

## **Message by Mr. Donglin Li, Country Director ILO Office for Sri Lanka, on the occasion of the World Day for Safety and Health, 28 April 2011**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me an immense pleasure to attend the event to celebrate the world day for safety and health to generate public awareness on safety culture at work places. The ILO reiterates the importance of the Safety at work place through observing the World Day for Safety and Health at Work which is held on 28 April each year, a date that was first marked in 2001.

On this day governments, employers' and workers' organizations conduct awareness raising activities within their areas of influence on the theme of accident and ill-health prevention. Meanwhile, everyone engaged in the world of work is encouraged to consider their working practices and to identify preventative action could avoid injuries and ill health.

Each year, across the globe, there are some 270 million occupational accidents and 160 million work-related diseases, around 337 million people are victims of work accidents and more than 2.3 million people die because of occupational injuries or work-related diseases.

From mines to chemical plants, from offices to fields, work-related accidents and illness take a heavy toll in terms of lives lost, disability and economic loss. The tragedy is that so many accidents, illnesses and deaths could be prevented with appropriate managerial measures.

Today, the ILO highlights the role of occupational safety and health management systems as a tool to secure continual improvement. Successfully building a strong preventative safety and health culture will depend on strong commitment, collaboration and concerted action by governments, employers and workers and all stakeholders.

In a new report issued for the 28 April World Day entitled "OSH Management System: A tool for Continual Improvement", the ILO outlines a step-by-step approach to be taken in applying OSH Management Systems (OSHMS) and, more concretely, how this system can be used at the national and enterprise levels. ILO Conventions 155 and 187, together with the ILO Guidelines of 2001, define the essential elements of a promotional framework for occupational safety and health and the key functions of a management system.

The ILO has never accepted the notion that injury and disease "go with the job". We do believe that prevention works. Experience has shown that a preventative safety culture is beneficial for workers, employers and governments alike. Various prevention techniques have proven themselves effective, both in avoiding workplace accidents and illnesses and improving business performance. Today's high safety standards in some countries are a direct result of long-term policies encouraging tripartite social dialogue, collective bargaining between trade unions and employers, and effective health and safety legislation backed by strong labour inspection.

A preventative safety and health culture comprises all the values, managerial systems and practices, participatory principles and working behaviour conducive to creating a safe and healthy working environment. The World Day theme this year is to emphasize the value of occupational safety and health management systems for continually improving prevention and control of risks at work.

The ILO-OSH 2001 Guidelines provide an internationally agreed framework for the implementation of occupational safety and health management systems at national and enterprise levels. Many countries have established national frameworks for the promotion of an OSH management system based on the ILO Guidelines, as part of their national strategies for occupational safety and health. National approaches taken include compulsory implementation, certification with incentives and voluntary application.

For an effective OSH management system, it is critical to have the strong commitment of top management to OSH and assurance of worker participation in all aspects of the system including policy formulation. In order to ensure continual improvement of safety and health performance, the reinforcement of the system through continuous OSH training of all personnel is essential. With the active participation of all

workers and management, a well functioning OSH management system will find practical solutions for improving safety and health conditions on a continual basis.

Another important issue is the integration of OSH management into overall business management as a basic component. I do hope that deliberations on the occasion of World Day will facilitate finding better ways for this integration reflecting local needs and practices.

I sincerely hope that the World Day Celebration will lead to more concrete actions to improve the working conditions in the work places in Sri Lanka. All stakeholders should pay more attention towards safety and health at work places to ensure that the impressive economic and industrial growth is attained not at the expense of the safety and health of the workers. ILO values your sincere endeavours and will continue to work and support you in this field.

I wish you every success in your deliberations on the occasion of the World Day on Safety and Health at Work.