

**Global Dialogue Forum on Safety in the Supply Chain
in Relation to Packing of Containers**Geneva
21–22 February 2011

**Points of consensus and conclusions
of the Forum**

The Global Dialogue Forum on Safety in the Supply Chain in Relation to Packing of Containers,

Having met in Geneva from 21 to 22 February 2011,

Adopts this twenty-second day of February 2011 the following points of consensus:

Introduction

1. Many accidents and problems in the transport sector are attributed to poor practices in relation to packing of containers, including overloading or misdeclaration of contents. This has caused major concern particularly because the victims can be the general public, road transport workers, rail workers, portworkers, seafarers or other workers, or their employers, who more often than not, have no control over the packing of containers. Against this background, the Governing Body of the ILO decided to hold a Global Dialogue Forum on Safety in the Supply Chain in Relation to Packing of Containers.
2. Government, Employer and Worker representatives participated in the Forum held at the ILO, Geneva, on 21–22 February 2011.
3. The Forum examined strategies and policies to help constituents in ILO member States for a common approach throughout the supply chain for the correct application of the appropriate standards in packing containers that would pave the way for a substantial improvement in container safety.
4. The Forum considered the background report prepared by the Office: *Safety in the Supply Chain in Relation to Packing of Containers* that was published in 2010.

Theme 1 – Reasons that lead to the application of poor practices in packing of containers

Points on which consensus was reached

5. Lack of training and knowledge of available standards (for example, ILO–IMO–industry) is a significant reason amongst others for poor practices in the packing of containers.
6. Inadequate dissemination of existing standards and guidance, and lack of awareness of this information, not only among workers and their employers, but other stakeholders and authorities, such as police, OSH inspectors, OSH doctors, etc.
7. In many cases, there is a lack of development of appropriate plans for the consolidation, distribution, segregation and securing of cargo in containers.
8. Suitable risk assessments are not always carried out in the supply chain so that the levels of risks would be identified, and particular problems would be targeted.
9. Those responsible for packing containers are not reached by the existing guidance on good practices for packing containers, including the IMO–ILO–UNECE guidelines for packing cargo transport units (CTUs).
10. The role and responsibilities of all the stakeholders, including governments, in the supply chain are not always clearly defined. This includes the responsibility for raising awareness of how to pack containers safely.
11. There is a lack of a system for the inspection of containers for proper packing at the point of origin.
12. Cargo insurance contracts provisions do not adequately address responsibility for unsafe packing of containers.
13. Misdeclaration and the lack of adequate information on container contents and weight.
14. Different consignments are packed in the same container and unpacked without the appropriate planning and coordination.
15. Poor practices in the packing of containers also results from breaches of laws and regulations.

Points on which consensus was not reached

16. Workers felt that there was often economic pressure and benefits to rush the packing of containers that might result in the application of poor practices.
17. Workers maintained that some types of cargo that, due to their size, weight and configuration, should not be shipped in containers.
18. Some (including both workers and some governments) felt that there was a lack of specific mandatory requirements covering the entire supply chain (from packing, through transport, to unpacking).

Theme 2 – Compliance to standards on packing of containers

Points on which consensus was reached

19. It is agreed that safety in the supply chain can be improved by implementing good practice through international standards on the packing of containers.
20. It is agreed that an ILO–IMO–UNECE code of practice on the packing of CTUs is necessary. The three organizations are requested to proceed with the revision of the existing guidelines for packing of CTUs which would form the code of practice.
21. Governments and all supply chain actors involved in the handling and/or transport of containers should participate in this revision process.
22. The voluntary application of this code of practice should improve the packing of containers and safety in the supply chain.
23. The code of practice should therefore apply to the whole of the supply chain, with clearly identified responsibilities and accountability.
24. In preparing the code of practice, the possibility of a subsequent document stating that the container has been packed according to the code of practice should be considered.

Theme 3 – Training on packing of containers and reaching out to all stakeholders for the dissemination and application of common standards and good practices

Points on which consensus was reached

25. It is important for all stakeholders to recognize the importance of using safe systems of work when packing containers in multimodal transport.
26. Awareness of and training on consistent standards for the whole supply chain are necessary. The need for appropriate skills and competencies in all components of the supply chain should be addressed. However, guidelines on best practices should be established in order to ensure that correct training on techniques and practices would be implemented.
27. It is important to communicate the information to the people who are actually engaged in the packing of containers. This would include workers and their supervisors.
28. Relevant guidance should be disseminated in various ways:
 - through organizations of workers and employers, government institutions, as well as non-governmental organizations; and
 - using different media, including the Internet and printed materials.

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29. A major hindrance to dissemination of the IMO–ILO–UNECE guidelines for packing CTUs is that they are copyrighted.
 30. Appropriate training materials developed under the ILO Portworker Development Programme (PDP) should be made available more easily and free of charge to those involved in container packing operations.
 31. The need for training and awareness is not only in developing countries but also in many enterprises in developed countries. Guidelines and training materials should especially be targeted at supervisors who might not be familiar with good practices for packing containers.
 32. Governments and the representative bodies of employers' and workers' organizations have a role in the promotion of existing guidance on good practices for packing containers. However, they cannot commit to standards which have not yet been adopted.
 33. The role of accredited training bodies is important. These can contribute in the continuous development of competency of supply chain workers and their supervisors and enable them to be recognized as competent professionals on packing containers.
 34. It was noted that the high turnover of employees responsible for the packing of containers is an obstacle in maintaining a well-trained workforce.
 35. Shippers do not operate in isolation but have contacts with many other stakeholders in the supply chain, and these contacts could be used for the dissemination of good practices on packing containers.
 36. It is important to ensure that training is more focused and simple.
 37. The first step is to identify all the steps in the supply chain. The next is to assess the health and safety risks at each step and then to identify training needs to fill the competency gap. This would allow better use of training resources. Then the above process could be monitored for effectiveness.

Points on which consensus was not reached

38. It is important to identify the specific roles of employers, trade unions and others. It was suggested that a good regulatory policy is useful. This includes a consistent enforcement policy that allows, in the first instance, for voluntary compliance (advice, etc.) and, in the second instance, for mandatory compliance. This even applies when there is no specific law or guidance: the responsibility is placed on the employer to find the best practice.

Theme 4 – Recommendations for a common approach throughout the supply chain for the correct application of the appropriate standards and good practices in packing of containers and follow-up activities

Points on which consensus was reached

- 39.** Once the code of practice emanating from the revised/updated IMO–ILO–UNECE guidelines for packing CTUs is adopted, it will be important to ensure it is followed up with user-friendly publications (training material, tool kits, etc.) and that the code, and the accompanying publications, are made free and easily accessible and are widely disseminated. This follow-up should be undertaken in consultation with a steering committee and task forces on specific activities to be set up by the International Labour Office in consultation with the tripartite constituents of the Organization.
- 40.** There is a need to improve the collection and publication of data on accidents related to the improper packing of containers. In this regard, consideration should be given to reviewing the standard classification of accidents in order to identify road and other accidents that are related to improper packing of containers.