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WORLD DAY FOR SAFETY AND HEALTH AT WORK 2007

AMID WORLDWIDE EVENTS, ILO SAYS MOST ACCIDENTS AT WORK COULD BE PREVENTED IF STANDARDS ARE RESPECTED

(ILO News) – Countries around the world are to mark the World Day for Safety and Health at Work this year, amid a new call by the International Labour Office (ILO) for applying internationally-agreed labour standards as a primary tool for reducing work-related accidents and illnesses that take some 2.2 million lives each year.

In commemoration of this year's **World Safety Day**, the ILO in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour Relations & Manpower, Ministry of Healthcare & Nutrition and Ministry of Transport has organized a walk on the 28th of April 2007, to raise awareness among the general public about health and safety issues at the workplace. This year's **theme** is "**Safe and Healthy workplaces - Making Decent Work a Reality**". **The walk will commence from Independence Square, Colombo 7 at 9.00 am and end at the Police Park, Colombo 5, followed by a commemorative ceremony.**

Countries in all regions of the ILO plan SafeDay events ranging from the launch of public awareness campaigns to solemn commemorations. Many have declared 28 April as a day to discuss safety and health at work, while others have brought together workers, employers, government officials and academics to discuss workplace safety. (For more information see www.ilo.org/safework/safeday).

In a new report ^{*/} published on the occasion of the World Day, the ILO has renewed its call for good workplace safety and health practices, including reporting, inspection and standards, as a means of reducing the number of accidents, injuries and illnesses on the job as well as improving productivity.

“Accidents don’t go with the job”, says Dr. Sameera Maziadi Al-Tuwaijri, the newly-appointed Director of the ILO’s SAFEWORK programme. “Experience shows that most accidents are preventable. Sound prevention practices need to be implemented by governments, employers and workers systematically at the national and enterprise level.”

ILO reports show that while 2.2 million people die every year due to work-related accidents or illnesses, more than 270 million workers are injured and an estimated 160 million suffer work-related illnesses. The report says this grim toll also costs the global economy an estimated 4 per cent in lost GDP, equivalent to 20 times all official development aid put together.

The ILO report highlights the links between decent work and occupational safety and health. Various elements of the ILO’s Decent Work Agenda including respect for fundamental principles and rights at work, its international labour standards, occupational safety and health mechanisms, labour

inspection, codes of practice on occupational safety and health and the workplace, and social dialogue provide the basis for a strong workplace response to prevention of occupational accidents and disease.

The ILO adopted a systematic approach to safety and health at work with a Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention adopted last year. The new Convention establishes a framework within which occupational safety and health can be promoted. At the same time, it can foster political commitments to develop national strategies to promote continuous improvement of occupational safety and health to prevent occupational injuries, diseases and deaths; to take active steps towards achieving progressively a safe and healthy working environment; and to periodically consider what measures could be taken to ratify relevant occupational safety and health Conventions of the ILO.

Together with the ILO Global Strategy on Occupational Safety and Health, adopted by the International Labour Conference in 2003, the Framework Convention is a key tool in reducing work-related accidents and ill-health and thus contributing to the realization of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda.

^{*/} *Safe and healthy workplaces. Making decent work a reality.* The ILO Report for World Day for Safety and Health at Work, International Labour Office, Geneva, 2007.

The ILO has also issued a feature story for World Day: “Making decent work a reality: improving health and safety at suppliers”
(www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/inf/features/07/wdsh_07.htm)