

MICHAEL SOMMER
PRESIDENT
PRÉSIDENT
PRÄSIDENT
PRESIDENTE

SHARAN BURROW
GENERAL SECRETARY
SECÉTAIRE GÉNÉRALE
GENERALSEKRETÄRIN
SECRETARIA GENERAL

Honourable Sebastián Piñera
President of the Republic of Chile
Palacio de La Moneda Teatinos 120
Pisa 9
8340382 Santiago
Chile
Fax: +56 2 687 9339/ +56 2 690 4138
E-mail: ebustamante@minmineria.cl
pastorga@mintrab.gob.cl

ESP/AR

14 March 2011

Dear Mr President,

The International Trade Union Confederation and its 301 national centres closely followed the dramatic rescue last October of 33 miners at the San José mine in Chile's northern Region II. We were particularly pleased when you announced days after the rescue on a live BBC telecast from London that Chile would ratify ILO Convention 176, the Safety and Health in Mines Convention. This was of enormous importance for the trade union movement, as experts' assessments have shown that this accident would have never happened if the Convention would have been applied. You also stated that Chile would modernise its national mine safety regulations and code.

Unfortunately, we now learn that none of these commitments have been realised, and Chile, a major producer of minerals and metals, remains outside the bounds of international mine standards.

Mr President, on several occasions you have highlighted the importance of realising sustainable development in Chile, and the fundamental role workers were called to play upon, inspired by the courage, solidarity and vision the 33 miners shown in this dramatic circumstance. It is our belief that Chile's sustainable development must start from a cohesive and coherent mine safety culture, that includes representation by mineworkers and their trade unions and the respect of their rights, and is composed of necessary components of monitoring, technical expertise and judicial powers.

You have stated several times that Chile had learned its lesson from San José and would chart such a course. The ITUC joins its Global Unions' partners ICEM and IMF in insisting that the necessary measures be implemented to ensure mine safety so Chilean workers can earn a decent livelihood without risking their lives and health, and Chile can be considered a world-class mining nation.

Yours sincerely,



General Secretary