

Forty-First Meeting of the CIS National and Collaborating Centres

London, 22-23 May 2003

1. Introduction.

The 41st annual meeting of CIS National and Collaborating Centres took place in the Imperial Hotel in London, England, on Thursday and Friday, 22-23 May 2003.

The Meeting was attended by representatives of 18 National Centres and 2 Collaborating Centres of the CIS worldwide network of occupational safety and health information centres. In addition, 3 staff members of CIS, the Director of the ILO's SafeWork In-Focus programme, the occupational safety and health expert of the ILO's Beirut Subregional Office, and 4 observers attended the Meeting. The List of Participants may be found in *Annex I*.

2. Opening Remarks.

Dr Emmert Clevenstine, Head of CIS, opened the Meeting and welcomed the participants. He also thanked the Health and Safety Executive of the United Kingdom for their support in the preparation of the meeting, and in particular he expressed CIS's appreciation to Ms Sheila Pantry for her role in organizing the pre-meeting seminar and for all the other help she had provided to CIS in connection with the meeting.

3. Election of a Chairperson.

Ms. Barbara Szczepanowska (representing the Polish National Centre), seconded by Dr Vern Anderson (representing the US National Centre), proposed Ms Elly Goos (representing the Netherlands National Centre) as Chairperson. There being no other proposals, Ms Goos was elected by acclamation.

4. Adoption of the Agenda.

The Agenda for the Meeting (See Annex 2) was adopted with a few changes related to the modifications of presentations by ROSPA and NEBOSH.

5. Adoption of the Report of the 2002 Meeting of National Centres

The Report was adopted as submitted.

6. Address by Mr Peter Brannen (Director, ILO Office in London)

On behalf of the ILO, Mr Brannen welcomed all participants.

On the matter of safety and health, he recalled that the ILO had a long tradition of collaboration with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) in Britain. He regretted that ILO priorities, concerning subjects of the utmost importance, were not seen as very fashionable, as was demonstrated recently when he had briefed members of the UK Parliament on the ILO's Decent Work agenda, and very few Members of Parliament had bothered to show up. He surmised that had his address concerned SARS, there would have been much more interest. Yet occupational accidents and diseases continued to result in 5000 deaths every day.

He appreciated that the trend in the modern approach to work was to emphasize its role in the maintenance of self-worth and in engendering a feeling of pride in workers' achievements. However, for many people work was still stressful, boring, and too often downright dangerous. While there was also a lot of discussion of "extreme" work (child labour, forced work, bonded labour), there was much less publicity about the hazards of "normal" work.

He continued this trend of thought by stating that because of technological and organizational advances as many as 80% of occupational diseases and accidents could be prevented. The way to do this was by a consistent application of accident prevention strategies in the workplace, by appropriate recourse to training and by the dissemination of training and information packages.

On the role of occupational safety and health within the ILO's wider strategy, he said that although the subject was not mentioned in the Declaration, it had a prominent place in both the ILO's Constitution and in the Covenant on Human Rights of the United Nations.

Mr Brannen also expressed his appreciation of the fact that corporate ethical codes have started including provisions for a safe and healthy workplace. He saw this as a good trend, although it would have widespread beneficial effects only if the multinational companies started to campaign for a safety and health culture outside their own spheres of activity.

He called attention to the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), which – unlike other similar institutions – dealt directly with enterprises in Central, and increasingly, Eastern Europe, and which routinely includes safety and health matters in the management advice it offers.

7. Report of CIS Activities.

7a. Dr Clevenstine's presentation

Dr Clevenstine made a presentation of CIS activities during the preceding 12 months.

He concentrated on three aspects of these activities. In particular, he thanked the centres for the following contributions:

- Treatment of documents, preparation of abstracts, publicity
- Organization of and publicity for the World Day for Safety and Health at Work, held on 28 April 2003 (20 responses to the Questionnaire)
- Questionnaire concerning the CIS Thesaurus, sent to CIS Centres (7 responses)

On the topic of the Thesaurus, Dr Clevenstine noted that few centres seemed to use the Thesaurus, even for searching the CISDOC database itself. He also recalled that one of the suggestions made at the Dublin National Centres meeting had been to use the Thesaurus for the indexation of CIS's web pages. He thought that this idea merited further consideration.

Dr Clevenstine then made a rapid survey of CIS achievements and performance during the preceding 12 months.

Among the accomplishments he noted that, considering the continuously diminishing resources, the very survival of CIS could be considered an achievement of sorts. He noted with pleasure that 1 new national centre (in the Ukraine) and two new collaborating centres (in Canada and the Russian Federation) had joined the network.

On the core activity of CIS, he noted that the last CIS Bulletin produced through the antiquated MINISIS database system had just been published, and that from now on new records in CISDOC would be added to an Oracle version of the database. A special project transferring the existing 60,000 MINISIS records of CISDOC would be completed within a few months.

The complete version of the French translation of the 4th edition of the ILO Encyclopaedia of Occupational Health and Safety was finished, and the printed version of the 4th volume (including the index) would be published before the end of the year. There were also new translations of parts of the Encyclopaedia (Korean, Japanese).

Dr Clevenstine also noted the appearance of other third-party publications by its collaborating institutions, including OSH CDs in Russia and Vietnam, and new updated International Chemical Safety Cards. He also mentioned the collaboration between the ILO and WHO in the dissemination of OSH information in Africa.

On CIS's financial performance, Dr Clevenstine regretted the continuing decline in extrabudgetary income (from the sale of products and services) – about USD 240,000

in 2002/2003, down from USD 440,000 in 2000/2001. There was an additional problem with cash flow due to bureaucratic barriers to the utilization of CIS funds carried over from previous budget periods, and to the fact that CIS so far had received no money from the sale of the Encyclopaedia.

In an analysis of CIS income by source, he noted that only about 25% of the estimated USD 167,500 for 2002 derived from the sale of the CIS Bulletin. Royalties (for the CD-ROM products mostly) amounted for about another 10%, while the bulk of extrabudgetary income derived from sale of other publications. This contrasted heavily with the 2000/2001 biennium, when almost half the income had come from the sale of the Bulletin.

Staffing trends were also negative. Professional person-years per biennium funded from the ILO Budget declined from 14 in 1996/1997 to 6 in 2002/2003, while General staff person-years for the same periods declined from 14 to 5.

If one looked at actual performance (rather than financial), things appeared less bleak. The number of subscriptions to the Bulletin remained reasonably steady (1250 in 1997, just over 1000 in 2002), as did the number of documents received and analysed.

The new web site devoted to CIS centres, hosted by CCOHS, was a bit of a disappointment. The site, the information on which was supposed to be put up by the centres themselves, was still very small, as few centres had actually done the work necessary for filling the pages devoted to them. This was unfortunate, as independent searching of the Internet confirmed that there was much information on the centres' activities, yet little of this was reflected in the centres' site. Some of this could of course be attributed to an unwillingness to do double work due to the overlap with the site of the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, which also required its national correspondents to report on their activities.

Meanwhile CIS's own web site remained very popular. It received around 600,000 hits during 2002, two-thirds of which went to the pages with the International Chemical Safety Cards (ICSCs). The other area of high interest to Internet users was that of OSH legislation. Overall, web usage statistics confirmed that the four priorities suggested by CIS centres in the past corresponded well to actual Internet usage: chemical safety, legislation, hazardous occupations, full-text information.

An analysis of the origin of visitors showed that as far as the developing world was concerned, relatively few countries predominated web traffic: South Africa, Mauritius and Egypt in Africa; India, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia and the Philippines in Asia; Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Mexico in Latin America. Such analysis by source of request was of course incomplete, as many requests came from Internet addresses unclassifiable by country of origin.

Dr Clevenstine drew attention to the fact that the CIS site represented 10% of the total ILO site traffic, quite out of proportion to the ILO budget, of which CIS received only 0.6%.

Regarding collaboration with other entities, Dr Clevenstine reported in the interest expressed by ISSA (the International Social Security Association, an organization closely tied to the ILO) to rely on CIS's network of national and collaborating centres in order to satisfy its own needs for information exchange. He thought that it may be advisable to organize a special meeting of the centres devoted to this issue.

Regarding the future of CIS, Dr Clevenstine regretted the fact that the staff of CIS felt obliged to fight a two-front war: on one hand, satisfying the need in the "outside" world for reliable and comprehensive information on current OSH topics (while keeping up with technological change, meeting increased web demands and balancing broad and thematic coverage), and on the other, keeping OSH on the ILO's agenda and maintaining the institutional and personal links necessary for internal and external collaboration.

7b. Discussion of CIS activities

Ms Sheila Pantry (Observer, United Kingdom) started the discussion by expressing the hope that the CIS web site would include the most topical articles from the Encyclopaedia. Since revenue from the sale of the Encyclopaedia was dropping in any case, she did not think that placing these pages on the Internet would lead to a significant drop in income by CIS.

Dr Clevenstine answered that such an action was in fact being considered. One of the problems that still had to be addressed was the fact that having parts of the Encyclopaedia on the Internet would lead to competition with the CCOHS product. He noted with pleasure, however, a remark by Mr Brannen that having full-text versions on the Internet can actually lead to higher sales.

Dr Jukka Takala (Head of the ILO's SafeWork In-Focus programme, which includes CIS) took the floor and described current ILO activities in the OSH area. He reminded participants that the 2003 International Labour Conference (ILC) was going to start in two weeks' time and that the ILO's web strategy was one area expected to lead to much debate among delegates. He said that, increasingly, Member States of the ILO wished to see free information on the Internet. This wish was naturally influencing the decisions made by CIS.

Commenting on the wish to have the Encyclopaedia updated, Dr Takala said that in fact many of the documents already on the CIS web site, or information that would be placed there in the near future, constituted supporting documents for the Encyclopaedia. He thought that a reorganization of the web site, merging the Encyclopaedia and other CIS information, might be the best solution. The OSH-

related conventions, recommendations and conclusions of the ILC would, of course, appear or be linked to on the same site.

Ms Pantry welcomed these ideas. She said that many key OSH documents should go up on the CIS site in their entirety.

Dr Clevenstine said that the only obstacle to the implementation of these ideas was the absence of resources.

Ms Marie Larue (ICSST, Collaborating Centre in Quebec, Canada) suggested that if, due to a lack of resources, CIS was unable to provide some documents free on its web site, it could offer an annual subscription service, possibly at lower rates for developing countries.

Dr Clevenstine answered that this was indeed the practice with the printed Bulletin, and it was a reasonable principle. Another avenue to explore was the obtaining of technical cooperation money for such purposes. It was not, however, possible to make global decisions on such issues – decisions would have to be made on a case-by-case basis.

Dr Abeytung (CCOHS, National Centre, Canada) said that the Encyclopaedia was getting out of date and it urgently needed updating. He agreed with Mr Brannen that a web presence of documents such as the Encyclopaedia was likely to lead to increasing sales. He appreciated, however, that until CIS's problems with the ILO's publications department were sorted out, it was difficult to proceed with an Internet presence for the Encyclopaedia.

Ms Irja Laamanen (FIOH, National Centre, Finland) drew attention to the importance of the CIS Thesaurus. She thought that it was due for a major update, that it could be turned into a multilingual publication/database and that it could be turned into a tool for semantically-based search strategies.

Ms Pantry said that unfortunately not many people were even aware of the existence of the thesaurus. It was interesting to note, however, that NOHSC, CIS's Australian National Centre, had managed to adapt the CIS Thesaurus to Australian needs, in part by introducing locally useful terms. Ms Pantry recommended the publication of an updated, CD-ROM-based Thesaurus.

Mr Finn Sheye (Observer, European Agency for Safety and Health at Work) informed the meeting of an ongoing collaborative effort between the Agency and NOHSC to update the Thesaurus, and make it multilingual, with up to 20 languages by 2004 when the accession of 10 new members of the European Union make this necessary.

Dr Clevenstine said that indeed NOHSC had used the Thesaurus for their own system. He regretted that this adaptation did not retain the facets of the original, as he considered the hierarchical nature of facets an essential part of the thesaurus.

It was difficult, he continued, to reissue a product that was in continuous evolution. New terms were added to the CIS Thesaurus all the time, particularly of chemical terms. Web access was the answer – once the CISDOC database was transferred in its entirety to the ORACLE system, he thought that the most current version of the Thesaurus at any rate could be made freely accessible through the Internet.

Ms Szczepanowska (CIOP, National Centre, Poland) reported that the Thesaurus had been translated into Polish, and that – with adaptation to Polish needs – it was heavily used.

8. Report on Pre-Meeting Workshops

Ms Sheila Pantry made a presentation on the pre-meeting workshops with the theme “Creating a successful electronic information service”. Major topics of the common part of the workshops included: information audits; nature of the information user; nature of external information; making use of existing systems; consultation of customers for help with information audits; staff training; expectations of the public; evaluation of information services; formatting of information; reliability of internet sites (many US government sites warn customers when they link to non-governmental, and possibly lower-quality, sites). She thought that attitudes to information services had changed greatly over the preceding 5-6 years.

There had been three workshops, with the following major points of discussion:

1. clarity, simplicity, sharing of information, copyright;
2. facility of internet access (50% of centres have no proper access), facility of use, redundancy (sophisticated, slow-loading graphics on sites interfere with information gathering), training;
3. involvement of all staff in the creation of web pages, non-internet projects should not be seen as conflicting with web-page creation, skill requirements from staff, need to keep electronic publishers aware of information supply dates, need to keep in touch with subscription agents.

On the second afternoon of the workshops, there had been another common session. It concentrated on the evaluation of and publicity for electronic information, relying on appropriate partnerships for the second. There had also been a discussion of the steps needed for an OSH campaign.

9. Presentations by CIS Centres and other CIS-related organizations

Ms Maureen Shaw (Industrial Accident Prevention Association [IAPA], Collaborating Centre, Canada) presented an overview of the Association she is President and CEO of. The principal aim of IAPA is to achieve a world where all risk was controlled and where corporate values included a strong commitment to the safe and healthy workplace. IAPA’s own focus was on prevention. It was a non-profit NGO registered

in the Province of Ontario, but with a mandate to cover all of Canada. A new initiative of IAPA was a prevention programme aimed at young workers called “Young Worker Awareness Program” (<http://www.yworker.com/english/resources.htm>). A key part of this programme was the creation of a “Life Quilt”, a permanent memorial to young workers who were killed or injured on the job. In 2001 there were 63,000 injuries and 57 fatalities in Canada affecting young workers in the 16-24 age group.

Dr Vern Anderson (NIOSH, National Centre, United States) concentrated on NIOSH’s web site, which really was the best way to explore the institute’s activities. There were three basic principles for the maintenance of the site: no page should be more than 3 clicks away from the top home page; reliability; up-to-dateness and freshness. There was emphasis on providing some information and links on the most important topics right at the top home page, e.g. on chemical safety and emergency responses. The site contains full-text versions of highly topical documents, such as how to protect buildings against terrorist, biological or chemical attacks. There are also videos available for downloading. All information on the site is free of charge. It is also available for use by anyone, as long as there is no financial gain and nothing is altered in the document, and NIOSH is credited.

Mr Kim Sang Young (Korea Occupational Safety and Health Agency (KOSHA), National Centre, Republic of Korea) also concentrated his presentation on the web site of his institution. He said that this site was now the common gateway uniting the contents of two sites used previously, and now containing all the information about the work of the Agency. This information includes the fundamental notions of OSH, accident prevention schemes used in Korea, the dissemination of OSH literature and aspects of home and playground safety. Statistics of usage show that the overall number of hits for the merged site exceed significantly the number of hits on the separate sites before. The site also includes English-language pages.

Mr Fumiaki Saito (Japan Industrial Safety and Health Association (JISHA), National Centre, Japan) presented the Activity Report for JISHA. He outlined the elements of the 10th Industrial Accident Prevention Programme, scheduled to cover the years 2003-2007. Among recently introduced activities of JISHA, he mentioned OSHMS certification services and the newly issued Revised Guidelines for Measures against Smoking at Workplaces.

Mrs. Siok Lin Gan (Occupational Health Department, Ministry of Manpower, National Centre, Singapore) talked about the integrated approach her organization had to the management of workplace health and well-being. The Department provided both a regulatory framework to OSH management and a philosophy to its implementation. It provided advisory services in addition to inspection. The provision of incentives for assuring a safe and healthy workplace and the issuing of OSH alerts were also part of its approach. The Department was a major participant in the OSHnet network of the ASEAN countries (<http://www.asean-oshnet.or.id/>). Answering a question concerning the language policies of the Department in the multilingual environment of Singapore, Mrs Gan said that most of its publications were in English,

but that some publicity material was also made available in Chinese and Bahasa Malaysia.

Mme Rachida Souissi (Direction de la Formation, Ministère des Affaires Sociales et de la Solidarité, Institut de Santé et de Sécurité au Travail (ISST), National Centre, Tunisia) made a survey of the activities of the Institute, including the provision of training, the dissemination of documents and the answering of information requests. The Institute was developing its own web page, with information mostly in French, although it also contained some material in Arabic and English. The Institute was collaborating with its counterparts in the ILO, WHO and the countries of the Maghreb.

Mrs Barbara Szczepanowska (Central Institute for Labour Protection (CIOP), Centre for Scientific Information and Documentation, National Centre, Poland) stressed the role of information in contemporary society, and praised the contribution CIS and its network of National and Collaborative Centres made in this area. She made a short presentation of CIOP, established in 1950 to be the principal Polish institution in the area of OSH information. One of its main current tasks was the coordination of the Polish effort to adapt Polish OSH standards to those in effect in the European Union, which Poland is scheduled to join in 2004.

Mr. Finn Sheye (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, Bilbao, Spain) described the updated version of the Agency's web site (<http://agency.osha.eu.int/>) and talked about the participation of the Agency in the setting up of the global OSH Portal. The main topics the Agency was concentrating on currently were the hazards of fisheries, the preparation of factsheets, the management of information forums, and the assistance of the candidate members of the European Union in developing their OSH information activities. The Agency was also preparing for the European Week for Safety and Health at Work, to be held in October 2003, whose theme this year was dangerous substances (http://mirror/pubcgi/links_ext.pl?http://agency.osha.eu.int/).

Ms Sheila Pantry (Observer, Editor of the CIS Newsletter) reported on the year's experience with the CIS Newsletter. Its circulation was above 110 addresses, not all of them CIS-related. From some of the addresses it was being resent to member organizations of national networks (e.g. the Netherlands, Poland). The Master copy was sent to the Belgian National Centre *Prevent*, which had its contents printed and mailed to about 80 recipients. All the back copies were available at the site <http://www.sheilapantry.com/> Ms Pantry then asked the audience whether the contents of the newsletter needed changing, and whether it should be distributed only in electronic format. Finally she reminded the audience of the upcoming conference EuroHSE 2003, to be held in London on 4-5 November 2003 (<http://www.eurohse2003.com/>)

Mrs Maria da Graça Nunes (Information and Documentation Unit, Instituto de Desenvolvimento e Inspeção das Condições de Trabalho (IDICT), Direcção de Serviços de Prevenção de Riscos Profissionais, CIS National Centre, Portugal) reported on a recent safety and health meeting involving lusophone countries. A recurrent theme at that meeting had been the need for OSH information to be available in Portuguese, as few people in lusophone countries knew English. She also asked National Centres in Eastern Europe to send IDICT OSH material in their own languages, as there was a large increase in Portugal in the number of workers from Eastern Europe.

Mrs. Helena Jiménez Goy (Instituto de Salud Carlos III, Biblioteca nacional de ciencias de la Salud, National Centre, Spain) made a survey of the activities of the Spanish Centre, with an emphasis on the collaboration of her institution with other libraries and OSH-related institutes in the country, as well as in Spanish-speaking countries overseas (Central and South America and the Caribbean). Networks of online databases shared by many Spanish-speaking institutions (including NIOSH in the US) were getting increasing use. The Spanish- and Portuguese-language versions of the CIS Bulletin, which her institution was publishing, was also widely read.

Dr. Nabil Watfa (Senior Occupational Safety and Health Specialist, ILO Arab States, Multidisciplinary Advisory Team, ILO/ARMAT, Beirut, Lebanon) submitted a plea on behalf of three weak and ailing CIS Centres in West Asia (in Bahrain, Jordan and Syria), which were in desperate need of resources. He then went on to describe the OSH-related activities of the ILO Multidisciplinary Team for the region, which covered all the Arabic-speaking countries of West Asia (including the West Bank and Gaza). He foresaw the possibility of expanded OSH activities in Iraq once the country settled down somewhat. He thought that one way to widen activities would be to involve the multinational companies active in the region. As for plans for the future, he foresaw the creation of four new CIS National centres before the end of 2003 (in Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman and Saudi Arabia), and of five more by the end of 2004 (in Iraq, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Yemen and the West Bank and Gaza). Furthermore, he wished to see a revived Centre in Syria and strengthened Centres in Bahrain and Jordan. In addition, he foresaw more collaboration with the Arabic-speaking countries of North Africa. A regional meeting on OSH was planned for 2004 involving CIS and the countries of ARMAT, Egypt and Tunisia.

Mr. Zaka Ullah (Chief Inspector of Mines, Central Inspectorate of Mines, CIS National Centre, Pakistan) described the activities of the Pakistani Inspectorate of Mines: safety audits and training, accident investigation, issuing of hazard alerts, information dissemination, preparation and enforcement of legislation.

Dr. P.K. Abeytungga (Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS), National Centre, Canada) started his presentation by a general comment on the importance of the OSH Global Portal, and how it would satisfy the need for OSH knowledge and information in the world. There was a clear need for some kind of

controlled access to links, because the Internet was becoming unmanageable – there was too much information (much of it not useful), too much manipulation by web page creators (who know how to manoeuvre to the top of search engine selections), too much of a danger in overlooking useful information, too much promotional material and advertising, and too much information that was misleading. A well-managed portal would satisfy people’s needs for reliable, accurate, up-to-date and complete information based on the global knowledge and experience of portal creators. CCOHS had much good experience in the field – its own site was so complete and useful that PAHO (the Pan-American Health Organization) had adapted it to its own needs, with a Spanish (and now a Portuguese) translation as well. It was important on such sites to provide collections of links to reliable sites (e.g. CANOSH), classified by jurisdiction and restricted to sites of institutions that were publicly accountable. The site of the European Agency was similar in concept. Dr Abeytunga drew attention to the fact that WHO had its own network of OSH collaborating centres and it was important to try to avoid the creation of competing portals. Another pitfall was that of duplicating effort – when several organizations collaborated in the collection of useful links, there was always the danger of the same entry appearing in several places.

In a comment on the preceding, Dr Anderson (NIOSH, USA) called attention to the fact that there was no copyright on any of the public sites hosted by his institution. Mr Sheye (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work) recalled that all relevant pages would be linked to from the common portal.

10. Presentation by Mr Roger Bibbings (Occupational Safety Advisor, RoSPA)
(<http://www.rospa.com/>)

Mr Bibbings provided an overview of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA), an organization quite unique to the UK. It was founded in 1917, and its original purpose was to increase bus safety during the blackout days of World War I. Subsequently the organization expanded into home safety, and eventually into the whole area of safety in general. It was an independent charitable organization. It had 5 principal areas of action: occupational safety, road safety, home safety, safety education, and water and leisure safety. One topic of current interest was that of “corporate killing” – the responsibility of corporate management for fatalities due to mismanagement/negligence.

In the ensuing discussion about British safety policies, Mrs Shaw (IAPA, Canada) asked what happened to fines paid by companies/individuals for safety violations. Mr Bibbings said that fines generally went directly to the Treasury, and the money thus earned by the government was not spent directly for safety purposes.

11. Presentation of Ms Sara Lumley (National Examination Board in Occupational Safety and Health (NEBOSH)) (<http://www.nebosh.org.uk/>)

Ms Lumley described NEBOSH, a totally independent examining body whose tasks include the awarding of OSH diplomas and awards within Great Britain. It does not engage in lobbying. A feature of the NEBOSH examining system is the awarding of International Certificates, for which there exist examining centres outside the UK. The syllabus for NEBOSH certificates takes ILO priorities into consideration.

12. Discussion on CIS

Dr Clevenstine introduced the topic. He highlighted two issues: (1) technological change was constantly modifying the environment within which CIS operated, and (2) there were favourable references to CIS's Centres' Network within the ILO's internal documents (in particular, in the evaluation that had been made of the SafeWork programme).

He suggested that the discussion should build on these positive comments. The next budget for the ILO (2004/2005) was due to be prepared within the next few months, and it was important to use the internal positive feedback from the ILO itself to draw up a budget that incorporated elements that had produced a positive view of CIS.

12a. Discussion of the CIS Portal

Another issue worthy of discussion was the CIS Portal, which – unfortunately – had received very few additions from Centres.

Mr. Mohamed Allam (Training Department, National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), CIS National Centre, Egypt) asked why the CIS Bulletin was chronically late?

Dr Clevenstine agreed that the Bulletin was late, but he added that the present discussion had to do with the CIS Portal.

Mme Marie Larue (Director, Prévention Inspection, Commission de la santé et de la sécurité du travail, Québec, Collaborating Centre, Canada) explained that her institution was busy creating its own web site, but she promised that the CIS Portal would be updated as soon as they had the time.

Ms Sheila Pantry reminded the participants that this was the third CIS Centres Meeting at which this issue was brought up. The Newsletter had also discussed the matter. She thought that it was evidently difficult for the Centres to enter the information, and suggested that CIS should do the entry work itself, based on information available to it. There was probably sufficient information on up to 50 Centres to do this.

Dr Clevenstine said that the initial work on this would be suitable work for a summer intern, but in the long term the issue remained sustainability – someone would have to be assigned the task of regularly keeping the information up-to-date. He thought that Centres were in a better position to know when updating was necessary. Ms Annick Virot (CIS, Geneva) said that even the updating by the centres may not work.

Dr Abeytung said that WHO had hired a summer intern to do a similar job in that organization, and that this worked very well. Such an intern could be in regular touch with the Centres, and thus do a very good job of keeping information up-to-date. For Centres, this kind of work is not normally a priority, so it may be better to do it by CIS.

Dr Anderson said that at NIOSH they did not find this task difficult, and they had been very well assisted by Chris Moore of CCOHS.

De Clevenstine foresaw that advancing technology (dynamically recreated pages from existing information) may come to help in resolving this problem. He also admitted that there was a difficulty in convincing institutions that were part of the European Agency's network to perform this task, since they had already done something fairly similar for the Agency's homepage. Indeed, CIS had avoided creating a Portal that was very similar to that of the Agency, precisely to avoid confusion by organizations that were part of both networks.

Dr Takala and Dr Abeytung added some comments on the Finnish situation, where the focal point had taken care of information for all participating institutions in the country.

Mr Sheye said that 95% of the information for the two portals was basically the same.

Dr Abeytung urged Centres to input the information required – and if some fields were missing, this would not be a problem.

Dr Takala said that some of the information asked for, such as future trends, could be done at the same time for both portals.

Dr Clevenstine added that CIS's own directory of National and Collaborating Centres needed updating, and that this would be done in the coming months. This work needed some time because there were actually several databases and/or lists whose information needed cross-checking and merging.

12b Discussion of CIS's situation within the ILO

Dr Clevenstine started the discussion by expressing his frustration with trying to acquaint the decision makers within the organization with the different aspects of the work done by CIS. He thought the large variety of knowledge and experience of the

people in the CIS network was a great asset and it helped CIS with this publicity effort towards other departments of the ILO.

Mme Larue made some comments on the perceived need for OSH information. She said that when her organization attempted to reduce services by about half (because of budgetary constraints), there was a large outcry of protest from both the employers and the workers. Both groups needed data in order to achieve safer working conditions.

Dr Clevenstine said that often the best support for CIS came from people associated with CIS Centres who were also delegates to the International Labour Conference (ILC). Unfortunately, this was not a very frequent situation. He wondered in what way CIS could help the National Centres in such a way that their situation and visibility vis-à-vis their funding organization was improved.

Mrs Shaw suggested that CIS use to better effect the mechanisms of public relations, for example by issuing press releases from time to time. She regretted that the ILO in general had low visibility in North America, partly because the federal structure of both major countries there made ratification of ILO conventions quite difficult – and, as a result, few were ratified. In addition, ILO standards were seen as not very useful and quite complicated to comply with by North American employers.

Dr Takala said that this kind of comment was indeed common from North America, but in much of the rest of the world globalization was considered a more important issue. The coming discussions at the International Labour Conference was going to spend more time on the latter issue, and one of the themes addressed is the global availability of information. Insofar as links with the centres were concerned, one issue that mattered was how work by the ILO would fit in with other work going on in the centres. It may be a good idea, Dr Takala went on, to organize a meeting with the centres at which both technical and managerial personnel were present.

He also suggested another meeting devoted entirely to the issue of the portal, to be attended by all three organizations involved in its creation.

Dr Watfa said that a list of participants for the first meeting suggested by Dr Takala would be easy to put together – many organizations from Western Asia would be interested.

Mme Souissi said that for the updating of the Portal her organization needed supplementary resources.

12c Discussion of CIS inputs and outputs

Dr Clevenstine raised one additional point for discussion: whether CIS should move away from its traditional practices concentrating on the processing of information, and move to more practical areas. It was also worth considering how the Encyclopaedia would fit into CIS's future.

13. Special proposal

Ms Pantry talked about trends in subscription policies to electronic information on the Internet. She suggested that the CIS network reorganize itself as a consortium that would buy electronic information at a relatively low cost (because the unit cost would go down), and resell the information to its members. A subscription agent would actually do all the arrangements. Ms Pantry said that analogous arrangement was actually in place in Australia.

14. Closing address

Dr Takala made a closing address. He outlined the activities of the SafeWork In-Focus Programme of the ILO in the area of occupational safety and health, primarily in the areas of standard-setting and information collection and diffusion. CIS being part of SafeWork, it has the vital role of carrying out most of the information activities of the programme. In addition, through its intensive contacts with its network of national and collaborating centres worldwide, it is the natural focal point for the exchange of safety and health information between the ILO and institutions in its Member States.

15. Closure

The Chairperson thanked participants for their contributions and closed the meeting.

ANNEX 1

41th MEETING OF THE CIS NATIONAL AND COLLABORATING CENTRES

London, United Kingdom. 19 -23 May 2003

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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ANNEX 2

2003 CIS Centres Meeting Imperial Hotel (Tudor Room), Russell Square, London

Provisional Agenda

Thursday 22 May

- 14:00 Opening
- 14:05 Election of the chairperson
- 14:15 Adoption of the agenda
- 14:20 Adoption of the report of the 2002 annual meeting
- 14:30 Report of CIS activities since last meeting; results of SafeWork review
- 15:00 Discussion
- 15:30 Tea break
- 15:45 Reports of pre-meeting workshops
- 16:00 Reports/presentations by Centres
- 17:00 Close

Friday 23 May

- 09:30 Reports/presentations by Centres
- 10:45 Coffee break
- 11:00 Guest speakers
- 12:00 Lunch break
- 13:00 Reports/presentations by Centres
- 14:00 Discussion: making the most of the Centres network
- 14:45 Closing address
- 15:30 Close

ANNEX 3

REPORTS OF NATIONAL AND COLLABORATING CENTRES

European Union	European Agency for Safety and Health at Work
Canada	Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS)
Colombia	Centro de Información en Seguridad Integral, Salud Ocupacional y Medio Ambiente
Egypt	National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)
Germany	Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (Bundesanstalt für Arbeitsschutz und Arbeitsmedizin)
Israel	Israel Institute for Occupational Safety and Hygiene (IIOSH)
Japan	Japan Industrial Safety and Health Association (JISHA)
Korea, Republic of	Korean Occupational Safety and Health Agency (KOSHA)
Netherlands	Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, Library and Documentation Centre (BIDOC)
Pakistan	Centre for the Improvement of Working Conditions and Environment & the Industrial Relations Institute
Poland	Central Institute for Labour Protection – National Research Institute (CIOP-PIB)
Portugal	Information and Documentation Unit (Divisão de Informação e Documentação – DID)
Russian Federation	All-Russia Centre for Occupational Safety and Health (VCOT)
Singapore	Occupational Health Department, Ministry of Manpower
Spain	Biblioteca Nacional de Ciencias de la Salud (BNCS)