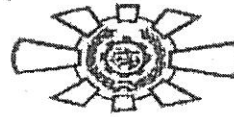




International Labour Organization



Arab Labour Organization

**Tripartite Interregional Meeting on  
“Occupational Safety and Health in the Arab States”  
(18-20 November 2007, Damascus, Syria)**

**Concept Note**

**Introduction**

Governments, workers and employers’ delegates attending the Fourteenth ILO Asian Regional Meeting in Busan, Republic of Korea, in September 2006, launched the “Asian Decent Work Decade “ and committed themselves to achieve defined goals for Decent Work during the period extending up to 2015 in accordance with national needs and priorities. The conclusions adopted also stressed the importance of regional cooperation initiatives between the countries involved in order to identify common needs, share good practices and develop strategies and programs to implement decent work for all.

The promotion of Occupational Safety and Health was identified as one among the interconnected priorities for realizing decent work and the reduction of poverty in countries of the region. The conclusions of the meeting specifically require the ILO to support governments and social partners in developing further initiatives on promoting the ratification and implementation of ILO Conventions on Occupational Safety and Health, including the Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 (No 187).

Furthermore, the tripartite delegations at the 11th African Regional Meeting which took place in Addis Ababa in April 2007 also committed themselves to a series of ambitious targets for the development of integrated Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCPs) to accelerate progress towards the agreed international development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This followed up on the conclusions of the Ouagadougou Summit of 2004 which adopted a Declaration, Plan of Action and Follow-up Mechanism on Employment and Poverty Alleviation in Africa.

Although many African States have comprehensive laws concerning basic working conditions, including occupational health and safety standards and minimum wages, their enforcement are weak and the national OSH systems are insufficiently developed. Hence the need to update both the content and means of implementation of laws and collective agreements concerning basic minimum conditions. In this regard, the constituents at the 11<sup>th</sup> African Regional Meeting committed themselves to set up specific national targets for reducing noncompliance with laws concerning among others, the reduction of

occupational accidents, diseases and days lost due to illness and accidents per worker, and a progressive increase in the number of labour inspectors in relation to workers.

### **Justification**

In Arab States, there are many challenges and institutional gaps impeding effective prevention of occupational accidents and diseases. Among these are the lack of resources devoted to OSH, including the provision of services and awareness raising, the low rates of ratification of ILO conventions, a lack of national capacity in training, retraining and further developing the skills of OSH specialists, weaknesses in the labour inspection components and the absence of clear national plans.

The ILO is therefore proposing the organization of a three-day tripartite regional workshop on occupational safety and health in collaboration with the Arab Labour Organization (ALO) - OSH Institute based in Syria. The tripartite workshop (18-20 Nov.) will be coupled with a two-day workshop for CIS centers' representatives from the region (21-22 Nov.). As a preparatory step and based on the global trends and emerging issues in the region, the ILO is currently developing a situation analysis report on OSH in Arab States. The report will provide conclusions and recommendations on measures needed for promoting OSH in the region through proper OSH programs and services. It will help set up the agenda and contents of the workshop to identify the next steps for a harmonized regional strategy towards continuous improvement of OSH in this region.

The promotion of a safe and healthy work environment requires a wide strategy and a multi-sectoral approach. In order to assist member States in developing an OSH policies with an aim of successfully preventing accidents and injuries to health arising out of, linked with or occurring in the course of work, the ILO adopted its Global Strategy on OSH, 2003, and the Promotional Framework for OSH Convention, 2006 (No. 187) with its accompanying Recommendation, 2006 (No.197). These two documents form the backbone of any OSH programme to be undertaken at international, national or enterprise levels. They complement other ILO instruments on OSH and, in particular, the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155), the Occupational Health Services Convention, 1985 (No. 161), as well as the Guidelines on occupational safety and health management systems (ILO-OSH 2001).

Convention No.187 highlights in particular the needs for the establishment of:

- a national OSH policy,
- a national OSH system, and
- a national OSH programme.

In order to facilitate the formulation of the above elements, it is recommended to establish and regularly update a national OSH Profile, which summarizes the existing national situation on OSH and the progress made towards achieving a safe and healthy working environment. A description of the elements to be included in the national profile is available in the Recommendation No.197 under section IV.

## **Objectives of the meeting 18-20 November**

The meeting aims to review the OSH situation of respective participating countries, identify priority needs to be addressed at national and regional levels and establish a tentative one year plan of action to improve safety and health at work in member states and in the region according to the principles embedded in particular in the ILO OSH strategy and ILO Conventions No. 187, 155, 161 and their respective accompanying recommendations. Special emphasis will be given to the promotion of a safety culture, labour inspection and policy dialogue.

In addition to the mobilization of the tripartite constituents to expand collaborative work on occupational safety and health issues, this workshop aims at setting country tailored action plans for developing the OSH infrastructure in Arab States towards national policies, systems and programs.

Upon completion of this meeting, participants will have:

- collectively reviewed the OSH situation in their respective countries,
- examined the existing gaps and opportunities,
- set plans of action for intensifying OSH measures at the national and enterprise levels, and
- Identified the support required from ILO and other relevant institutions.

## **As for the CIS meeting (21, 22 Nov)**

**The objectives are to:**

- Strengthen constituents' capacity in accessing, producing and disseminating/exchanging OSH information at national and regional level.
- Enlarge the CIS centres network and reinforce national and regional capacities in efficiently producing and using OSH information as a means to improve safety and health at work.

A separate invitation letter will be sent for the CIS meeting.

## **Proposed agenda of the meeting 18-20 November**

- Overview of the OSH situation in the region
- Analysis of the OSH situation in Arab States taking into account:
  - ILO Conventions ratified by country, National OSH strategy/policy, national OSH Programmes and/or national action plan, general OSH legislation, Labour Inspection systems, Workers' compensation system, Occupational diseases, Occupational health services, national OSH advisory bodies, National OSH profiles (where they exist), the national legislation for recording and notification of occupational accidents and diseases, national OSH indicators and statistics, national OSH information centres (ILO CIS network), national roster of OSH professionals, OSH raising awareness campaigns, Promotional OSH programmes and activities, and issues related to chemical safety.
- Review of ILO's role in supporting OSH initiatives in the region
- Promotion of the ILO OSH conventions, instruments and guidelines

- Review of the National OSH profiles (where they exist).
- Role of tripartite constituents in promoting preventative OSH culture.
- Multi-sectoral co-ordination at the national level.

**Participants Profile**

The Meeting is aimed at senior OSH experts responsible for policy development and for implementing national policies and programmes. Tripartite delegations from the following countries will be invited: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Palestinian Authority, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, UAE and Yemen.

**Methodology**

The workshop will include prominent resource persons for the purpose of presenting; sharing related experiences and facilitating the meetings. It will also include group work activities.

**Languages**

Arabic

Simultaneous interpretation into/from French will be available.