

Subregional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia

# Newsletter



International  
Labour  
Organization

www.ilo.ru

ISSN 1811-1351

# 3 (22) SEPTEMBER 2005



## Russia's trade unions turn 100, FNPR - 15

*On October 6-7 Russian trade unions will celebrate their 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia (FNPR) will turn 15. On the eve of these events we spoke to FNPR President MIKHAIL SHMAKOV:*

“The year 2005 is special for us. This is the year of two jubilees. Let's go back to the history. After the 1905 February Revolution the first National Conference of Trade Unions was held in Moscow on October 6-7. Two issues were high on the agenda: the establishment of the Moscow Central Bureau of Trade Unions and the convocation of the National Congress of Trade Unions.

Moscow workers declared a general political strike and soon after that railway workers went on strike at nearly all railways of the country. Later bakers, textile and metal workers joined them. On October 17 the strike spread all over the country, gathering 2,863 million people. The strike resulted in the well-known “October Manifesto” of Nicolas II, which declared freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and freedom of association. This was the first serious victory of the trade union movement in Russia.

During their 100-year-long history Russian trade unions experienced different stages of development and methods of struggle. We had to work during the period of the New Economic Policy (1922-1928), the era of Stalinism, Khrushchev thaw and the period of stagnation. The time made its corrections into our work, forms and methods of our activity. However Russian trade unions have never left the field of social and political struggle for workers' rights. Otherwise we could not have become the largest public organisation in our country.

The FNPR is open for all trade unions and trade union associations of the Russian Federation. At present, the FNPR is affiliating 122 member organisations, including 43 all-Russian and interregional trade union organisations with a total membership of 29.7 million, and also 79 territorial associations. If one counts the trade unions that cooperate with the FNPR on the basis of agreements, the number of trade union mem-

bers will be still bigger, 30.5 million people. We are independent in our activity from employers, executive authorities, public movements and political parties.

Since its foundation the FNPR has been actively cooperating with the International Labour Organisation (ILO). Our choice is quite clear, as the FNPR supports social dialogue and settles collective labour disputes through negotiations and collective actions. Following these principles, the FNPR initiated the creation of the Russian Tripartite Commission on Regulation of Social and Labour Relations, as well as elaboration and signing of the first General Agreement between the Government, Trade Unions' and Employers' Associations of the Russian Federation in 1992.

The FNPR has repeatedly used the ILO platform and its mechanisms of control to defend social and economic interests of workers and trade union rights and freedoms in Russia. Everyone still remembers the FNPR and its affiliates' complaints regarding the violation of the ILO Convention No. 95 “On Wage Protection” in our country. It has been under ILO's control for several years.

The FNPR takes an active part in working out cooperation programmes between ILO and the Russian Federation, which are the basis of relationship between ILO and the Russian participants in the tripartite dialogue.

In the framework of implementation of these programmes in Russia major international trade union forums were held – on the protection of trade union rights and freedoms, trade union education and back pay. I should particularly note the success of the unique three-year project on the perfection of a system of trade union education. The project allowed to introduce modern training methods, used by ILO, into the system of the FNPR trade union training.

There have been positive results of other major cooperation projects with ILO: on the social consequences of Russia's accession to the WTO, social aspects of globalisation, labour migration, HIV/AIDS at the working place, gender equality and many others.



FNPR Chairman Mikhail Shmakov

The success of this cooperation is determined in many respects by the constant interaction between the FNPR and Moscow ILO Office and ILO Headquarters in Geneva. Our cooperation with ILO Bureau for Workers' Activities is developing fruitfully. It has become a tradition to hold the so-called “summer trade union school of the FNPR in Geneva” during annual International Labour Conferences. Over a hundred of trade union leaders of different levels have already been trained there.

I'm sure that cooperation between the FNPR and ILO will successfully develop in the future as well.

Today we can proudly say that we have gained a firm foothold and we feel confidence in the future. We are approaching the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Russian Trade Unions and the 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the FNPR, determined to unite our ranks, to further improve the efficiency of trade union organisation at every enterprise. Our historical experience has proved that the strength of trade unions is in their solidarity. Only joint actions of workers, united in trade unions, will be able to withstand the pressure and arbitrariness of capital and to expand decent work throughout the country.

In spite of its age, Russian trade unions are getting younger. More and more young and energetic people join our ranks. Future is in their hands. That means that we'll celebrate another centenary not once. ■



## IPEC project in Central

### IPEC's assistance remains in constant demand

Interview with Klaus Guenther, IPEC Senior Programme Officer for Eastern Europe and Central Asia



*-Mr. Guenther, there have been several reports in the local media about a new IPEC project in Central Asia. What is the essence, the main idea of this project?*

Yes, we just started a new large-scale project which operates in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. We will also initiate activities at sub-regional level. Interventions to be supported at the national level fall within the broad categories of: building the knowledge base on child labour; dissemination of information; raising awareness; policy and legislative support and direct assistance provided to working children and their families.

Important is that activities will be implemented by national institutions at various levels, and will take special account of national features and conditions. Actions against child labour are expected to move up-stream towards the policy level. We aim at empowering national actors from the grass roots to the policy makers to take up action against the worst forms of child labour (WFCL) in line with the ILO Convention 182.

The sub-regional level interventions will offer an added value to the national activities and contribute to enhanced synergy of project interventions by sharing experience and information across the sub-region. This shall lead to building capacity and knowledge base on issues of general relevance, and thus making available much more information to many more people in a more systematic way than has been the case so far.

*- Why were Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan chosen as the venue for the IPEC project? And what particular forms of child labour are typical for the Central*

*Asian countries?*

The ILO member countries in Central Asia acknowledge that child labour is a problem of increasing dimension. Relevant sectors include agriculture, petty trade in local markets and in the urban informal economy as well as domestic services. In addition, the commercial sexual exploitation of children is on the rise. There is therefore an urgent need to address the child labour challenge, particularly as spelled out in ILO Convention No. 182 (C 182) on the elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour.

There is, however, limited capacity to fully apply C182 in the Central Asian countries. Consequently, capacities must be built and/or strengthened at all levels of society to facilitate concerted national efforts against the WFCL. The ILO constituents have requested IPEC's assistance in building up and/or strengthening their capacities for combating the WFCL and for developing models of direct action programmes on prevention, withdrawal and rehabilitation.

*- Have you already visited these countries, met with the tripartite partners?*

In the framework of the project development I carried out fact finding missions to all participating countries. Numerous consultations with our constituents and other potential project partners and relevant local institutions have been held. And I talked to working children. Clearly, our partners are strongly committed to address child labour. But they need our help and so do the children and their families.

*- What has already been done since the launch of the project?*

We have started to set up the logistical infrastructure of the project, recruited national project staff and opened up IPEC offices. Based on Rapid Assessments which analyse the problems and recommend actions, planning workshops with our local partners were conducted in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan to agree on those activities that should be carried out as a matter of priority. The project will be fully operational in autumn this year. First activities with a focus

on raising awareness have started and in September we will begin to train our implementing partners who then will carry out concrete action programmes.

*- Mr Guenther, as a responsible IPEC official you are certainly aware of both the scale of child labour in the world and the effectiveness of measures to combat it. Do you think it is possible to eliminate child labour globally in a short-term perspective? And what should be done for this?*

The problem of child labour is immense. Recent ILO global estimates put the number of child labourers at 246 million of which some 171 million are in very hazardous situations. While the effective elimination of child labour is the ultimate objective, it is closely related to economic and social factors such as poverty and underdevelopment - and thus will take time to be accomplished. In the meantime, there are certain forms of child labour that cannot be tolerated, regardless of a country's level of development or economic situation. The ILO and its member states give therefore high priority to the urgent elimination of the *worst forms of child labour*, as defined in Convention 182.

I think it is widely accepted that a development-oriented approach that reduces poverty and promotes universal education is the most effective way of attacking the complex root causes of child labour and eliminating it in a sustainable way. IPEC's overall strategy is thus firmly based on the premise that the reduction of child labour through reforming national policies, enhancing capacity, protecting children's rights, enhancing community participation and the empowerment on children and parents can make a durable impact. Such an approach has resulted in hundreds of thousands of children being withdrawn from work and rehabilitated or prevented from entering the workforce.

However, much needs still to be done and IPEC assistance will certainly remain in constant demand. With our projects, we will continue to provide this assistance now also in Central Asia. ■

## Appointments



Mr. Werner Konrad Blenk has been appointed Director of the ILO Subregional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia in Moscow with effect from November 1 2005. Mr. Blenk joined

the ILO as an associate expert at the ILO Office for the United Nations in New York. Later he worked at the ILO Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. He headed the ILO offices in Bangladesh (1992-1995), India (1996-1998) and Philippines (2000-2005). From 1998 to 1999 he was Director of the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) in Geneva.

Mr. Blenk graduated with the First State Degree in Law from the University of Wuerzburg in Germany in 1975, where he had studied theology and law. He has the Second State Degree in Law (judge's qualification, Supreme Court of Berlin) and Master's Degree in Euro-

pean Law (University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom).

In addition to his career as an international civil servant, Mr. Blenk has conducted several teaching assignments on labour and economic law at various universities, including the Universite de Lyon and the University of Berlin. He is the author of a number of publications on labour law and labour relations. For several years he was involved in managing the International Industrial Relations Association (IIRA).

In addition to his mother tongue - German Mr. Blenk is fluent in English and French and has working knowledge of Spanish.

Married with three children. ■



## Asian republics

### Central Asian republics support IPEC project

*Labour and Social Protection Ministries of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan together with employers' organizations announced the beginning of a comprehensive programme on the elimination of child labour in the republics.*

*The project is implemented under ILO's International programme on the elimination of child labour.*

The first meeting of the Coordination Council on Child Labour in **Kyrgyzstan** was held in the republic on August 1. It was chaired by Acting Deputy Prime Minister Ishenkul Boldzhurova. The participants discussed the trade union activities to eliminate the worst forms of child labour, the social partners' national action plan and the list of the worst and most dangerous types of work, where child labour is prohibited.

Despite the government's efforts, child labour still remains one of the most acute problems in Kyrgyzstan and an issue of serious public concern. There are many factors for child labour, including low living standards, adult unemployment and its extremely low cost. Poverty-bred child labour causes irreversible physical and moral harm to young population.

The trade union of Kyrgyzstan's agroindustrial complex had conducted a survey in southern regions of the country, which showed that on each hectare of cotton and rice fields from three to four children are employed and from seven to eight children at tobacco fields. About 5,000 families and 15,000 children are engaged in tobacco production.

About 125,000 children are employed in agricultural sector in the Dzhalsalabad region alone. Boys and girls in rural areas help their parents in different works, including the ones harmful for their health.

At a news conference in Astana devoted to the project's implementation in **Kazakhstan**, Deputy Labour and Social Protection Minister Batyrzhan Ashitov said that child labour was used at tire recapping shops, and at marketplaces and during cotton and tobacco harvesting.

IPEC Chief Technical Advisor in Central Asia Lars Johansen pointed out that child labour is widespread mostly among migrant families. In Kazakhstan the situation is better than in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan – other participants in the project. Four hundred thousand dollars are earmarked in the project for each of the four Central Asian countries, Johansen said. But the exact volume of financing in each country will depend on concrete actions and the scale of the child labour problem, he said.

Director of the Labour Ministry's employment and control over observance of labour law department Serik Abdenov said that there is still no coordinated efforts in resolving this problem that is why we have no complete and reliable child labour statistics.

Sofia An, IPEC Coordinator in Kazakhstan pointed out that "the analysis of child labour in the republic is complicated by the fact that children engaged in the worst forms of child labour are not registered. This is a la-

tent problem."

The child labour problem is now being discussed in different parts of the country. For example, participants in the seminar on the elimination of child labour in Kazakhstan's agricultural sector (Shchuchinsk, Akmolinsk region) adopted a final document, which reads: "We note the efforts of the ILO and IPEC in providing technical assistance in the elimination of child labour and welcome the beginning of the programme in Kazakhstan," – participants said. ■

*By information of the KABAR, Kazinform and Interfax-Kazakhstan agencies.*

#### Latest news

ASTANA. September 28. KAZINFORM - IPEC Chief Technical Advisor in Central Asia Lars Johansen and IPEC Coordinator in Kazakhstan Sofia An met on Thursday at the Kazakh Ombudsman's office.

In December 2005 the Ombudsman intends to submit for consideration a report to the President and parliament of the Republic. The report will sum up the results of monitoring over the observance of child's rights in Kazakhstan and draw up certain proposals. Mr. Johansen said that he was eager to assist in preparing a section of the report on child labour.

#### Calendar of events of the ILO Subregional Office in Moscow

##### OCTOBER

- 1 International Day of Older Persons
- 4 A finale conference on the project "Comprehensive Partnership Strategies for HIV/STI Prevention among Young People in the Russian Federation", *Altai territory, Russia*
- 11-12 Seminar "Exchange experience and good practices of interventions on HIV/AIDS in the world of work in the region of Eastern Europe and Central Asia", *Kiev, Ukraine*
- 12-14 Seminar on "OSH and Social

- Partnership. New Ways of Development" *Murmansk, Russia*
- 17 International Day for the Eradication of Poverty
- 17-18 High-level Tripartite Seminar on Labour Administration and Public Employment Services, *Nicosia, Cyprus*
- 24 United Nations Day
- 24.10-3.11 - SIYB Training of Trainers (TOT) seminar, *Moscow, Russia*
- 26-27 Labour Inspection Audit seminar, *Taraz, Kazakhstan*

##### NOVEMBER

- 3-4 Annual meeting of Baltic Sea

- OSH Network, *Oslo, Norway*
- 20 Universal Children's Day
- 25 International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women
- 29.11 – 2.12 IX International OSH exhibition, OSH Conference, *Moscow, Russia*

##### DECEMBER

- 1 World AIDS Day
- 3 International Day of Disabled Persons
- 10 Human Rights Day
- 18 International Migrants Day
- (...) Seminars on OSH in agriculture, women and OSH, *Uzbekistan*



## Start and Improve Your Business

By these articles we begin a series of publications devoted to the tenth anniversary of ILO's

### Starting life anew

#### SIYB in Tajikistan's women prisons

*After the collapse of the Soviet Union and civil war, Tajikistan has been in a very difficult economic situation. Employment problems, low wages and extreme poverty of the majority of families force many women to break the law to make a living. Many agree to become drug mules. At great risks to their lives they transport capsules with narcotic substances inside their body becoming the so-called 'live containers'. In case of arrest they get prison terms of several years.*

"Three years ago we came up with an idea of arranging a SIYB training for women who serve their prison terms on charges of illicit drugs trafficking," Alisher Rakhimov, master-trainer of the National SYIB Trainers' Association, said. "Since then we've been looking for a partner organization to help us implement the project. In the second half of 2004 the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation in Tajikistan announced a small grants contest within the Penitentiary System Reform Project. We took part and gained support for the implementation of our project on social and labour rehabilitation of women in penitentiary institutions. The Penitentiary Department of the Republic's Justice Ministry hailed our initiative," he said.

Since April 2005 sixty women from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Russia serving terms in women's labour colony No.3/13 in Nurek, Tajikistan underwent SIYB training. Trainers prepared manuals for beginner entre-

preneurs and a feasibility study both in Russian and Tajik, set up dinners and coffee-breaks to create an informal and friendly atmosphere.

The participants learnt how to choose a good business idea, how to work out their own business plans, how to draw up an income and spending budget for the whole year, how to estimate the starting capital and how to get a credit for their business.

The trainees practiced newly-acquired skills in a SIYB role game playing the role of a manufacturer, a supplier and a sales person. They admitted that it was not easy for them to run business even in a game, as it was necessary to have not only business management abilities, but also good communication and negotiation skills.

"The SIYB program in Tajikistan is in its fifth year. We have trained over 700 trainees, but none of the previous audience was as active and as grateful as these women prisoners," the trainers said. "All participants did their homework in the most painstaking way, sometimes till 3:00 a.m."

However, far from everything proved was so calm and bright. It was probably for the first time that trainers met people with such a different level of education and skills in one group. Some women had long forgotten how to use a calculator and make easy arithmetical operations. Trainers had to explain certain issues over and over again and then shared their students' joy about their first successes. It was also very rewarding to see that the

students took the programme as a guide for further action.

During a meeting with her father, a successful businessman, one trainee studied with him the "Start Your Business" guidebook and the feasibility study she had written herself. She asked the trainers for more books and they presented her the "Improve Your Business. Basics" book. Another trainee asked her relatives to keep these books safe until her release.

In a gesture of gratitude women prisoners presented their trainers with hand-made toys and souvenirs.

Since this first training the SIYB project staff have felt their personal responsibility for the future of these women. Although it is not his direct duty, Alisher Rakhimov, the director of the National SIYB Trainers Association, is now looking for sources to microfinance the women ex-convicts' business projects after their release.

"We plan after their release – and this will happen shortly – to find such organizations that will be able to provide them with a start-up capital. It's not going to be an easy task. Banks and state-run financial institutions will hardly agree to give credits to people with such a record. But it is so important to give them a chance to start a new life. These women for the first time after many dark years have found hope for the future. And we want to help them start their life anew," Rakhimov said. ■

### SIYB in the subregion: chronology of events

**June 1994** - the SIYB programme proposed for the CIS region, and more specifically for Kazakhstan as part of a German government funded project "Local Economic Restructuring and Employment Adjustment". Later the Luxemburg government hailed ILO's initiative to support the programme implementation in different regions of Kazakhstan with placing of trainers in 11 out of 14 regions.

**February 1995 – September 1998** four Training of Trainers (TOT) seminars in Almaty, Chimkent, Astana, and Semipalatinsk (Kazakhstan)

**April 1999** - the first Training of Master

Trainers seminar in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

**September-October 1999** certified Master Trainers piloted the first Training of Trainers outside Kazakhstan - in Kyrgyzstan - with the ILO's financial support.

**July 2000** - the first SIYB Training of Trainers in the Belgorod region, Russia conducted by certified Master Trainers.

**August 2000** - the second Training of Trainers seminar in the Nizhny Novgorod region, Russia.

**November 2000** - the first Training of Trainers seminar in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

**December 2000- May 2001** - three Training of Trainers seminars in Tajikistan

**2002-2005** the Dutch funded Youth and Entrepreneurship Education Programme ensured the continuation of the SIYB programme and reinforced programmes for Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.

**June 2003** a second generation of Master Trainers trained in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

**June 2005** a second generation of Master Trainers issued certificates at the Competency Reinforcement Workshop in Almaty, Kazakhstan.



# – 10 years in the subregion

*Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB) programme in the subregion.*

## Teaching themselves to teach others

From June 13 to June 24 Almaty, Kazakhstan hosted a Master Trainer Competency Reinforcement Workshop on the ILO's Start and Improve Your Business Programme (SIYB). No other country in the region has witnessed such a representative meeting. Experienced SIYB trainers, who stood at the cradle of the programme as well as beginners gathered in one hall. They got together to discuss results of a ten-year work of the programme in the region, share their successes and lessons learnt, master and improve their skills guided by their colleagues' experience.

The main objectives were to refresh and reinforce Master Trainers on the five competency areas: marketing the SIYB programme

(including the Rapid Market appraisal, describing and selling the SIYB programme and mapping of all key actors); organizing the SIYB programme (considering the notion of selection, Training of Trainers (TOT) programme

design and follow-up); conducting sessions for Trainers and Training Managers; following up on trainers, partners and linkages with the ILO (including trainer certification, the use of logos, copy right issues, etc.); assessing and reinforcing impact. Additional presentations were included to cover gender related issues and the set-up of a sub-regional database.

The workshop participants benefited not only from the experience sharing sessions and exercises, but also from meetings with employment specialists Ms. Martina. Lubyova and Ms. Mariko Ouchi, international and regional experts of the SIYB facilitators team Mr. Walter Verhoeve and Mr. Sergey Muzyka, deputy head of the Russian Federal Labour and Employment Service Mr. Sergey Kartashov, gender specialists Ms. Irina Melekh and Ms. Elena Sannikova, ILO SRO communication officer Ms. Olga Bogdanova and database developer Mr I. Pavlov.

High on the agenda was changing of the course from donor assistance, which had supported the SIYB programme for 10 years, to economic efficiency and sustainability. As it was noted during the workshop, with the growing tendency towards more commercial

and more sustainable BDS (business development services) markets for the SME sector, SIYB programme in the subregion should gradually start introducing a more sustainable training delivery mechanism.

Here are views of some trainers on self-financing of the programme:

**Ms. Svetlana Brutchikova, SIYB master-trainer (Kazakhstan):**

*"Probably, each country of the subregion has its own point of view on the programme's self-financing. In Kazakhstan this programme has been self-regulated for a long time that is to say it is economically independent. In other countries it makes its first steps and it is still unknown on the market. Everything will depend on how effectively our colleagues will work to make the programme recognizable. It is also necessary to have the name and logo of an authoritative organization for assistance and support as that of the International Labour Organisation (ILO). This was of great importance for us."*

**Mr. Alisher Rakhimov, SIYB master-trainer (Tajikistan):**

*"Now after the seminar I know what we need to do in Tajikistan first of all: to develop a marketing programme, gather donor organizations to explain to them that at present, we cannot provide our product for free, otherwise it is not appreciated. I've met this in Tajikistan. We have much to do - beginning from the programme's marketing to the development of a database that is not available now."*

**Ms. Olga Lunina, SIYB master-trainer (Belgorod, Russia):**

*"It will be rather difficult to shift to self-financing but it is possible. Of course, we rely on financial support, but we already have an experience of independent activity. Acting entrepreneurs who attend our Improve Your Business (IYB) seminars, pay for trainers' services and training materials, while the business development centre has only to provide classrooms."*



Svetlana Brutchikova receives a certificate

**Ms. Matlyuba Kadyrova, SIYB trainer (Fergana, Uzbekistan):**

*"I think that without financial support the programme will not be 100-percent operational. There are too many unemployed in my country who are very poor and cannot even get a loan in the bank as well as too many young people who cannot yet pay for the courses themselves. As for training of acting entrepreneurs on how to improve their business, it's quite another thing. They can pay for training. What I am saying is that we need a differentiated approach towards various social groups."*

**Mr. Mikhail Khadayev, SIYB trainer (Uzbekistan):**

*"I would like to focus on two points of the agenda. First, it is necessary to perfect and upgrade the programme to satisfy customers' demands. Second, we need to increase the programme's competitiveness in the conditions, when other international programmes offering similar products are operating on the market side by side with us. One of the factors for the programme's stability is sustainable financing. I will cite as an example my country, where for one of our main target groups, the unemployed, we have a stable source of financing the Employment Assistance Fund. Our product should be competitive on the free market."*

The workshop gave a fresh look into a working mode of trainers and master-trainers. They realized the necessity to focus on impact orientation, make the programme more market oriented and increase the quality of the SIYB training of trainers. By the end of the workshop the participants prepared and presented a common vision on programme standards for the subregion. In addition, all country teams presented their own vision, national priorities and plans of actions for further implementation of the SIYB programme.

So, almost two weeks of hard work, hot and lively discussions are over. Trainers returned home with a baggage of new ideas and plans, which means that the programme lives and develops and has promising future. ■



Marat Nuraliev, SIYB MT, Kyrgyzstan



A group photo after the workshop



## ILO-Armenia: new stage of cooperation

An office of an ILO National Correspondent will be opened in Armenia, director of the ILO Regional Bureau for Europe and Central Asia Friedrich Buttler said during his official visit to the Republic from June 27 to June 30.

Armenian Labour and Social Issues Minister Aghvan Vardanyan on behalf of the Armenian Government highly assessed cooperation with the ILO, which "became very active over the past year." Armenia has settled its contribution arrears and regained the right to vote in the ILO. In November 2004 the Armenian government together with its social partners signed the ILO-Armenia Programme of technical cooperation for 2004-2006.



Meeting with Labour and Social Affairs Minister Aghvan Vardanyan (left)

Armenia adheres to the ILO principles of social partnership and continues to adjust the republic's legislation to the ILO's norms and standards. The ILO helped Armenia work out a new Labour Code and a Labour Inspection Law and set up the State Labour Inspection.

The Republic has already ratified 23 ILO Conventions and another ten are in the process of ratification. Mr. Buttler pointed out that at present Armenia reached a stage when it should focus on the implementation of the ratified conventions.

Occupational safety was also high on the agenda of the talks.

"At present, we've approached a stage where we have realized that for the republic's economy it is very important to ensure safe and healthy working conditions, which will be beneficial not only to the employees, but also employers and the government," the minister said.

Mr. Vardanyan also pointed to problems in implementing normative legal acts, retraining labour inspectors and creating labour inspection's information center.

Friedrich Buttler confirmed ILO's readiness to help resolve problems voiced by Aghvan Vardanyan. He said that the ILO had provided all necessary funds to expand a programme for labour inspectors' retraining, which will allow to train specialists in compliance with international standards.

Armenian Foreign Minister Vardan Oskanyan also attaches importance to Armenia's membership in the ILO. Adoption of ILO standards will help not only regulate social issues in the country, but will also influence its economic development and raise its international rating. The minister also hails the ILO's decision to create the post of a National Correspondent in Armenia, which will allow to coordinate the ILO-Armenia cooperation more effectively.

Mr. Buttler visited the Kotayk region,

where the ILO is implementing employability and skills development project. Its beneficiaries are women, youth and other vulnerable groups.

"It is the first international project for Kotayk. During the Soviet years it was an industrial region. Now 70 percent of enterprises are closed and the unemployment rate is high. About 60 percent of economically active population is unemployed. About 35,000 are jobless aged between 15-29. The region has a good potential for tourism – resorts and mineral water springs and we should tap it properly in order to provide jobs for our people. This is where we rely on ILO's experience and expertise," deputy head of the Kotayk Regional Administration Levon Mikaelyan said.

Friedrich Buttler visited Holy Echmiadzin, a residence of the Armenian Apostolic Church. He also met with head of the Trade Unions Confederation of Armenia Mesrop Harutyunyan, executive director of the Armenian Manufacturers and Employers Union Gagik Makaryan, Finance Minister Vardan Khachatryan, Deputy Trade and Economic Development Minister Armen Gevorgyan, chairman of the Permanent Committee for Social Affairs, Health and Environment of the Armenian National Assembly Gagik Mkheyan, U.S. Ambassador to Armenia Mr. John Evans and director of the World Bank Office Roger Robinson.

The visit was concluded with a joint press conference of Mr. Buttler, the Labour Minister and heads of the social partners associations. It brought together all leading TV, radio, and printed media of Armenia. ■



## ILO publications at 18th International Book Fair in Moscow

On the eve of the 60th Anniversary of the United Nations, ILO Moscow, together with other UN Agencies, was invited to participate in the 18th Moscow International Book Fair, which took

place at the All-Russian Exhibition Centre from September 7-12.

The Moscow International Book Fair today is the most representative and large-scale forum in Russia for public-at-large and expert community. The programme of the fair included over a hundred meetings and presentations. Delegations from 54 countries took part in the exhibition. Organizers of the fair hardly managed to place more than 100,000 editions in tens of languages in the two pavilions of the Exhibition Centre.

The exhibition was an excel-

lent opportunity to promote ILO's publications and activities.

The ILO stand was one of the most popular, and hundreds of copies of ILO books and information materials were collected within a few days. ■







## International Year of Microcredit 2005

In 1998, the UN General Assembly declared 2005 the International Year of Microcredit in recognition of microcredit's contribution to poverty reduction, towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

Microfinance has already made a positive impact on the quality of life of millions of poor people by providing greater access to credit, savings, insurance, transfer remittances, and other financial services, which would otherwise be unreachable. But there is still a huge gap in the availability of services. As ILO Director-General, Juan Somavia, said at the launch of the Year, microfinance institutions reach only 10 per cent of the world's poor today.

"Microcredit is about poverty reduction. And the ILO has a tremendous interest in microcredit precisely because fighting poverty is at the heart of our mandate", said Somavia. "Microcredit creates jobs. It promotes self-employment, livelihood, and it helps people expand their economic activities so they can hire others". It can also become an important part of the social safety net, and plays a critical role in empowering women.

The ILO is committed to building on the links between microfinance and decent work through its Social Finance Programme. Created in 1991, the it is a focal point to analyze, evaluate and disseminate financial sector issues relevant for employment and social justice.

In countries where the ILO works to assist in attaining compliance with core labour standards, such as the abolishment of forced labour and child labour, microfinance initiatives have played a key role. They help replace family income when a child labourer leaves work and goes to school, provide poor workers with credit to avoid slipping into debt bondage, assist women who are vulnerable to human trafficking, and help migrant workers send remittances back home through secure channels while supporting the use of those remittances for income-generating activities.

Around fifty countries have confirmed their participation in the Year. Dozens of outstanding economists, bankers and financiers agreed to enter the Group of Advisors for the International Year of Microcredit 2005.

Russia is represented by Diana Medman, director of the Bioprocess joint stock, founder of the Women's Microfinance Network. "I'm pleased to be a part of the overall effort to provide microfinance to poor and low-income people, which gives women everywhere the power to play more prominent roles in their communities," she said.

Every country-participant set up national committees to mark the Year. In Russia it was created under the aegis of the Economic Development and Trade Ministry. National committees were also set up in Azerbaijan ([www.microfinance.az](http://www.microfinance.az)), Kazakhstan ([www.microfinance.uz](http://www.microfinance.uz)), Belarus and Georgia.

In Eastern Europe and Central Asia ILO has pioneered several microfinance initiatives, including start-up financing for new entrepreneurs – graduates of the Start and Improve Your Business Programme (SIYB), and the assessment of microcredit schemes in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. ■

Official site of the Year <http://www.yearofmicrocredit.org>



## Occupational Safety and Health in the North West of Russia

In April the ILO Moscow Subregional office launched a project on improving occupational safety and health in the North-Western region of Russia. The two-year-long project is financed by the Finnish government in cooperation with the Northern Dimension Partnership on Public Health and Social Welfare.

The project's goal is to sum up results and experience accumulated during year-old cooperation in occupational safety between Russia and Finland and spread it across other regions and countries of the Subregion.

"Our work is aimed at reducing poverty and raising employment," Wiking Husberg, Senior Specialist on Occupational Safety and Health at the ILO Moscow Office said. "The project envisages development of social partnership mechanisms and effective management in accordance with legislation. Finally, all this will contribute to improving working conditions and standards of living in the region," he said.

First of all, it is necessary to focus on key problems of occupational safety in the northwestern region. As it is known, there is poor and inaccurate reporting and registration of work-related diseases and accidents in Russia. Therefore, the project is aimed at

analyzing this process, especially at medium and small enterprises and at working out guidelines to improve it.

Project Coordinator Roman Litvyakov pointed out that the important element of work will be promotion of social partnership in occupational safety at an enterprise level. The international experience shows that inspection and control are not enough to cover all enterprises. The only way to improve working conditions is cooperation between an employer and an employee (social partnership). It means that it is necessary to set up safety committees and train their staff. Russian and Finnish trade unions have already gained wide experience in this area.

How to explain to an employer that it is necessary to invest in occupational safety? Only, if we make calculations and show economic losses caused by bad working conditions. This very approach was practiced in Western Europe and it will be used in the North-West of Russia and adjusted to specific conditions of the region.

The important element of the project will be development of OSH management systems at enterprises. ILO has worked out an international OSH management system, which combines in itself basic provisions and principles. It is aimed not on payment



of compensations for hazardous working conditions, but on prevention of work-related diseases and accidents.

To make the accumulated experience available for Russian specialists, the project will use different information networks and resources such as the Internet Academy of Safe Work ([www.safework.ru](http://www.safework.ru)) and printed media. It is also planned to issue CDs on the project.

Taking part in the project will be Finland's leading organizations in charge of occupational safety. Russia will be represented by the Labour Ministry, inspections, trade unions, educational and research institutions of St. Petersburg, the Leningrad region, the Republic of Karelia and Murmansk. ■

## In Brief

■ On September 14-16 the UN headquarters in New York hosted the 2005 World Summit, which gathered heads of state and government from 151 countries. ILO was represented by Director-General Juan Somavia. ILO was involved in the debate regarding progress toward the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals adopted five years ago. In his opinion-editorial article Mr. Somavia pointed out that "ILO's responsibility can be summarized in a single phrase: working out of poverty. We have to begin by changing the policy paradigm to recognize that employment, and the promotion of enterprises that create jobs, is the most effective route to poverty eradication." Mr. Somavia's opinion-editorial article was published by central mass media in the subregion, including *The Rossiyskaya Gazeta* in Russia, *The Republic of Armenia* and *The Free Georgia*.

■ ILO's HIV/AIDS Workplace Education Programme is being implemented in the Moscow region in accordance with a workplan approved at the April 7 meeting of the Project Advisory Board under the chairmanship of deputy head of the Moscow region government Sergei Koshman. From April to June the work was in progress to choose enterprises for participation in the programme under assistance of regional administration, trade unions and employers' associations. The Advisory Board chose seven enterprises in sectors where occu-

pational groups at risk may appear: hotels, restaurants, tourist operators, transport, construction, agricultural and trading firms and services. In June-July, participating enterprises signed memorandums of cooperation, appointed project coordinators and set up commissions on HIV/AIDS. As of early August the Yuri Levada analytical centre has been polling and interviewing focus groups to define workers' awareness of HIV/AIDS problems and their attitude to them. At present, the work is underway to collect project's statistics in municipalities of the Moscow region.

■ On July 18-22 the ILO Subregional office in Moscow organized a one-week workshop on introducing the ILO modular training methodology in accordance with a Memorandum of Understanding signed with the Federal Labour and Employment Service (FES) of the Russian Federation for the implementation of the Dutch TC RAM project on "Increasing employability through skills development and entrepreneurial training". It was piloted in Golitzino, one of the FES training centers in the Moscow region. Taking part in the seminar were representatives of FES, ILO experts and vocational training specialists from Golitzino center and other Russian regions – North Ossetia, Dagestan, Kalmykia and Kabardino-Balkaria. Two experienced experts from Ukraine Valery Plokhiiy and Vladimir Anishchenko conducted trainings and provided participants with the modular training methodology and training packages and materials.

■ A seminar on "Boosting employment and job creation through small enterprise development and entrepreneurial education in Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Uzbekistan" was conducted at the ITC Turin on 7 – 13 September, 2005 for representatives of the tripartite partners from five countries. In the framework of the seminar, a training workshop for SIYB Master Trainers was also conducted which resulted in certification of four new Master Trainers.

■ On September 18-23 Orlando, US, hosted the 17<sup>th</sup> World Congress of Safety and Health at Work, where ILO's new report was represented. According to estimates, some 2.2 million people die of work-related diseases and accidents each year and this number may be underestimated due to poor reporting and coverage systems in many countries.

■ "Russia needs a new labour migration policy concept," Yelena Tyuryukanova, PH.D. (Econ.), leading researcher at the Institute for Socio-Economic Problems of the Population at the Russian Academy of Sciences said. She made a presentation at a roundtable meeting entitled "Labour Migration and Forced Labour in Legislation: Russia and the International Community" at the Federal Migration Service on July 28. Taking part in the meeting were representatives of the Economic Development and Trade Ministry, the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia, the Federal Labour and Employment Service and Foreign Ministry and the ILO. ■



## Kazan – capital of Tatarstan



On August 30, the capital of Tatarstan Kazan celebrated its thousandth anniversary. This city is situated on the banks of the great Volga River and on the crossroads of ancient trade routes uniting Europe and Asia, West and East. Modern Kazan is one of Russia's largest economic, scientific and cultural centres.

In 2000 historic and architectural complex of the Kazan Kremlin was included in the UNESCO World Heritage list. Kazan became a full-fledged member of the Organization of World Heritage Cities.

Over 1.2 million people of more than 100 nationalities of different confessions reside in the city, which harmonically combines in itself two basic elements – East and West.

Kazan is the capital of one of the most dynamic Russian regions. The Republic of Tatarstan has rich natural resources, huge and diversi-

fied industries such as fuel and petrochemical industries, machine- and aircraft building, radio instrument making as well as agroindustrial complex. The republic's annual oil output makes up 30 million tons, which accounts for 6.7 percent of the national output.

In 2004 Tatarstan's gross domestic product amounted to 379.8 billion roubles, a 6-percent increase in comparison with 2003.

The republic's labour sector is also on the rise. More than 200 labour agreements and



Synthetic rubber production

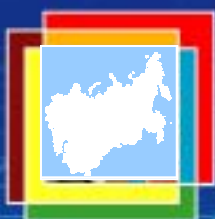
6,000 collective agreements covering about 88 percent of workers regulate social and labour relations in the republic. Tatarstan has one of the lowest unemployment



rates (6.7 percent) and a high share of economically active population (1,865 thousand).

The high proportion of young population and the current demographic situation determine the republic's future in all sectors. Young people aged between 16 and 29 years make up 21.7 percent of the republic's population.

In 2004 almost a one-million young population of Tatarstan marked the tenth anniversary of the state youth policy. It is aimed at expanding opportunities of younger generation. ■



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This newsletter is distributed free of charge. Circulation: 3500 copies

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