

**Düsseldorf, Germany**  
**International ILO Conference on**  
**Making Decent Work a Global Goal and a National Reality**  
**18-20 September 2007**  
**Opening Session – Presentation by Michele Patterson**  
**President, International Association of Labour Inspection**  
**and Executive Director, SafeWork SA, South Australia**

***Effective Labour Inspection – Why your country needs us***

## **Introduction**

Distinguished guests, colleagues from around the world and our generous hosts, the ILO and its partners and sponsors.

We come together at a moment in time – where the world's workforce is seeking assistance to meet safe and decent standards of work; where economic imperatives are driving the pursuit of a better standard of work practice; and where the profession of labour inspection is well positioned to influence the development of safe, fair and decent work.

So labour inspection is in demand. There are great expectations of what we can do. Just like the world of work – represented by employer associations and unions - we must develop new approaches to the way we deliver our services and respond to the pressures that determine whether our role will be significant in a global economy.

This conference provides us with an opportunity to recognise and reflect on the challenges labour inspectors face to be effective. We can use this moment in time as an opportunity to build new alliances and develop our commitment to strengthen and modernise labour inspection across the world.

## **What is labour inspection?**

Every labour inspection service is defined differently according to a particular country's governance structure. But in general, labour inspectors address a combination of:

- Occupational safety and health
- Conditions of work
- Forced labour
- Child labour
- Employment relations
- Social security
- Gender equality and discrimination
- Illegal employment
- Specific sectoral functions (eg agriculture, construction, mining etc).

## What can effective labour inspection do for you?

The value of effective labour inspection has been thoroughly evaluated over many years. The labour inspector is a field officer who seeks compliance with labour law requirements. The work typically involves advising, assisting and educating everyone in workplaces as well as enforcing the law where necessary. These services positively impact on the individual worker and workplace, the employer and business enterprise and, ultimately, if delivered effectively, the social and economic well being of a country.

This work is essential for the realisation of the ILO's key objective of decent work in every country. Further, it is essential to create the conditions for sustained social and economic growth. The table below highlights just some of the potential benefits that effective labour inspection can deliver in your country. It demonstrates how the positive impact on workers will flow through to better conditions for business and ultimately, a healthy social and economic environment.

<b>LABOUR INSPECTION POSITIVELY IMPACTS ON:</b>		
<b>Workers and people in workplaces</b>	<b>Employers and business enterprises</b>	<b>Countries and the state of the world</b>
Improved conditions of work	Reduced costs to business	Better quality products and services
Promotion of worker rights	Reduced disputes	Decline in number of days lost to production
Proactive health and safety of workers	Reduced injuries, diseases, fatalities	Improved health of the economy
Consult and participate in OSH	Collective responsibility for OSH compliance	Good Governance
Human dignity	Cooperative workforce	Social cohesion
Increased motivation of workers	Increased productivity	The right environment for business to thrive
Fair labour standards	Harmony in the workplace	Sustainable economic growth and development
Ensuring decent work	Corporate social responsibility	Increased standard of living

## Engaging the professional association - IALI

The International Association of Labour Inspection – IALI – is the global professional association for labour inspection. Established in 1972 it currently has over 100 member countries world wide. We aim to:

- Promote the professionalism of all aspects of labour inspection – to enhance their impact and effectiveness;
- Exchange ideas and experience about how to promote compliance with labour law and good practice;
- Provide information about professional issues through the Association's website, newsletters, reports and other publications; and,

- Promote closer collaboration between its members, through regional networking, development of MOU's and other activities.

### **Leadership and Vision - The ILO and IALI as partners**

Global efforts to reinvigorate and strengthen labour inspection take leadership and vision.

Current efforts in meeting the challenges are being led by the ILO and IALI as partner organisations with a common interest in the pursuit of this agenda.

But in addition to the leadership of the ILO and IALI together, successfully achieving this aim will depend on engaging all parties who affect the workplace – not just governments, but employers, workers and their representatives, designers, manufacturers and suppliers of plant, materials and substances, owners and occupiers and those delivering professional services.

IALI has always worked in close partnership with the ILO and host country organisations, and is increasingly working at regional levels – partnerships between countries is a new and vital focus. We have expanded our activities to be truly global, with conferences recently run in Europe, Africa, Asia, North America – and we will have our first conference in the Pacific region – in South Australia – in March 2008.

### **The ILO Governing Body Strategy Paper – November 2006**

In November 2006, the ILO Governing Body proposed a new series of measures designed to *“reinvigorate, modernise and strengthen labour inspectorates worldwide”*. They stressed that *“good governance of workplaces is central to the promotion of sustainable economic development”*.

The Governing Body Committee on Employment and Social Policy found that *“an efficient and adequately resourced labour inspection system makes a significant contribution to economic development, social cohesion and good governance.”*

It further comments that with 135 ratifications, ILO Convention, 1947 (no. 81) on labour inspection in industry and commerce, is one of the *“10 most ratified ILO conventions to date and serves as a good international guide to secure the enforcement of the legal provisions relating to conditions of work and the protection of workers.”*

Measures the ILO has suggested in its Strategy Paper to reinvigorate labour inspection, include the development of ethical and professional codes of conduct, tripartite labour inspection audits to assist governments identify and address weaknesses, global inspection principles, hands on tools and targeted training.

But It is one thing to propose such an ambitious agenda – and another thing to make it happen. To do this, the ILO must follow through on the Governing Body commitment. This means the ILO needs to commit appropriate resources to increase it's capacity in this area.

Although the agenda is ambitious, it is essential to achieve the broader ILO aim of global decent work - and IALI is committed to working in partnership with the ILO to achieve these aims.

### **IALI and the ILO working together**

IALI has 3 main priorities for the years 2005 to 2008; these are:

- To work towards regional alliances for cooperative initiatives between labour inspectorates;
- To develop a Global Code of Ethics; and
- To influence everyone who can assist in meeting the decent work aim, through measuring and demonstrating our effectiveness.

These priorities fit closely with the objectives stated in the ILO's Governing Body Strategy Paper on Labour Inspection and provide a sound basis for the two organisations to work together to strengthen and reinvigorate labour inspection throughout the world.

### **Regional Alliances**

Developing strong and effective partnerships across regions results in:

- Shared good practice;
- Collaborative action;
- Combined resources; and
- Better results.

The emergence of the global world of work provides opportunities for IALI regional alliances to contribute significantly to the ILOs decent work country programmes. Sharing training approaches and good practice assists in strengthening and modernising labour inspection services.

Further, by formalising international networks, developing international MOUs between labour inspectorates, and cooperatively developing and applying similar auditing tools, we can address such issues as working conditions and OSH in supply chains between trading partners.

In the globalised world of work, labour inspection alliances need to deliver strong outcomes. Partnership arrangements formalised in MOU agreements provide the framework for formal cooperative arrangements.

Cooperation between labour inspectors across regions can facilitate trade agreements, social dialogue, deregulation, harmonisation, robust auditing, mutual recognition and remove trade barriers and opportunities for exploitation.

In summary, regional cooperation can deliver:

- Strength, consistency & fairness in application of the law; resulting in
- Reduced non-compliance with labour standards; therefore,
- Less injuries, disease and death and
- Cheaper compliance for business.

## **Ethics and Professionalism**

To deliver on our commitment to modernise and strengthen labour inspection worldwide we need to build a foundation of professionalism. Development of a global code of ethics is a key strategy towards this aim.

Development of a global code of ethics or integrity will address labour inspection issues at two levels:

For countries, a global code of ethics would:

- Underpin signatory nations commitment to Convention 81;
- Give developing countries guidance on expectations and professional standards;
- Provide a service guarantee in developed countries; and
- Ensure all countries work towards modern ethical standards of practice.

For labour inspectors, a code of ethics would:

- Help to protect labour inspectors eg in developing countries;
- Identify the maturity of the profession; and
- Provide basis for increased influence & therefore safe, healthy & decent work.

## **Influence**

Labour inspectors alone cannot achieve the decent work objective. To be effective they need to be able to influence all those who can affect work and workplaces including:

The community  
Politicians  
Business  
Media  
Economists  
Opinion-makers  
Governments  
Employers  
Workers  
Designers  
Manufacturers  
Suppliers  
Etc.

Through influence, labour inspectors are in a unique position to facilitate safe, healthy & decent work in the globalised world

**BUT ONLY IF**

- they can deliver measurable results for workers, business & economic development.

Commitment to delivering results means demonstrating effectiveness to:

- Establish a basis to influence good practice;
- Measure the quality of our outputs; and
- Justify increased resources.

### **Opportunities and challenges for labour inspection, IALI, the ILO and the future**

In summary, the ILO and IALI are working together to

- Formalise international networks to address issues arising from the globalised workforce;
- Establish an ethical 'guarantee' of professional practice; and
- Influence safe and fair work outcomes through demonstrated effectiveness of labour inspection.

Our international challenge is to improve occupational health and safety and fair working conditions to deliver reductions in deaths, injuries, diseases, disputes and costs to business – as well as human dignity, more productive workers and the right environment for business to thrive.

At this moment in time, we call on the ILO, to commit the resources and build the capacity to deliver on the stated agenda of its tripartite Governing Body to strengthen and reinvigorate labour inspection in order to make decent work a global reality. In partnership with IALI the ILO has the opportunity to convince every country that:

***“An efficient and adequately resourced labour inspection system makes a significant contribution to economic development, social cohesion and good governance”*** (ILO Governing Body Committee on Employment and Social Policy, November 2006).

Together, we must achieve this goal.