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PRESS RELEASE

Safety and Health Culture is Urgently Needed in the Workplace

JAKARTA (ILO News): Throughout the world, thousand workers lose their lives every day as a result of work-related accidents, injuries, or diseases. To reduce or prevent occupational accidents and diseases, there is an urgent need for a new “safety culture” in the world of work, particularly in small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

In order to help develop this “safety culture” in Indonesia, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and its tripartite constituents (the Ministry of Manpower and Transmigration, employers’ organization and trade unions) will hold a one-day seminar on Occupational Safety and Health Management System (OSH-MS) for Small Enterprises on Friday, 7 May, at Tri Dharma Room, Ministry of Manpower and Transmigration, Jakarta.

The seminar will be opened by the Minister of Manpower and Transmigration, H.E. Jacob Nuwa Wea. It is a part of a series of activities held by the ILO in conjunction with the commemoration of the World Day for Safety and Health at Work on 28 April. Other activities were a three-day workshop on OSH in informal sector shoemaking in Bandung from 26-28 April and the Indonesia “World of Work” Forum on HIV/AIDS in Jakarta on 5 May.

“Experience has shown that a strong safety culture is beneficial for workers, employers and governments alike,” says ILO Country Director in Indonesia Alan Boulton. “Various prevention techniques have proven themselves as effective in both avoiding workplace accidents and improving business performance.” He continued that commitment to prevention starts with respect for life and recognition of the right to safe and healthy workplaces. “One of the keys to reach this goal is strong advocacy.”

In Indonesia, SMEs are defined as an enterprise with an asset under Rp 60 million and with less than 50 employees. They comprise of 91% of 169,524 industries reported to Department of Manpower in 2001. The SMEs also employ around 90% of workers in the formal sector. Thus, SMEs play an important role in the country’s economic growth and social welfare.

However, SMEs’ workers are vulnerable to work-related accidents, injuries, or diseases. The rate of fatal accidents in developing countries is four times higher than of industrialized countries. In developing countries, most work-related accidents and illnesses occur in primary industries such as farming, fishing and logging, mining and construction. Low literacy and poor training regarding safety methods lead to high

death rates from fires and exposures to hazardous substances, affecting among others those in the informal economy.

Indonesia has implemented Occupational Safety and Health Management System since 1996. However, the implementation is not yet satisfactory due to ineffective law enforcement. The data shows that of 15,043 big companies, only 317 of them (around 21%) have complied with the regulation. For the first seven months of last year, data from state-owned insurance firm PT Jamsostek shows that there were 51,528 work related accidents. Jamsostek recorded 103,804 cases in 2002 and 104,774 cases in 2001.

To improve the implementation of the Occupational Health and Safety Management System, the Government of Indonesia has incorporated OSH related issues into Manpower Act No. 13/2003. The Act requires all companies to implement the OSH-MS. A government regulation on OSH-MS is expected to be issued in the near future.

Worldwide approximately 6,000 workers lose their lives every day of the year as a result of work-related accidents, injuries, or diseases. In addition to the 400,000 deaths attributable to hazardous substances that occur each year, the ILO notes this is only a percentage of the total of some 2 million work-related fatalities and some 160 million work-related diseases that occur annually. This grim toll requires greater hazard control based on ILO conventions and practical safety measures as a first step toward creating a global "Safety Culture" in the workplace.