



**Message by Juan Somavia  
Director-General of the International Labour Office  
on the occasion of  
World Day for Safety and Health at Work**

**28 April 2008**

Today we put the spotlight on protecting the life and health of workers everywhere.

Labour is not a commodity and markets must serve people. Nearly 90 years ago the protection of workers' lives and health was set out as a key objective in the founding charter of the Organization. Today, rapid technological change and a fast-paced and globalized economy bring new challenges and pressures for all areas of the world of work. Safety and health remain integral elements of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda.

Millions of work related accidents, injury and disease annually take their toll on human lives, businesses, the economy and the environment. Each year, for some two million women and men, the ultimate cost is loss of life. In economic terms it is estimated that roughly four per cent of the annual global Gross Domestic Product, or US\$1.25 trillion, is siphoned off by direct and indirect costs of occupational accidents and diseases such as lost working time, workers' compensation, the interruption of production and medical expenses.

Developing countries, where the rate of accidents has been increasing, face particular challenges. And we cannot forget that most workers are in the informal economy where work related accidents, disease and death are likely to be unrecorded. Their health and safety must be a prime concern.

This year we focus on managing risk in the work environment. We know that by assessing risks and hazards, combating them at source and promoting a culture of prevention we can significantly reduce workplace illness and injuries.

Employers, workers and governments all play key roles in making this happen.

It calls for sustained advocacy, effective social dialogue, and the promotion of relevant international labour standards, including the Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 (Convention 187). Practical measures such as sharing experience and know-how can also foster progress.

All stand to gain from safe and healthy workplaces. On this World Day for Safety and Health at Work, the ILO is committed to working with our constituents and all concerned partners to make work and workplaces safe for all.

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