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Committee on Occupational Health**

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**Working Document**

**ILO's perspective on integrated approach to occupational safety and  
health**



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## Introduction

1. The primary goal of the ILO is to promote opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and dignity. In this formulation of decent work in the context of ILO action, the protection of workers against work-related sickness, disease and injury, as embodied in the Preamble to the Constitution of the ILO, is an essential element of security and continues to be a high priority for the ILO. While operationally the InFocus Programme on Safety and Health at Work and the Environment (SafeWork) represents a focal point for the ILO's work in this area, concern for occupational safety and health (OSH) is engrained in the very fabric of the daily activities of the Office in a large number of the areas of action presented under the ILO's four strategic objectives (Promote and realize standards and fundamental principles and right at work; create greater opportunities for women and men to secure decent employment and income; enhance the coverage and effectiveness of social protection for all; and strengthen tripartite and social dialogue).
2. Over the years, the ILO has multiplied the number of tools and activities in which it is engaged in order to carry out its mission. This multiplication stems from the realization that actual impact requires more than the signature of an instrument of ratification of an ILO Convention and that such a signature does not by itself guarantee that the objectives the constituents articulated in such an instrument will become reality. The promotion of standards is thus a fundamental task, and an indispensable complement to the process of developing them. There are many standards to be promoted and transformed into reality and the ILO's normative mission has to be carried out on a large number of fronts at the same time. But today, the role and function of the diverse activities in relation to the standards which they are intended to promote, and vice versa, does not appear to be sufficiently clear. Furthermore, as different standards-related activities – development, supervision, promotion, technical assistance and cooperation – are functionally separated within the Office, it is institutionally difficult and cumbersome to create synergies and avoid fragmentation of action and dispersion of resources, both human and financial.
3. Remedying this situation is a major challenge. It is against these backgrounds that at its 279th Session (November 2000) the Governing Body of the ILO decided to apply on an experimental basis an integrated approach to ILO standards-related activities in order to increase their coherence, relevance and impact. This approach aims to develop a consensus among the ILO's constituents on a plan of action in a specific subject area through a general discussion at the International Labour Conference. A plan of action which reflects the common vision of the ILO constituents is expected to have great potential to help realize increased synergies between the standards and related activities of the ILO. It will address not only standards – Conventions and Recommendations – but also other types of instruments such as codes of practice, as well as promotional activities, technical cooperation and the dissemination of information. The Governing Body selected ILO standards-related activities in the area of occupational safety and health as the first subject for this approach and included a general discussion on this item on the agenda of the 91st Session (2003) of the International Labour Conference.

## The place of OSH in ILO actions

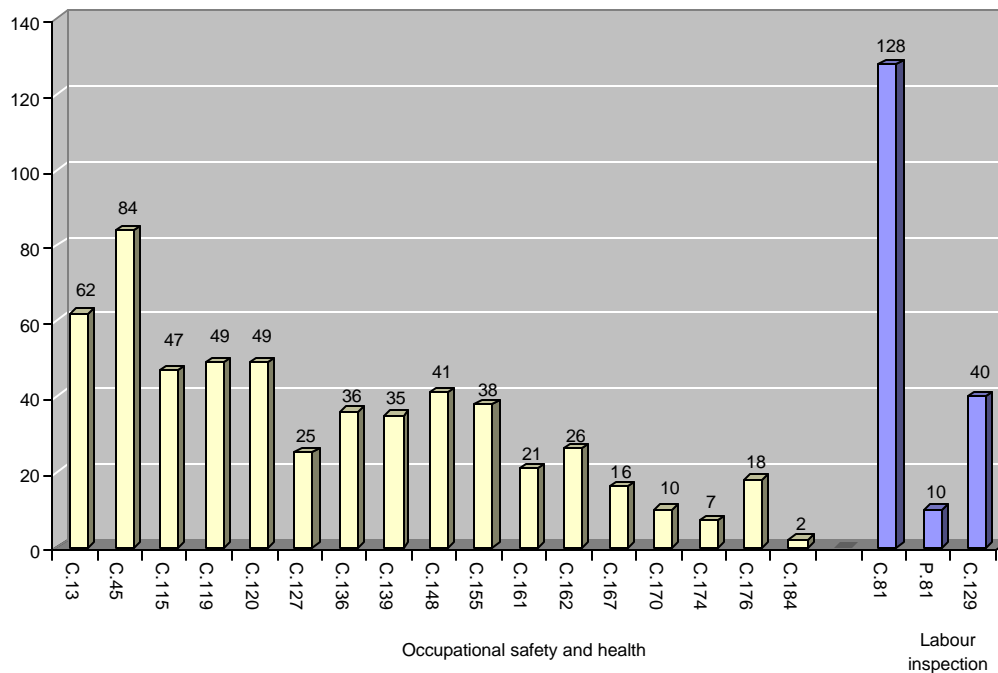
4. At the First Session of the International Labour Conference in 1919, the ILO adopted the White Phosphorous Recommendation 1919 (No. 6). This instrument invited ILO member

States to ratify the Berne Convention of 1906. This is one of the earliest international conventions on occupational safety and health and it was aimed at banning the use of white phosphorous. Since the mid-nineteenth century white phosphorous was widely used in the match-making industry, however it caused matchmakers – mostly children – to contract the dreaded, disfiguring “phossy jaw.” What compounded the tragedies caused by this occupational hazard was that they were avoidable. Another non-hazardous form of phosphorus, red phosphorus, worked just as well for making matches. However, the abundance of cheap labour and the absence of industrial health regulations made a shift in production patterns slow. It took legal compulsion, along with international action, to eventually eliminate the problem. This example illustrates the issues that are still today at the heart of ILO work and of the decent work paradigm in terms of worker protection, economic constraints and the role of regulatory mechanisms in maintaining compliance with ethical principles, rights and obligations.

5. Since the turn of the twentieth century when the first legal relationships between exposure to hazards and the world of work were being established, occupational safety and health has grown into a multifaceted discipline. This discipline has implications not only for human lives, enterprise development and national efforts to increase productivity and alleviate poverty, but also for the human environment. It is also recognized today as an essential component in the global efforts to develop production and consumption patterns which are sustainable and which respect the global environment in the face of increasing demographic pressures.
6. The place of occupational safety and health, particularly in relation to chemicals, on the global agenda was discussed in August 2002 when the world community met in Johannesburg to develop a global consensus on how to integrate social, economic and environmental policies to achieve globally sustainable development. Cleaner production systems and the environmentally sound management of chemicals were advocated. The strong link between OSH and public health was recognized with the recommendation to strengthen and promote ILO and World Health Organization (WHO) programmes aimed at reducing occupational deaths, injuries and illnesses, and enhancing the integration of occupational health and public health to increase synergies and improve overall health levels.
7. Through a unique tripartite consensus-building process the ILO contributes to setting minimum standards in the form of Conventions and Recommendations. International labour standards are adopted by the International Labour Conference. Contrary to Recommendations, Conventions are destined to create legally binding commitments for member States, which are subject to international supervision by the ILO. While Recommendations most often accompany Conventions on the same subject, they may also be autonomous and provide guidance on the subject matter they regulate. International labour standards are inspired by, and rely on, existing national law and practice. For some countries, a comparison of national law and practice with international standards may reflect a large level of correspondence with existing national standards, while for others it may highlight a gap that should be filled. For yet others, the protection offered in the national context goes beyond that provided for in international standards. Whatever the situation may be at the national level, at the global level international labour standards are designed to be a dynamic element, a driving force and a goal for the constituents to achieve.

8. International labour standards have not been designed as a comprehensive legal code but are a series of individual instruments, where Conventions are individual treaties subject to ratification and Recommendations are non-binding instruments. By ratifying a Convention, a State undertakes to apply the provisions of that Convention, and that Convention alone. Unless expressly provided there are no legal links between Conventions. Those principally concerned as beneficiaries of the rights and duties contained in the standards are persons and entities engaged in the world of work. But, it is through action by member States to give effect to adopted standards and – more specifically – to comply with the legal obligation of implementing provisions in ratified Conventions that standards are expected to achieve a real and tangible impact for those concerned. Although it is an incomplete measure, the legal undertaking to comply has justified the traditional use of ratification levels as a convenient measure of impact. Information on the actual situation at the national level is made available through the regular reporting systems on which the supervisory system is based.

Figure 1. Number of ratifications of ILO occupational safety and health and labour inspection Conventions as at 1 January 2003



9. What has been the impact of ILO efforts in the area of occupational safety and health? If the ratification levels of the relevant Conventions are taken as a measure then there is cause for concern. A look at the number of ratifications that they have attracted is telling (see figure 1). The Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81) – a priority Convention – has attracted a significant level of ratifications. The two OSH instruments that have attracted the highest numbers of ratifications (Underground Work (Women) Convention, 1935 (No. 45), and White Lead (Painting) Convention, 1921 (No. 13)) are not up to date. The Safety and Health in Mines Convention, 1995 (No. 176), has attracted a significant number of ratifications over a short period of time.
10. It is generally agreed, however, that ILO standards have an impact which goes beyond that measured through ratifications and the supervisory procedures. Non-ratified Conventions and Recommendations, as well as other voluntary instruments such as codes of practice, are frequently used as models for national law and practice, as a point of reference for enterprises and workers or as a gauge for determining the international consensus on day-to-day issues in the world of work. Information on the actual impact of non-ratified Conventions and Recommendations on national law and practice is occasionally collected and examined through General Surveys. These surveys are based on the long standing practice of the ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Standards to prepare each year a report on the obstacles to ratification and implementation of one or more instruments on a particular subject matter. Occasional specific impact studies have been carried out but the information is incomplete and outdated.<sup>1</sup> The extent to which ILO instruments are used as a reference in the national judicial systems could provide additional information on this issue but would require a substantial research effort.
11. As regards the usefulness and impact of ILO standards in other respects, the tip of this iceberg is the daily and increasing demand for information on ILO standards and related activities, through the level of consultation of the ILO web site, requests for information and daily references in newspapers and the media in general. Information on the actual impact of non-ratified Conventions and Recommendations is, however, not collected systematically and is therefore difficult to measure. Yet, if the ultimate goal of ILO standards is to raise the level of national regulatory standards, this impact constitutes one of the most important indicators of the success of the ILO's work and is the very justification for the substantial investment of human and economic resources that the ILO as an organization represents.
12. The need to increase the real impact of ILO standards was emphasized in the Decent Work Agenda and as a result placed increased demands not only on our means and methods for measuring this impact, but also on the standards themselves and their related activities. A more effective promotion of standards in the international arena, as proposed in the Decent Work Agenda, calls for less emphasis on individual instruments and increased demands for systematic assessments of their collective coherence, relevance, and ultimate impact. Present-day promotion is heavily influenced by the ongoing revolution in information technology, calling upon the ILO to formulate and express in simple media-friendly terms the basic principles that are advocated in ILO standards. These developments are certainly affecting the means and methods that are used to present and promote the application of ILO standards on a general level. A central issue in this context is to what extent, if any, these

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<sup>1</sup> ILO: *The impact of international labour Conventions and Recommendations* (Geneva, 1976).

developments will require the consideration of new standard-setting criteria and methodologies, in this case in the area of OSH, to address the form of the standards, the subject matter they cover and how they are promoted.

13. The formulation, implementation and promotion of international labour standards were the first *raison d'être* of the ILO, the very reason for its creation. Over time, the ILO's range of action and means used to achieve its objectives have expanded to include knowledge management and research, inter-agency cooperation, and, since the 1950s, the provision of direct help to member States in the form of technical assistance or technical cooperation. The ILO is facing increasing competition in the international arena and resources devoted to OSH both nationally and internationally do not seem to match the needs in this area. Against this background, increasing the impact of ILO efforts to make the SafeWork dimension of the Decent Work Agenda a reality for a larger number of persons engaged in gainful activities around the world through standards seems to call for a sustained effort to focus and streamline the ILO's related activities, to seek synergies and self-supporting win-win situations.
14. In order to better assess the real impact of ILO OSH instruments, a survey was carried out in mid 2002 among ILO constituents.<sup>2</sup> The ILO received replies and detailed information (including in several cases copies of relevant and newly adopted legislative texts) from 103 member States. The Office also received individual replies from 47 representative employers' and workers' organizations transmitted either by governments or sent in separately. It should be noted that the survey contained complementary questions on the method of consultation with employers' and workers' organizations. Among the respondents, all regions of the world were well represented and the responses submitted were not only detailed and informative, but indicated in a large majority of cases, that a broad process of consultation had taken place with the tripartite constituents as well as with national expertise on OSH. The survey responses as well as their analysis are accessible on the ILO Web Site and are available on a CD-ROM.

### **Assessment of ILO standards-related activities in the area of OSH**

15. Concern for the safety, health and welfare of workers is a central part of the ILO's mission. International labour standards are the "backbone" of the ILO and, as they are developed in a tripartite context, they constitute the ILO's comparative advantage in international forums. One of the reasons for assessing ILO's means of action in relation to the standard setting process is that the proliferation of the range of ILO activities, including the introduction of technical cooperation, has been such that the link between standards and the activities in which the ILO is engaged is not always obvious. In addition to examining the relevant standards in this area, other forms of instruments, such as codes of practice or guidelines, the promotion of standards, ILO activities related to technical cooperation and knowledge management, as well as the ILO's role in international and interagency cooperation, are included.
16. A large number of the areas of action presented under the major ILO objectives include an OSH-related component (e.g. child labour, employment and the informal economy, poverty

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<sup>2</sup> The Survey questionnaire is available in six languages on the ILO Web Site.

alleviation and SMEs, gender mainstreaming, older workers, labour statistics, labour inspection, and sectoral activities related to the agriculture, mining, construction and chemical, maritime and transport sectors). These cross-cutting themes and areas of action, which are also the focus of the ILO's Employers' and Workers' Activities programmes, are considered to be the ones where OSH is, and must be, a major element of the actions directed at the sustained establishment of decent working conditions and environment and the building of strong safety cultures, and which therefore have to be taken into account in future ILO plans of action. Over the years, international cooperation has proven to be a very effective way of ensuring that ILO values and views are taken into account in the activities undertaken by other international bodies and used as a basis for the development of technical standards and methodologies pertaining to OSH and the introduction of employers' and workers' views in a number of international forums. Greater visibility, and thus international and internal recognition of the collective results of international collaboration, could possibly be achieved through regular reporting to one of the committees of the Governing Body, which could also provide a basis for developing more effective OSH strategies. As a result, there is a strong need to maintain overall coherence of action in this area to ensure that the ILO's "occupational safety and health message" is consistent. In this context, effective approaches for the mainstreaming of OSH in relevant areas of action may need to be considered.

### **ILO's response to global, national and workplace occupational safety and health concerns**

17. The global, national and workplace OSH concerns that the ILO has to respond to are daunting. The magnitude of the global impact of occupational accidents and diseases, as well as major industrial disasters, in terms of human suffering, degradation of the environment and related economic costs, calls for the urgent need to raise occupational safety and health in national and enterprise priorities and to engage all social partners in globally integrated and harmonized action to achieve sound management of OSH through the appropriate establishment of networking and consultative mechanisms and alliances. Achieving and maintaining a safe and healthy workplace and environment in the light of a constantly changing world of work is a challenging task that calls on a multiplicity of skills and disciplines to anticipate, identify and control the numerous hazards and risks. As a result, this entails the application of holistic approaches involving the strong collaboration of competent authorities, employers and workers. Occupational safety and health is an intrinsic part of social relations and, as such, is affected by the same forces of change that prevail in national and global contexts. Increasing concerns for environmental issues seem to call for a better recognition of the relationship between the world of work and the environment. The effects of demographic factors and dynamics, employment shifts and work organization changes are examples of some issues that are contributing towards generating new patterns of exposure and increased risks of accidents and disease. Yet, in many cases also, risks have been reduced. The information revolution is creating opportunities for improving access to OSH information but there is also a need for skills in knowledge management and exchange systems as well as low-cost access to telecommunication systems and networks.
18. The strategic approaches to possible ways to improve working conditions in SMEs, informal economy undertakings and for temporary workers include strengthening the capacities of enforcement and inspection systems and providing technical advice and assistance in the area of OSH, particularly for small enterprises that do not have technical capacities in this area. Financial incentives, coupled with hands-on practical training material to integrate OSH

requirements and systems at the enterprise level and specifically designed for SMEs, are recognized as important tools for improvement. Initiatives to strengthen linkages between primary health-care systems and occupational health are still considered as important strategic approaches. The introduction of hazard and risk concepts in school curricula and educational systems in general (prevention through education) is proposed as a means to build strong and sustained safety cultures on a continuous basis.

- 19.** Recent regional and national strategies developed to address current concerns have focused on improving the different parts of their national OSH systems through a number of actions aimed at the different parts making up these systems. Emphasis is placed on increased and more effective communication and consultation between competent authorities, employers and workers, and the establishment of periodic review and benchmarking systems for proper monitoring of progress towards the reduction of accidents and diseases. Although more pronounced and articulated in developed countries, this tendency is also visible in developing countries. There is a need to establish an adequate balance between formal regulatory systems and voluntary initiatives to create levels of flexibility to respond rapidly and adapt to change and address site-specific requirements. In this context, the visibility of voluntary initiatives has increased, but there seems to be a need to evaluate further the effectiveness of their complementary functions in the context of regulatory action. The economic impact of OSH at different levels has to be evaluated further and analysed in order to develop tools and incentives for a better integration of OSH requirements into the economic processes of business and to establish an equitable distribution of this impact between macro- and micro-levels of national economies.
- 20.** In the domain of general regulatory action, strategies focus also on the promotion of systems approaches for the management of OSH at the enterprise level as an effective means to improve the application of regulatory requirements through better adaptability, to extend them to cover new risks and to rationalize the implementation of reporting requirements. The prevention of risks related to biological hazards and the improved prevention of social risks (e.g. stress, harassment, violence, drugs, alcohol, etc.) are identified by some as an emerging need and a subject for further research. Other areas include measures to enhance the prevention of occupational diseases with particular focus on asbestos, hearing loss and musculoskeletal problems. Strategies need to take account of the increased vulnerability of certain groups that is caused by demographic change, such as women, older and migrant workers, and in particular the mainstreaming of the gender dimension and protection of young workers.
- 21.** In the world of work, the integration of OSH management systems approaches at all levels is increasingly perceived as an effective way of building strong and sustained enterprise safety cultures. Employers should make arrangements for workers to participate, where practicable, in the integration of such approaches in the enterprise. There is an increase in the creation of SMEs. This, coupled with the emergence of new forms of work, may pose challenges to the traditional responses to occupational safety and health. National competent authorities and employers' and workers' organizations should cooperate in their efforts to create new means and channels for OSH-related assistance and information to small enterprises, preferably in the form of training and improving skills.

- 22.** What emerges from the examination of the impact of the current OSH standards is that the levels of ratification of OSH Conventions are on average low. The results of the survey indicate that there are prospects that the ratification levels – in particular for the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155) – may increase in the future. Furthermore, the information collected through the survey also permits the conclusion that the actual impact of the OSH standards, and of Convention No. 155 in particular, appears to be greater than the ratification levels indicate. Several member States indicate that not only Conventions, but also codes of practice, are used as guidance or as models in the shaping of national law and practice. Nevertheless, overall, the impact of current up-to-date standards does not seem to be at a level which reflects the importance of OSH from a human, national and global perspective.
- 23.** With respect to the foregoing analysis concerning the coherence of the present standards, it seems to follow that current standards in this area represent a complex system of principles, rules and detailed prescriptive solutions to address OSH concerns. They lack certain coherence in the sense that they reflect and illustrate a historical evolution of how to address existing and emerging hazards in the workplace. Although Convention No. 155 is an up-to-date instrument and contains several of the basic elements for setting out a framework for a national occupational safety and health system, it does not seem to have acquired the central function it was intended to fulfil. Against the background of proposals made in the survey, and with a view to improving the coherence of standards, consideration might be given to the development of a framework instrument for the sound management of occupational safety and health – to regulate the basic building blocks required for the management and operation of a national OSH system.
- 24.** As regards the relevance of the current standards, it follows from the result of the survey, in particular the analysis of the relevant national law and practice, that overall, and subject to certain exceptions, the ILO constituents that have responded to the survey share the objectives expressed in the current OSH standards. This gives a clear indication that current ILO standards are, generally speaking, a relevant response to national concerns. On the basis of the work of the Working Party on Policy regarding the Revision of Standards, the proposals for standard setting previously considered by the Governing Body and the survey responses, possible directions for addressing proposed revisions of standards and lacunae that have emerged in the present analysis have been identified.
- 25.** The overriding theme that emerges from the report and the survey is the crucial importance of promoting ILO standards and other instruments such as codes of practice and guidelines, and that these promotional activities appear to have become fragmented and dispersed. Increasing the impact of ILO activities in this area will depend on efficient, targeted and focused action. The ILO disposes of a number of promotional tools, including technical cooperation and the dissemination of information, and it also has the possibility of developing formal tools on the basis of article 19 of the Constitution. The use of this provision allows for the collection of information on the state of national law and practice in member States with respect to non-ratified Conventions and Recommendations. A more regular use of such a provision could, in fact, contribute to improved identification of the obstacles to implementation of Conventions and Recommendations and, when required, the need for technical assistance in order to overcome these obstacles.

26. In the area of technical cooperation, slow but steady progress has been made in streamlining technical cooperation action to serve as a more effective vehicle for the transmission of ILO values, expertise and capacity-building assistance to constituents. The key role it plays in promoting and implementing ILO standards was confirmed by the majority of technical cooperation recipients in the survey. Enhanced focus on identifying country needs and matching them with priorities for developing efficient OSH systems needs to be considered. An increased focus on the development of country profiles, including a systematic collection of national needs and constraints in the light of ILO standards, is suggested for further consideration.
27. Both the review of ILO action in this area and the survey responses indicate that ILO information tools are fulfilling the needs of constituents. They also confirm the fundamental importance of the ability to access reliable information and master knowledge management tools for the proper collection and analysis of available data as a basis for any effective action, whether international, national or within the enterprise. In this context, the ILO's capacities and effectiveness in this area condition to a great extent the overall potential impact of all its means of action. Further improvements are still needed, particularly the development of related methodologies, increased OSH training capacity at the International Training Centre of the ILO, Turin, in the field and among constituents, and a more coherent strategy concerning research on OSH subjects.

### 91st Session of the International Labour Conference

28. The sixth item on the agenda of the 91<sup>st</sup> Session of the International Labour Conference in June 2003 concerned a general discussion based on an integrated approach with the following title: *ILO standards-related activities in the area of occupational safety and health: An in-depth study for discussion with a view to the elaboration of a plan of action for such activities*. The discussion was based on the results of the Survey and the information and conclusions of the Conference Report VI on ILO standard-related activities in the area of occupational safety and health<sup>3</sup>. The Committee on Occupational Safety and Health undertook a General Discussion that addressed the following Points for Discussion:
- Point (a)** In developing a plan of action for future ILO standards-related activities in the area of occupational safety and health, what are the major trends, developments and other elements that should be taken into account and the main objectives to be achieved?
- Point (b)** What promotional activities and tools should the ILO develop as effective means for ensuring continuous awareness of the importance of occupational safety and health?
- Point (c)** Should a plan of action for occupational safety and health include the development of standards (including revisions) and other instruments aimed at raising occupational safety and health in national priorities and programmes and responding to national concerns in specific occupational safety and health-related areas? Would the development of methodology and criteria for the elaboration, updating and promotion of codes of practice and guidelines improve their impact and usefulness to the constituents of the ILO?

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<sup>3</sup> Report VI. ILO standards-related activities in the area of occupational safety and health, International Labour Conference, 91<sup>st</sup> Session, 2003. ISBN 92-2-112883-0. An electronic version is available on the ILO Web site: <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/relm/ilc/ilc91/pdf/rep-vi.pdf>

- Point (d)** How could the means and methodologies to assist member States in the context of the establishment and progressive implementation of national occupational safety and health programmes be further improved and promoted?
- Point (e)** With the goal of assisting constituents in improving their capacities to access and use globally available occupational safety and health information, should greater emphasis be placed on strengthening and developing national occupational safety and health information centres, ILO knowledge management and dissemination capacities and related methodologies? Would increased focus on the development of training methods and research in selected areas of occupational safety and health improve ILO's effectiveness in responding to the needs of its constituents?
- Point (f)** Would the regular review of international collaboration activities in the area of occupational safety and health improve overall ILO action in this area?

**29.** The International Labour Conference adopted unanimously a Resolution concerning occupational safety and health and Conclusions recommending elements for a global strategy on occupational health and safety, which calls for "coherent and focussed" worldwide action to reduce the number of deaths, injuries and disease among workers. The global strategy approved by government, employer and worker delegates should be implemented through an action plan based on a strategy with two fundamental pillars: the first involves the introduction of a "preventative safety and health culture" which calls for guarantees of the right to a safe and healthy working environment by all through the agreement of the ILO social partners to a system of defined rights, responsibilities and duties with prevention as the highest priority. The second pillar is aimed at the development of an integrated ILO occupational safety and health "tool box" to assist the tripartite constituents in transforming the goals of the global strategy into reality. The main tools include the elaboration of a promotional instrument designed to put safety and health higher on the agenda of member States, and a structured use of technical assistance and cooperation focussed on the establishment and implementation of national OSH programmes by governments in close collaboration with employers and workers. If the Governing Body so decides, work for such a comprehensive instrument could start at the 2005 session of the Conference. The full texts of the Resolution and Conclusions are provided in **Annex I**.

### **Collaboration with WHO in implementing the Global OSH Strategy**

- 30.** In both the ILO Report VI and the Conclusions, a strong collaboration with international organizations involved in OSH related activities, but particularly with the WHO, is considered as essential in achieving a safe and healthy working environment. During the General Discussion, ILO constituents agreed that ILO and WHO were the key international organizations with strong mandates in the area of safety and health and recommended unanimously that the long standing collaboration between the two organizations be further strengthened. In this context, the Joint Committee may wish to advise how the ILO and WHO can cooperate and contribute to the effective implementation of the Global Strategy on Occupational Safety and Health. The Joint Committee may also consider specifically:
- a. Identifying priority areas for joint activities where the two organizations are in a position to create synergies and increase impact, such as:

- i. Development of a new instrument establishing a promotional framework in the area of OSH;
  - ii. Collaboration in the fostering and promotion of a safety and health culture including participation of the WHO in the establishment of an annual international event or campaign (world day or a safety and health week) aimed at raising awareness of the importance of OSH
  - iii. Launching of a global knowledge and awareness campaign focused on promoting sound management of safety and health at work;
  - iv. Collaboration in the launching of national programmes on occupational safety and health;
  - v. Collaboration in the development of instruments in the areas of guarding of machinery, ergonomics and biological hazards;
  - vi. Collaboration in joint activities against work-related psychosocial hazards;
  - vii. Strengthening the ongoing collaboration in the area of chemical safety, such as IPCS, IOMC and SAICM
  - viii. Updating of the ILO List of occupational diseases and elimination of silicosis
  - ix. Further strengthening collaboration between the field structures of the two organizations;
  - x. Developing approaches and strategies aimed at linking more effectively primary and occupational health care systems, particularly in developing countries;
  - xi. Further facilitating research, and access to reliable and practical OSH information through improved knowledge development, management and dissemination systems and networks;
- b. Recommendations and proposals to improve the operational functioning of the current Joint Committee so that it would be a more flexible and better integrated tool designed to advise the two organizations in a more timely and efficient manner.

## Annex I

### **ILC 2003 Resolution concerning occupational safety and health**

The General Conference of the International Labour Organization, meeting at its 91st Session, 2003, Having undertaken a general discussion based on an integrated approach on the basis of Report VI, *ILO standards-related activities in the area of occupational safety and health*;

1. Adopts the following conclusions;
2. With a view to increasing the impact, coherence and relevance of ILO standards-related activities in the area of occupational safety and health (OSH), invites the Governing Body of the International Labour Office:
  - (a) to give due consideration to these conclusions in planning future ILO standards-related activities in the area of OSH, noting that the opportunity exists for placing an item relating to OSH on the agenda of the 93rd Session (2005) of the International Labour Conference if agreed by the Governing Body in November 2003;
  - (b) to request the Director-General to give them priority when implementing the present and the 2004-05 programmes, when allocating such resources as may be available during the 2004-05 biennium and when preparing future strategic plans and programmes and budgets, in particular for the 2006-07 biennium.

### **ILC 2003 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 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 II

### Relevant ILO 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). All up-to-date instruments are marked in bold; those that need to be revised are italicized. Instruments that have been classified as “other” appear in both bold and italics.

#### Conventions

<b>Instrument</b>	<b>Ratifications (as of 01.01.03)</b>	<b>Status</b>
<i>White Lead (Painting) Convention, 1921 (No. 13)</i>	62	To be revised
<b><i>Underground Work (Women) Convention, 1935 (No. 45)</i></b>	84	Interim status
<b>Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81)</b>	128	Priority Convention; up-to-date instrument
<b>Protocol of 1995 to the Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (P. 81)</b>	10	Related to a priority Convention; up-to-date instrument
<b>Radiation Protection Convention, 1960 (No. 115)</b>	47	Up-to-date instrument
<i>Guarding of Machinery Convention, 1963 (No. 119)</i>	49	To be revised, along with Recommendation No. 118
<b>Hygiene (Commerce and Offices) Convention, 1964 (No. 120)</b>	49	Up-to-date instrument
<i>Maximum Weight Convention, 1967 (No. 127)</i>	25	To be revised, along with Recommendation No. 128
<b>Labour Inspection (Agriculture) Convention, 1969 (No. 129)</b>	40	Priority Convention
<i>Benzene Convention, 1971 (No. 136)</i>	36	To be revised
<b>Occupational Cancer Convention, 1974 (No. 139)</b>	35	Up-to-date instrument
<b>Working Environment (Air Pollution, Noise and Vibration) Convention, 1977 (No. 148)</b>	41	Up-to-date instrument
<b>Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155)</b>	38	Up-to-date instrument

<b>Instrument</b>	<b>Ratifications (as of 01.01.03)</b>	<b>Status</b>
<b>Occupational Health Services Convention, 1985 (No. 161)</b>	21	Adopted after 1985; up-to-date instrument
<b>Asbestos Convention, 1986 (No. 162)</b>	26	Adopted after 1985; up-to-date instrument
<b>Safety and Health in Construction Convention, 1988 (No. 167)</b>	16	Adopted after 1985; up-to-date instrument
<b>Chemicals Convention, 1990 (No. 170)</b>	10	Adopted after 1985; up-to-date instrument
<b>Prevention of Major Industrial Accidents Convention, 1993 (No. 174)</b>	7	Adopted after 1985; up-to-date instrument
<b>Safety and Health in Mines Convention, 1995 (No. 176)</b>	18	Adopted after 1985; up-to-date instrument
<b>Safety and Health in Agriculture Convention, 2001 (No. 184)</b>	2	Adopted after 1985; up-to-date instrument
Protocol of 2002 to the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (P. 155)	–	

## Recommendations

<b>Instrument</b>	<b>Status</b>
<i>Anthrax Prevention Recommendation, 1919 (No. 3)</i>	To be revised
<i>Lead Poisoning (Women and Children) Recommendation, 1919 (No. 4)</i>	To be revised
<i>White Phosphorus Recommendation, 1919 (No. 6)</i>	To be revised
<b><i>Prevention of Industrial Accidents Recommendation, 1929 (No. 31)</i></b>	Interim status
<b>Labour Inspection Recommendation, 1947 (No. 81)</b>	Related to a priority Convention; up-to-date instrument
<b>Labour Inspection (Mining and Transport) Recommendation, 1947 (No. 82)</b>	Related to a priority Convention; up-to-date instrument
<b>Protection of Workers' Health Recommendation, 1953 (No. 97)</b>	Up-to-date instrument
<b>Welfare Facilities Recommendation, 1956 (No. 102)</b>	Up-to-date instrument
<b>Radiation Protection Recommendation, 1960 (No. 114)</b>	Up-to-date instrument
<b>Workers' Housing Recommendation, 1961 (No. 115)</b>	Up-to-date instrument
<i>Guarding of Machinery Recommendation, 1963 (No. 118)</i>	To be revised
<b>Hygiene (Commerce and Offices) Recommendation, 1964 (No. 120)</b>	Up-to-date instrument
<i>Maximum Weight Recommendation, 1967 (No. 128)</i>	To be revised
<b>Labour Inspection (Agriculture) Recommendation, 1969</b>	Related to a priority

<b>Instrument</b>	<b>Status</b>
<b>(No. 133)</b>	Convention; up-to-date instrument
<i>Benzene Recommendation, 1971 (No. 144)</i>	To be revised
<b>Occupational Cancer Recommendation, 1974 (No. 147)</b>	Up-to-date instrument
<b>Working Environment (Air Pollution, Noise and Vibration) Recommendation, 1977 (No. 156)</b>	Up-to-date instrument
<b>Occupational Safety and Health Recommendation, 1981 (No. 164)</b>	Up-to-date instrument
<b>Occupational Health Services Recommendation, 1985 (No. 171)</b>	Adopted after 1985; up-to-date instrument
<b>Asbestos Recommendation, 1986 (No. 172)</b>	Adopted after 1985; up-to-date instrument
<b>Safety and Health in Construction Recommendation, 1988 (No. 175)</b>	Adopted after 1985; up-to-date instrument
<b>Chemicals Recommendation, 1990 (No. 177)</b>	Adopted after 1985; up-to-date instrument
<b>Prevention of Major Industrial Accidents Recommendation, 1993 (No. 181)</b>	Adopted after 1985; up-to-date instrument
<b>Safety and Health in Mines Recommendation, 1995 (No. 183)</b>	Adopted after 1985; up-to-date instrument
<b>Safety and Health in Agriculture Recommendation, 2001 (No. 192)</b>	Adopted after 1985; up-to-date instrument
List of Occupational Diseases Recommendation, 2002 (No. 194)	Adopted in 2002

### **Selected 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

Safety and health in the non-ferrous metals industries, 2001

HIV/AIDS and the world of work, 2001