAND TRANSPORT
AND SHIPPING ON THE OPENING
OF THE
NATIONAL SEMINAR ON ILO MARITIME LABOUR
CONVENTION

Wednesday 10 January 2007 at 09.30h
Domaine Les Pailles

**Dr the Hon A R Beebeejaun, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister
of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping**

Hon A Kasenally, Minister of Public Utilities

Members of the Diplomatic Corps

**Mrs Doumbia Henry, Director International Labour
Standards of International Labour Organisation**

Vice Chancellor, University of Mauritius

Permanent Secretaries

Representatives of Employers

Representatives of Trade Unions

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am pleased to welcome all of you at the opening ceremony of this National Seminar on the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006. A special word of welcome to Mrs Doumbia Henry, the representative of the ILO Director General at our Seminar.

I would like to express our thanks and gratitude to the Hon Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping for having kindly agreed to be present with us to-day to open the seminar.

As you are aware, this national seminar aims at sensitizing all stakeholders on the provisions of the new Maritime Labour Convention and at reaching consensus on an implementation plan.

The Maritime Labour Convention which was adopted on 23 February 2006 at the 94th International Labour Conference has been qualified as a landmark in maritime history. It is to become what has been called the “fourth pillar” of the International regulatory regime for shipping, complementing the key Conventions of the International Maritime Organization, namely (a) SOLAS (Convention on Security and Safety of Life at Sea); (b) MARPOL (Convention against Pollution by ships); and (c) STCW (Convention on Standardization of Training and Watch-keeping).

The Maritime Labour Convention consolidates and updates 68 existing ILO maritime conventions and recommendations adopted since 1920. At the presentation of the Convention, attention was drawn to the fact that the objective of the consolidation was to bring the system of protection contained in existing standards closer to the workers concerned, in a form that is consistent with the rapidly developing, globalized sector. In fact, the shipping sector is highly dynamic and there have been significant developments in the size and nature of activities and the composition of fleets, the methods of shipping management and introduction of new technologies. This has resulted in considerable changes in the conditions of employment of seafarers, the fishing

community and port workers. The changes have affected to a large extent the skills requirements, job opportunities, manning skills, the organization of work on board ships. It is important to underline that maritime activities take care of more than 95% of the cargo involved in global trade.

By setting minimum standards, this Convention offers an excellent guideline to governments, operators and workers. This Convention is very comprehensive as it lays down standards for hours of work and rest, accommodation, recreational facilities, food and catering, health protection, medical care, welfare and social security protection. Compliance and enforcement are secured through onboard and onshore complaint procedures for seafarers, and through provisions regarding shipowners' and shipmasters' supervision of conditions on their ships, flag States' jurisdiction and control over their ships, and port state inspection of foreign ships.

The Convention also provides for a maritime labour certificate, which can be issued to ships once the flag State has verified that labour conditions on board a ship comply with national laws and regulations in line with the Convention.

In view of the significant impact of this international instrument on the maritime sector, we at the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping, have decided, after consulting ILO, and with the blessing of the Deputy Prime Minister, to hold this national seminar, to enable us to identify areas in our legislation and administrative procedures which need to be reinforced. We therefore expect the participants representing private sector operators, trade unions, fishing operators and

officials from relevant ministries and National Remuneration Board, to participate fully and share their experiences and ideas.

While in London last week, I discussed common issues with IMO officials and amongst the officials was Mr Gaetano Librando, an IMO specialist on the Maritime Labour Convention. I apprised him of the holding of this seminar and he was pleased that Mauritius had taken such a decision. He was full of praise for the gigantic work performed by the ILO and stated that the Maritime Labour Convention had received immense support from the International Maritime Organisation.

The formulation of a national plan for the implementation of the Convention would facilitate our task as it would be the outcome of our collective efforts. A recommendation on the ratification by the Government of Mauritius of the Maritime Labour Convention 2006 will be made after the holding of the seminar.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank very warmly the ILO which has funded the seminar and provided us with the valuable services of Mr. Dani Appave, ILO Expert from the Maritime Sector and Mrs. Doumbia Henry, the Director of the International Labour Standards Division.

I wish also to thank the Permanent Secretary, Mrs Nababsing, for the excellent seminar arrangements and the officers of the Shipping Division who have prepared reports on the labour standards in shipping in Mauritius, which they will present during the Seminar. We hope that this meeting of stakeholders concerned will spark interesting debates, leading us to some firm recommendations.

With these words, I thank you for your kind attention and have much pleasure to invite Mrs Doumbia Henry to deliver her address and give us an insight into the issues to be discussed during this Seminar.