

## PRESS RELEASE

### Women are Still at Greater Risk of Sexual Harassment at Work

JAKARTA (ILO News): Concern with sexual harassment at work is relatively recent in Indonesia. However, it is widely agreed that sexual harassment is a clear form of gender discrimination and is recognized as a violation of human rights. Sexual harassment at work can happen to any worker at any workplace—offices, factories, plantations and farms, small and large enterprises.

Sexual harassment affects employees, employers and the society as a whole. Research has clearly shown that workplaces in which harassment is allowed to occur tend to have sharply falling productivity. Sexual harassment leads to increased absenteeism, high turnover of staff and loss of valuable employees and to a poor image of the company.

In response to this problem, the International Labour Organization (ILO), in collaboration with its tripartite constituents (the Ministry of Manpower and Transmigration, Indonesian Employers Association (APINDO) and trade unions), will hold a ***National Tripartite Workshop on Sexual Harassment*** in the Workplace in Indonesia at YTKI Building, Jakarta, on Tuesday, 24 August 2004.

The workshop will be opened by the Minister of Manpower and Transmigration, H.E. Jacob Nuwa Wea, State Minister for Women's Empowerment, H.E. Sri Redjeki Sumaryoto, Chairman of APINDO, Sofjan Wanandi, and Chairman of KSBSI Rekson Silaban. It will be attended by concerned parties such as leaders of employers association, workers confederations, international business community, government officials, academics, practitioners and NGOs.

The main purpose of the workshop is to examine the adequacy of existing laws and policies, including company rules and collective agreements in effectively preventing and addressing the issue of sexual harassment, to identify the most manifest forms of sexual harassment in the workplace, and to identify follow-up measures and programmes to confront this issue.

Sexual harassment consists of unwelcome and unwanted sexual conduct. Both men and women can be subjected to sexual harassment, yet women are much more likely to be affected. Certain groups of women workers tend to be at greater risk of being subjected to sexual harassment, particularly girls and young women, domestic workers, migrant women, women in male-dominated occupations or training institutions, and women with little job security. A group of women supervised by a small number of men are also at risk.

“Silence or lack of complaints does not mean sexual harassment does not occur. The ILO considers sexual harassment as a violation of fundamental rights of workers, declaring that it constitutes a problem of safety and health, a problem of discrimination, an unacceptable working condition and a form of violence, primarily against women,” said Carmelo Noriel, *Chief Technical Adviser of ILO Declaration Project on Industrial Relations in Indonesia*.

The two principal types of sexual harassment in the workplace are ‘quid pro quo’ harassment and the creation of a hostile working environment. Quid pro quo (meaning ‘this for that’) harassment refers to a demand by a person in authority, such as supervisor, for sexual favours in order to obtain or maintain certain job benefits—a wage increase, promotion, training opportunity, a transfer or a job itself. It forces workers to choose between giving in to sexual demands or losing benefits. This type of sexual harassment is also referred to as ‘sexual blackmail.’”

The second type of sexual harassment can poison the work atmosphere and limit the adequate performance of workers. Thus, the creation of a hostile working environment is usually included in definitions of sexual harassment in laws and policies against the practice around the world. It encompasses physical, verbal and non-verbal acts of a sexual nature which are offensive to the person being harassed.

Forms of physical harassment include repeatedly squeezing a worker’s shoulder and putting a hand around her or his waist, rubbing or brushing against one’s breast or behind, exposing of body parts, superfluous attention, and forced to have unwanted sex (physical assault and rape). Verbal harassment include repeated inappropriate remarks about a person’s body parts or looks, comments or conversations with sexual innuendo, obscene jokes of sexual nature, questionable unwelcome compliments or endearments that make the recipient uncomfortable. Non-verbal acts refer to leering and sexually suggestive gesturing, displaying of pornographic or sexual suggestive pictures of men and women.