

Let's Prevent Occupational Diseases – World Day for Safety and Health at Work 2013

The International Labour Organization (ILO) has called for an “urgent and vigorous” global campaign to tackle the growing number of work-related diseases, which claim an estimated 2 million lives per year. The World Day for Safety and Health at Work in 2013 focuses on the prevention of occupational diseases.

“The ultimate cost of occupational disease is human life. It impoverishes workers and their families and may undermine whole communities when they lose their most productive workers,” said the ILO Director-General Guy Ryder in a statement issued for the World Day for Safety and Health at Work. “Meanwhile, the productivity of enterprises is reduced and the financial burden on the State increases as the cost of health care rises. Where social protection is weak or absent, many workers as well as their families, lack the care and support they need.”

Worldwide, occupational diseases continue to be the leading cause of work-related deaths. According to ILO estimates, out of 2.34 million occupational fatalities every year, about 2 million deaths are caused by various types of work-related diseases, which correspond to a daily average of more than 5,500 deaths. It is evident that occupational diseases impose enormous costs. They can impoverish workers and their families, reduce productivity and work capacity and dramatically increase health care expenditures. This is an unacceptable Decent Work deficit.

Speaking at the Seminar for World Day for Safety and Health at Work organised by the Employers' Federation of Ceylon, Mr. Donglin Li Country Director for Sri Lanka and the Maldives said; at the policy level in Sri Lanka, the ILO is very pleased to note the new Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Act - that has been approved by Cabinet – is far reaching and comprehensive. This is also a very significant improvement for the safety culture at the workplace in Sri Lanka. To implement the act, the ILO stands ready with its resources to assist in the necessary capacity building in a joint effort with Government, employers and Trade Unions.

The Country Director urged the Government, employers, workers organizations and other social partners to collaborate in the development and implementation of national policies and strategies aimed at preventing occupational and work-related diseases.