



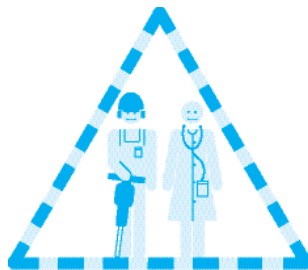
International
Labour
Office

GLOBAL STRATEGY ON OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH

Conclusions adopted
by the International Labour Conference
at its 91st Session, 2003

Global Strategy on Occupational Safety and Health

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International Labour Office

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Decent Work must be Safe Work

In June 2003, the International Labour Conference discussed the International Labour Organization's standards-related activities in the area of occupational safety and health. The discussion took place in the context of the tripartite Committee on Occupational Safety and Health comprising 104 Government members, 37 Employer members and 58 Worker members

Ever since it was founded in 1919, the subject of occupational safety and health has been at the heart of the ILO's work, including its standards-setting activities. The 2003 discussion attracted a high level of interest among delegates and reflected the importance which ILO constituents continue to attach to the issue of occupational safety and health.

We are pleased to reproduce the Conclusions of the Conference in this document. We hope that it will be a useful resource for all who aim to promote and protect workers' safety and health.

Occupational accidents and diseases cause great human suffering and loss. The economic cost is high. Yet public awareness of occupational safety and health tends to be low. All too frequently it does not get the priority it merits. This must change and action needs to be stimulated and accelerated nationally and internationally.

The Conference Conclusions outline a global strategy on occupational safety and health. They confirm the role of ILO instruments as a central pillar for the promotion of occupational safety and health. At the same time they also call for integrated action that better connects the ILO standards with other means of action such

as advocacy, awareness raising, knowledge development, management, information dissemination and technical cooperation to maximize impact.

The Conclusions pinpoint the need for tripartite national commitment and national action in fostering a preventive approach and a safety culture which are key to achieving lasting improvements in safety and health at work.

The ILO and its constituents must be leaders in promoting occupational safety and health at work. Together we must build the partnerships that are needed to bring about the changes we seek.

Decent Work must be Safe Work. These Conference Conclusions provide guidance to the ILO and its constituents to make this a reality.

Juan Somavia
Director-General

Conclusions concerning ILO standards-related activities in the area of occupational safety and health – A global strategy

1. The magnitude of the global impact of occupational accidents and diseases, as well as major industrial disasters, in terms of human suffering and related economic costs, have been a long-standing source of concern at workplace, national and international levels. Significant efforts have been made at all levels to come to terms with this problem, but nevertheless ILO estimates are that over 2 million workers die each year from work-related accidents and diseases, and that globally this figure is on the increase. OSH has been a central issue for the ILO ever since its creation in 1919 and continues to be a fundamental requirement for achieving the objectives of the Decent Work Agenda.
2. In addition to established measures to prevent and control hazards and risks, new strategies and solutions need to be developed and applied both for well-known hazards and risks such as those arising from dangerous substances, machinery and tools and manual handling as well as for emerging issues, such as biological hazards, psychosocial hazards and musculo-skeletal disorders. Furthermore, as OSH is an intrinsic part of social relations it is affected by the same forces of change that prevail in national and global socio-economic contexts. The effects

of demographic factors and dynamics, employment shifts and work organization changes, gender differentiation, the size, structure and life cycles of enterprises, the fast pace of technological progress, are examples of the key issues that can generate new types of patterns of hazards, exposures and risks. The development of an appropriate response to these issues should rely on and make use of the collective body of knowledge, experience and good practice in this area. Safety and health measures are undertaken to create and sustain a safe and healthy working environment; furthermore, such measures can also improve quality, productivity and competitiveness.

3. Although effective legal and technical tools, methodologies and measures to prevent occupational accidents and diseases exist, there is a need for an increased general awareness of the importance of OSH as well as a high level of political commitment for effective implementation of national OSH systems. Efforts to tackle OSH problems, whether at international or national levels, are often dispersed and fragmented and as a result do not have the level of coherence necessary to produce effective impact. There is thus a need to give higher priority to OSH at international, national and enterprise levels and to engage all social partners to initiate and sustain mechanisms for a continued improvement of national OSH systems. Given its tripartite participation and recognized global mandate in the area of OSH, the ILO is particularly well equipped to make a real impact in the world of work through such a strategy.
4. The fundamental pillars of a global OSH strategy include the building and maintenance of a national preventative safety and health culture and the introduction of a systems approach to OSH management. A national preventative safety and health culture is one in which the right to a safe and healthy working environment is respected at all levels, where governments, employers and workers actively participate in securing a safe and healthy working environment through a system of defined rights, responsibilities and duties, and where the principle of prevention is accorded the highest priority. Building and

maintaining a preventative safety and health culture require making use of all available means to increase general awareness, knowledge and understanding of the concepts of hazards and risks and how they may be prevented or controlled. A systems approach to OSH management at the enterprise level has recently been developed in the ILO Guidelines on Occupational Safety and Health Management Systems (ILO-OSH 2001). Building on this concept and related methodology, the global OSH strategy advocates the application of a systems approach to the management of national OSH systems.

An ILO action plan for the promotion of safety and health at work

I. Promotion, awareness raising and advocacy

5. The fostering and promotion of a preventative safety and health culture is a fundamental basis for improving OSH performance in the long term. Multiple approaches could be taken for this purpose. Since the promotion of such a preventative culture is very much a leadership issue, the ILO has to play an advocacy role with regard to different initiatives. Therefore the ILO should:
 - endorse the establishment of an annual international event or campaign (world day or a safety and health week) aimed at raising widespread awareness of the importance of OSH and promoting the rights of workers to a safe and healthy working environment. Such an initiative should respect the workers' commemoration event organized since 1984 on 28 April;
 - seek ways to raise visibility of the ILO and its OSH instruments;
 - launch a global knowledge and awareness campaign focused on promoting the concept of "sound management of safety and health at work" as the most effective means for achieving strong and sustained preventative safety and health culture at both the national and enterprise levels;

- strategically use international meetings to promote a preventative safety and health culture including the triennial World Congress on Occupational Safety and Health organized jointly by the ILO and the International Social Security Association;
- internally implement its own guidelines on OSH management systems;
- encourage the launching of national OSH programmes by the highest government authorities.

II. ILO instruments

6. A new instrument establishing a promotional framework in the area of OSH should be developed on a priority basis. The main purpose of this instrument should be to ensure that a priority is given to OSH in national agendas and to foster political commitments to develop, in a tripartite context, national strategies for the improvement of OSH based on a preventative safety and health culture and the management systems approach. In its function as an overarching instrument with a promotional rather than prescriptive content, it would also contribute to increasing the impact of existing up-to-date ILO instruments and to a continuous improvement of national OSH systems including legislation, supporting measures and enforcement. Such a practical and constructive instrument should promote, inter alia, the right of workers to a safe and healthy working environment; the respective responsibilities of governments, employers and workers; the establishment of tripartite consultation mechanisms on OSH; the formulation and implementation of national OSH programmes based on the principles of assessment and management of hazards and risks at the workplace level; initiatives fostering a preventative safety and health culture; and worker participation and representation at all relevant levels. It should strive to avoid duplication of provisions which are in existing instruments. In order to enable an exchange of experience and good practice on OSH in this respect, the instrument should include a mechanism for reporting on achievements and progress.

7. As regards revisions, priority should be given to the revision of the Guarding of Machinery Convention, 1963 (No. 119), and the Guarding of Machinery Recommendation, 1963 (No. 118), and the revision of the Lead Poisoning (Women and Children) Recommendation, 1919 (No. 4), the White Phosphorus Recommendation, 1919 (No. 6), the White Lead (Painting) Convention, 1921 (No. 13), the Benzene Convention, 1971 (No. 136), and the Benzene Recommendation, 1971 (No. 144), in a consolidated manner by a Protocol to the Chemicals Convention, 1990 (No. 170).
8. With a view to increasing the relevance of ILO instruments, the development of new instruments in the areas of ergonomics and biological hazards should be given the highest priority. Priority should also be given to the development of a new instrument on the guarding of machinery in the form of a code of practice. Consideration should also be given to work-related psychosocial hazards for further ILO activities.
9. Occupational safety and health is an area which is in constant technical evolution. High-level instruments to be developed should therefore focus on key principles. Requirements that are more subject to obsolescence should be addressed through detailed guidance in the form of codes of practice and technical guidelines. The ILO should develop a methodology for a systematic updating of such codes and guidelines.

III. Technical assistance and cooperation

10. It is important to provide technical advisory and financial support to developing countries and countries in transition for the timely strengthening of their national OSH capacities and programmes. This is of particular importance in the context of rapid changes in global economy and technology. In developing technical cooperation programmes, priority should be given to the countries where the assistance is most needed and where the commitment for sustained action is obvious, for example in

the form of initiated national OSH programmes. The formulation and implementation of technical cooperation projects, beginning with a needs assessment at the national, regional and international levels, are the effective ways in this regard. Where possible, these projects should have a multiplier effect at the regional level and be self-sustaining in the long term. Together with its constituents, the ILO should make special efforts to seek the support of donor countries and institutions as well as innovative funding sources for such purposes along with increasing OSH experts in the regions. Experiences gained through technical cooperation projects should be widely shared, particularly at the regional level.

- 11.** The formulation of national OSH programmes, which has been promoted by the ILO in recent years, is an effective way to consolidate national tripartite efforts in improving national OSH systems. The endorsement and launching of a national OSH programme by the highest government authority, for example by the Head of State, government or parliament, would have a significant impact on strengthening national OSH capacities and mobilization of national and international resources. It is essential to ensure the active participation of employers, workers and all relevant government institutions in the formulation and implementation of the programme. The programme should be developed on the basis of the achievements and needs of each country aiming at the improvement of national OSH systems and their capacity and OSH performance.
- 12.** National OSH programmes should cover key aspects such as national policy, high-level commitment and vision that are publicly expressed and documented, national strategy that would include the development of a national OSH profile, targets, indicators, responsibilities, resources, and government leadership. Such programmes would strengthen national government departments and their OSH inspection and enforcement systems, OSH service structures, employers' and workers' organizations focused on OSH, information centres and networks, cross-cutting education and training systems,

research and analytic structures, occupational injury and disease compensation and rehabilitation systems that include experience rating and incentives, voluntary and tripartite programmes and structures, as well as advocacy and promotion.

13. In developing methodologies to assist in the establishment and implementation of national OSH programmes, consideration should be given to the elaboration of appropriate and practical input, process and output indicators designed to provide a tool for the evaluation of progress by constituents, as well as a basis for periodic review and identification of future priorities for action in the prevention of occupational accidents and diseases.
14. The capacities and expertise of ILO field structures in the area of OSH should be strengthened to better address the needs of constituents in this area. The means of communication between ILO headquarters and its field offices should be streamlined and improved to ensure that available country data can be analysed and used effectively for planning and developing projects.

IV. Knowledge development, management and dissemination

15. In the field of OSH, adequate capacities to develop, process and disseminate knowledge that meets the needs of governments, employers and workers – be it international standards, national legislation, technical guidance, methodologies, accident and disease statistics, best practice, educational and training tools, research or hazard and risk assessment data, in whatever medium, language and format needed – are a prerequisite for identifying key priorities, developing coherent and relevant strategies, and implementing national OSH programmes. The ILO should continue to improve its means to assist constituents in developing their capacities in this area, and responding to their specific needs, particularly in the establishment or strengthening of the national and collaborating centres of the ILO's International Occupational Safety and Health Information Centre (CIS) and linking

these centres through the Internet to form regional networks and a global OSH information exchange system that could also serve as the backbone for a global hazard alert system.

- 16.** The ILO should foster research on particular priority subjects in the area of OSH, preferably in collaboration with other interested organizations, as a basis for decision-making and action.
- 17.** Free access to ILO OSH information to all who need it should be granted through all available dissemination means and networks such as CD-ROM and the Internet. Assistance to constituents in the translation of key OSH documents and materials in local languages is vital. The ILO should collaborate with other interested organizations and bodies in integrating the ILO's information centres and networks into wider global OSH information networks designed to provide constituents with easy access to key quality and multilingual OSH information and databases, particularly in the areas of OSH legislation, technical and scientific guidance, training and education materials, and best practice. The sharing of successful experience and approaches among all those involved in safety and health is the most efficient way of facilitating the development of practical preventative measures for new and traditional problems. Access to such a body of knowledge would also facilitate the ILO's task of identifying key trends and updating its instruments accordingly.
- 18.** The ILO should contribute to international and national efforts aimed at developing harmonized methods for the collection and analysis of data on occupational accidents and diseases. Methodologies should also be designed to assist constituents in the techniques of information collection, analysis, processing and dissemination, and on the use of reliable information in planning, prioritizing and decision-making processes.
- 19.** It is essential to provide education to raise awareness of OSH issues to all starting from schools and other educational and training institutions. In addition, certain groups

need more advanced OSH education and training, including management, supervisors, workers and their representatives, and government officials responsible for safety and health.

20. The ILO should develop practical and easy-to-use training materials and methods focused on the “train-the-trainer” approach on key aspects of safety and health at work and improve the capacities of the ILO field structures in the area of OSH information dissemination and provision of training, and in particular those of the ILO’s training centres. The ILO should support developing countries in the establishment of relevant OSH training mechanisms to reach all workers and their representatives and employers. Training should focus on supporting preventative action and on finding practical solutions. Vulnerable workers and workers in the informal economy should be given special consideration. The ILO training package on Work Improvements in Small Enterprises (WISE) has been used in many countries resulting in concrete improvements at enterprises. WISE and other training materials should be further improved and made widely available at low cost. OSH education curricula should be developed at the appropriate level.

V. International collaboration

21. Collaboration with international organizations and bodies involved in various activities related to OSH, in particular with WHO, has proven to be a very effective way of ensuring that ILO values and views are taken into account and used as a basis for the development of technical standards and methodologies pertaining to OSH. This collaboration puts the ILO at the centre of global networks and alliances that are vital mechanisms for maintaining the currency of its technical knowledge base as well as influencing other bodies. It is also very effective in ensuring complementarities of mandates and avoidance of duplication of efforts, and opens opportunities for employer and worker experts to bring their

views to bear on outcomes outside the mandate of the ILO.

22. In taking action to further improve the visibility, streamlining and impact of the ILO's role in OSH, consideration should be given to a periodic review of activities in this context and reporting to the Governing Body of the ILO on key issues and outcomes. This type of collaboration should be further encouraged and strengthened, particularly in areas where common interests and mandates are shared between several organizations and where outcomes of activities are of benefit to the ILO's constituents, such as the work of the ILO/WHO Joint Committee on Occupational Health, the International Programme on Chemical Safety, the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC) and the International Commission on Occupational Health (ICOH). Within the context of ongoing efforts by the United Nations Environment Programme, the Inter-governmental Forum on Chemical Safety and the IOMC in developing a strategic approach to integrated chemicals management, the ILO should contribute to this work and ensure the full participation of employers' and workers' organizations in this process so that their views and interests are duly taken into account. The final outcome of this process should be presented to the ILO decision-making bodies for consideration.

General considerations

23. In developing and implementing the global strategy, the ILO should make special efforts in relation to countries with particular needs for assistance and willing to strengthen their OSH capacities. Other means that could be considered at a national level as part of strategies to improve working conditions at the enterprise level, including SMEs and informal economy undertakings, and for vulnerable workers, including young, disabled and migrant workers, and the self-employed, include: extending coverage of legal requirements, strengthening the

capacities of enforcement and inspection systems, and focusing these capacities towards the provision of technical advice and assistance in the area of OSH; the use of financial incentives; initiatives to strengthen linkages between primary health-care systems and occupational health; the introduction of hazard, risk and prevention concepts in school curricula and educational systems in general (prevention through education) as an effective means to build strong and sustained preventative safety and health cultures on a continuous basis. A further consideration is the need to take account of gender specific factors in the context of OSH standards, other instruments, management systems and practice. Within the Office, the mainstreaming of OSH in other ILO activities should be improved. Furthermore, the integrated approach should be progressively applied to all other areas of ILO activities. Finally, due consideration should be given to the provision of adequate resources to implement this action plan.

Annex

ILO OSH instruments – Ratifications and status

The following tables include a chronological list of Conventions, Recommendations and codes of practice, as well as the status of each Convention and Recommendation listed as decided by the Governing Body on the basis of the recommendations of the Working Party on Policy regarding the Revision of Standards of the Committee on Legal Issues and International Labour Standards (LILS/WP/PRS).

Conventions

Instrument	Ratifications (as at 01.03.04)	Status
White Lead (Painting) Convention, 1921 (No. 13)	62	To be revised
Marking of Weight (Packages Transported by Vessels) Convention, 1929 (No.27)	65	To be revised
Underground Work (Women) Convention, 1935 (No. 45)	97	Interim status
Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81)	130	Up-to-date instrument
Protocol of 1995 to the Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (P. 81)	10	Up-to-date instrument
Radiation Protection Convention, 1960 (No. 115)	47	Up-to-date instrument
Guarding of Machinery Convention, 1963 (No. 119)	50	To be revised
Hygiene (Commerce and Offices) Convention, 1964 (No. 120)	49	Up-to-date instrument
Maximum Weight Convention, 1967 (No. 127)	25	To be revised
Labour Inspection (Agriculture) Convention, 1969 (No. 129)	41	Up-to-date instrument
Benzene Convention, 1971 (No. 136)	36	To be revised
Occupational Cancer Convention, 1974 (No. 139)	35	Up-to-date instrument
Working Environment (Air Pollution, Noise and Vibration) Convention, 1977 (No. 148)	41	Up-to-date instrument
Occupational Safety and Health (Dock Work) Convention, 1979 (No. 152)	20	Up-to-date instrument
Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155)	41	Up-to-date instrument
Occupational Health Services Convention, 1985 (No. 161)	22	Up-to-date instrument
Asbestos Convention, 1986 (No. 162)	27	Up-to-date instrument
Safety and Health in Construction Convention, 1988 (No. 167)	17	Up-to-date instrument
Chemicals Convention, 1990 (No. 170)	11	Up-to-date instrument

Conventions (cont.)

Instrument	Ratifications (as at 01.03.04)	Status
Prevention of Major Industrial Accidents Convention, 1993 (No. 174)	9	Up-to-date instrument
Safety and Health in Mines Convention, 1995 (No. 176)	20	Up-to-date instrument
Safety and Health in Agriculture Convention, 2001 (No. 184)	3	Up-to-date instrument
Protocol of 2002 to the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (P. 155)	2	Up-to-date instrument

Recommendations

Instrument	Status
Anthrax Prevention Recommendation, 1919 (No. 3)	To be revised
Lead Poisoning (Women and Children) Recommendation, 1919 (No. 4)	To be revised
White Phosphorus Recommendation, 1919 (No. 6)	To be revised
Prevention of Industrial Accidents Recommendation, 1929 (No. 31)	Interim status
Labour Inspection Recommendation, 1947 (No. 81)	Up-to-date instrument
Labour Inspection (Mining and Transport) Recommendation, 1947 (No. 82) Up-to-date instrument	Up-to-date instrument
Protection of Workers' Health Recommendation, 1953 (No. 97)	Up-to-date instrument
Welfare Facilities Recommendation, 1956 (No. 102)	Up-to-date instrument
Radiation Protection Recommendation, 1960 (No. 114)	Up-to-date instrument
Workers' Housing Recommendation, 1961 (No. 115)	Up-to-date instrument
Guarding of Machinery Recommendation, 1963 (No. 118)	To be revised
Hygiene (Commerce and Offices) Recommendation, 1964 (No. 120)	Up-to-date instrument
Maximum Weight Recommendation, 1967 (No. 128)	To be revised
Labour Inspection (Agriculture) Recommendation, 1969 (No. 133)	Up-to-date instrument
Benzene Recommendation, 1971 (No. 144)	To be revised
Occupational Cancer Recommendation, 1974 (No. 147)	Up-to-date instrument
Working Environment (Air Pollution, Noise and Vibration) Recommendation, 1977 (No. 156)	Up-to-date instrument
Occupational Safety and Health (Dock Work) Recommendation, 1979	Up-to-date instrument
Occupational Safety and Health Recommendation, 1981 (No. 164)	Up-to-date instrument
Occupational Health Services Recommendation, 1985 (No. 171)	Up-to-date instrument
Asbestos Recommendation, 1986 (No. 172)	Up-to-date instrument

Recommendations (cont.)

Instrument	Status
Safety and Health in Construction Recommendation, 1988 (No. 175)	Up-to-date instrument
Chemicals Recommendation, 1990 (No. 177)	Up-to-date instrument
Prevention of Major Industrial Accidents Recommendation, 1993 (No. 181)	Up-to-date instrument
Safety and Health in Mines Recommendation, 1995 (No. 183)	Up-to-date instrument
Safety and Health in Agriculture Recommendation, 2001 (No. 192)	Up-to-date instrument
List of Occupational Diseases Recommendation, 2002 (No. 194)	Up-to-date instrument

Codes of practice

- Occupational exposure to airborne substances harmful to health, 1980.
- Safety in the use of asbestos, 1984.
- Safety and health in coal mines, 1986.
- Radiation protection of workers (ionizing radiation), 1987.
- Safety, health and working conditions in the transfer of technology to developing countries, 1988.
- Safety and health in opencast mines, 1991.
- Prevention of major industrial accidents, 1991.
- Safety and health in construction, 1992.
- Technical and ethical guidelines for workers' health surveillance, 1992.
- Safety in the use of chemicals at work, 1993.
- Recording and notification of occupational accidents and diseases, 1995.
- Management of alcohol- and drug-related issues in the workplace, 1996.
- Protection of workers' personal data, 1997.
- Safety and health in forestry work, 1998.
- Use of synthetic vitreous fibre insulation wools (glass wool, rock wool, slag wool), 2000.
- Guidelines on occupational safety and health management systems, 2001.
- Ambient factors in the workplace, 2001.
- HIV/AIDS and the world of work, 2001.
- Safety and health in the non-ferrous metals industries, 2003.



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