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PRESS RELEASE

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Delegation from International Metalworkers' Federation meets with Mexican Labour Minister

A high-level international delegation composed of representatives of the International Metalworkers' Federation (IMF), United Steelworkers (USW) from Canada and the U.S. and AFL-CIO, as well as prestigious lawyers, met yesterday with Mexican Labour Minister, Javier Lozano Alarcón, to discuss three important issues dealing with:

Rescuing the bodies of 63 miners that still remain trapped in the Pasta de Conchos mine after the accident of 19 February 2006. The international delegation reiterated officially the availability of international coal-mine-rescue experts from the United States, Canada and Australia that would be willing to assist in rescuing the bodies of the miners. The international delegation stated that for these rescue experts to provide their expertise, it was necessary to have the authorization and support of the mining company, Grupo Mexico, and the Mexican Government.

Investigating what caused the accident at the Pasta de Conchos Mine. The International Metalworkers' Federation (IMF) proposed the participation of international experts from the International Labour Organization (ILO) to be charged with investigating the causes of this deadly accident, and thus contributing to:

- Adopting preventive measures to avoid future accidents in any other mines;
- Identifying those responsible for the accident, and their prosecution.

Respect of trade union autonomy in Mexico. The international delegation asks the Mexican Government to fully respect union autonomy and recognize Napoleón Gómez Urrutia as the democratically elected leader of the National Miners' and Metalworkers' Union (SNTMMSRM). The international delegation emphatically asks the Government to deal with this problem, which was created by the former administration, urgently. The IMF, representing the collective interests of 25 million metalworkers worldwide, has submitted a complaint at the ILO against the Mexican government, with particular reference to violations to ILO Convention #87 on Freedom of Association and the Right to Organize.

The Labour Minister, Javier Lozano Alarcón, accepted the offer presented by the IMF and said he will be taking the necessary steps to implement this measure. The Minister of Labour also expressed the commitment of his administration to respect trade union autonomy, which must be determination by the workers themselves.

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