



International Occupational Hygiene Association



## **JOINT IOHA, ICOH, IEA STATEMENT ON THE RECOGNITION OF SAFETY AND HEALTH AS A FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE AND RIGHT AT WORK**

### **Introduction**

In February 2019, at the beginning of their centenary year, the International Labour Organisations (ILO) Global Commission on the Future of Work, launched the report "Work for a Brighter Future". In this report the Commission recommends establishing a Universal Labour Guarantee. The Committee calls for a Universal Labour Guarantee including fundamental workers' rights;

- an "adequate living wage";
- limits on hours of work; and,
- and ensuring safe and healthy workplaces.

This proposal allows for safety and health to be recognized as a fundamental principle and right at work.

### **What about fundamental rights**

In 1976 the UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights declares in article 7 safe and healthy working conditions, reasonable working hours, social protection and equal and decent conditions of work as a right of working people (1,2). In the period of 1930 till 1999 The ILO's Governing Body identified eight conventions as "fundamental", covering subjects that are considered as fundamental principles and rights at work:

These eight fundamental conventions are:

1. Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87)
2. Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98)
3. Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29)
4. Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105)
5. Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138)
6. Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182)
7. Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100)
8. Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111)

Until today fundamental conventions on workers' rights do not include key occupational safety and health instruments. The rights on safety and health are classified as 'technical conventions'; i.e. Convention on Occupational Safety and Health, No. 155 (1981), Occupational Health Services Convention, No. 161 (1985) Convention No. 187 (2006) on Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health 9 (2).

The ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, adopted by the International Labour Conference in June 1998 and its follow-up and the recognition of eight Fundamental Conventions in 1995 by the ILO Governing Body in line with the Declaration, have introduced the tools to report on the individual conventions' impact on workers' rights (3).

### **Today's situation**

The world is dealing with 2,78 million workers who die every year as a result of occupational accidents or work-related illnesses (4). There are also additionally 374 million non-fatal work-related injuries and illnesses each year, many of these resulting in extended absences from work, and we all know that these figures may be an underestimation.

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The economic burden of poor occupational safety and health practices are estimated at 3.94 per cent of global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) each year. The consequences of these figures on society and families is significant. These deaths and injuries take a particularly heavy toll in developing countries, where a large portion of the population is engaged in hazardous work activities, such as mining, construction, agriculture and fishing.

Current figures indicate that Asia accounts for more than 60% of estimated deaths; with Africa, America and Europe contributing up to 12% each, to these figures. Data also reveals that young people have a 40% increased risk in comparison to older workers. This has a significant impact on families, especially in developing countries when a wage earner cannot work.

## A Collaborative Approach

IOHA, ICOH and IEA:

The **International Occupational Hygiene Association (IOHA)** is an association of occupational hygiene organisations from across the world. All these associations are dedicated to the discipline and application of the inherent principles of occupational hygiene and worker health. Our collaborative vision is a safe and healthy working environment for all.

The **International Commission on Occupational Health (ICOH)**, founded as Permanent Commission on Occupational Health in 1906, is an international non-governmental professional society whose aims are to foster the scientific progress, knowledge and development of occupational health and safety in all its aspects.

The **International Ergonomics Association (IEA)** is a federation of 52 Human Factors and Ergonomics Societies around the world. The mission of the IEA is to improve the quality of life through the advancement and promotion of the science and practice of Human Factors and Ergonomics (HFE) globally. IEA collaborates with member societies to expand the contribution of HFE to the global society to optimize human well-being, safety and overall work system performance.

The ILO aims to create awareness worldwide of the dimensions and consequences of work-related accidents, injuries and diseases and to place the health and safety of all workers on the international agenda to stimulate and support practical action at all levels.

We embrace the vision of the ILO for a human-centred agenda for the future of work that strengthens the social contract by placing people and the work they do at the centre of economic and social policy and business practice. It is a political choice that workers health and safety is an important value that matters.

With our common mission and vision on one side and the figures of the ILO on occupational accidents and work-related illnesses on the other side, we know that only a collaborative approach will deliver a landscape in which decent work will be the general standard.

We recognize that our efforts to achieve our mission must fit into broader societal and global actions to improve working conditions in all parts of the world. Our common efforts can play an important role to convince and support all governments and employers to invest in responsible labour practices. To achieve our mission, we must use and share our combined knowledge and expertise.

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## Call to Action

Since the focus of the International Labour Conference in June 2019 will entail a series of discussions on the Report of the Global Commission on the Future of Work:

- We call upon the ILO to recognize the fundamental rights of safety and health. If the ILO states that decent work is safe work, it seems obvious to include these rights as an important part and tool for the design of the Future of Work, the future we want. A future of work that provides decent and sustainable work opportunities for all. Only then will we achieve sustainable development goal (SDG) number 8: to "Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all".
- We call on governments and policymakers at all levels to understand the importance of recognizing safety and health as a fundamental principle and right at work, and address links between decent work, occupational hazards and diseases and the implementation of rights into policy decisions through legislative and budgetary actions.
- We call on all organizations and individuals involved in occupational health, hygiene and safety to advocate for responsible approaches to delivering decent work including safety and health. Commit to implementing decent work that includes working conditions without compromising worker health and safety.

1. UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. accessed on 15 April 2018.\_  
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cescr.aspx>

2. Occupational health services for all, A global survey on OHS in selected countries of ICOH members, Jorma Rantanen, Suvi Lehtinen, Antonio Valenti, Sergio Iavicoli, 2015.\_  
<http://www.icohweb.org/site/multimedia/pubblicazioni/ICOH%20global%20survey%20OHS%20for%20all.pdf>

3. ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its Follow-up. Adopted by the International Labour Conference at its Eighty-sixth Session, Geneva, 18 June 1998 (Annex revised 15 June 2010).\_  
<http://www.ilo.org/declaration/thedeclaration/textdeclaration/lang--en/index.htm>

4 Global Estimates of Occupational Accidents and Work-related Illnesses 2017, Päivi Hämäläinen, Jukka Takala, Tan Boon Kiat  
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<http://www.icohweb.org/site/images/news/pdf/Report%20Global%20Estimates%20of%20Occupational%20Accidents%20and%20Work-related%20Illnesses%202017%20rev1.pdf>

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