

For the first time this year that the International Labor Organization is taking the initiative via the Bureau for Workers Activities (ACTRAV) to mark the International Commemoration Day for Dead and Injured Workers which has been observed at the initiative of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) since 1996 by the trade union movement.

union celebrations
in many countries,
during the ninth
Sustainable



This ceremony will coincide with
held on 28 April 2001
and in particular
UN Commission on
Development (CSD)

currently being held in New York.

Purpose

The purpose of this commemoration day is to highlight the preventable nature of workplace accidents and ill health and promote awareness raising campaigns as to safety and health problems in general, and in particular the sectors of agriculture and construction.

Safe & Sustainable Workplaces for All Workers

Safe & sustainable workplaces for all workers is the overriding theme of 2001. "Cancer in all forms but primarily related to asbestos" is the first sub-theme, and "workplace accidents and injuries caused by unsustainable agriculture" is the second sub-theme.

Did you know that :

- 1.3 million worker deaths occur each year (that is 3, 300 worker a day) due to unsustainable production. This is nearly double the deaths caused by war, and more than those caused by malaria;
- Each year, 12,000 die at work;
- 335, 000 deaths are due to fatal accidents at work;
- An estimated 900, 000 occupational or work related diseases occur annually many of which are caused by hazardous substances;
- Over 160 million new injuries and work related diseases are reported each year;
- Asbestos used in the construction sector alone claims about 100,000 lives. In fact, 20% of all cancer deaths are work related;
- Agriculture and construction rank as two of the three most hazardous occupations in both developing and industrialized countries, alongside mining.

- In several countries, the fatal accident rate in agriculture is double the average for all other industries. According to ILO estimates, workers suffer 250 million accidents every year;
- According to WHO estimates, about 3.5-5 million people are poisoned by pesticides every year, and 40,000 fatally;
- Out of a total 335,000 fatal workplace accidents in the world, there are some 170,000 agricultural workers;
- An estimated 55,000 fatalities occur each year at construction sites around the world.

What can be done?

In light of the above figures, it becomes of utmost importance that employers and Governments together with trade unions address the issue of occupational accidents and ill health which remains, in addition to a human catastrophe, a considerable burden on a country's budget.

Time to act

We hope that this International Commemoration Day for Dead and Injured Workers will serve as a reminder of the real suffering behind the negotiations that are undertaken during international conferences and meetings. A reminder of the need for a concrete global effort and consensus, through the International Labour Organization, so as to alleviate human suffering: towards setting a standard in occupational health and safety in agriculture and leading to more ratifications by all countries to abide by the Asbestos Convention, 1986 (No. 162), the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155), and the Safety and Health in Construction Convention, 1988 (No. 167), to name only a few Conventions related to the themes of this year.

Action at the ILO: SafeWork

The primary objectives of SafeWork are: to create worldwide awareness of the dimensions and consequences of work-related accidents, injuries and diseases; to promote the goal of basic protection for all workers in conformity with international labor standards; and to enhance the capacity of both member States and industry to design and implement effective preventive and protective policies and programmes.

