



## FIFTH ITEM ON THE AGENDA

**Proposals for the agenda of the  
91st Session (2003) of the Conference****ILO standards-related activities in the area of  
occupational safety and health****Contents**

	<i>Page</i>
Introduction .....	1
The purpose of an integrated analysis .....	1
Methodology .....	2
Preliminary overview.....	3
ILO mandate and objectives.....	3
Existing standards and related instruments .....	4
Substance .....	4
Coverage .....	5
Status of existing standards.....	6
Revisions.....	6
Proposed new standards.....	6
Impact of occupational safety and health standards .....	6
Codes of practice .....	7
Technical cooperation.....	7
Inter-agency cooperation – Technical documents and information .....	7
Ongoing and further research.....	8
Conclusion.....	8
<b>Appendices</b>	
I. International labour standards on occupational safety and health.....	9
II. Other relevant instruments and ongoing activities .....	11
III. Proposals for new standards and decisions to revise.....	12



---

## Introduction

1. The present document is submitted to the Governing Body in connection with two different, but related, items on its agenda for the present session. First, the Governing Body has before it a document entitled *Possible improvements in ILO standards-related activities*.<sup>1</sup> This includes a proposal to introduce a new integrated approach to ILO standards-related activities aimed at reinforcing the coherence and relevance of ILO standards and their impact. The present document offers an outline of a concrete application of this approach with respect to ILO activities in the area of occupational safety and health. Secondly, in accordance with its regular practice, the Governing Body holds at its November session each year a first discussion on proposals for the agenda of the International Labour Conference.
2. The integrated approach proposed involves a three-stage procedure. The first comprises an in-depth analysis by the Office of standards-related activities in a specific area of ILO activities. The second stage consists in a tripartite examination at the International Labour Conference of the outcome of this integrated analysis. As stated in the main document containing proposals for the agenda of the 91st Session (2003) of the Conference,<sup>2</sup> it is proposed to hold a discussion at the Conference in 2003 on ILO standards-related activities in the area of occupational safety and health on the basis of an in-depth examination of these activities, which is outlined in the present document. In the third stage, the Governing Body would draw specific conclusions from the Conference examination with respect to standard setting or other action to be undertaken.
3. In addition, the examination proposed in this document also responds to a request by the Working Party on Policy regarding the Revision of Standards<sup>3</sup> to undertake an examination of the appropriate methods of revision with respect to five Conventions and six Recommendations in the area of occupational safety and health, which the Governing Body decided<sup>4</sup> should be revised.
4. As further explained in the document *Possible improvements in ILO standards-related activities*, the present proposal is submitted to the Governing Body on an experimental basis and it is for the Governing Body to decide whether and how to pursue an integrated approach. The present document therefore only contains an outline of the proposed integrated analysis. Should the Governing Body approve the proposal to follow this integrated approach, a more detailed proposal will be submitted to it for examination at its 280th Session (March 2001).

## The purpose of an integrated analysis

5. The purpose of the integrated analysis proposed is to carry out an examination of ILO standards-related activities in the area of occupational safety and health, in the light of the

<sup>1</sup> GB.279/4.

<sup>2</sup> GB.279/5/1.

<sup>3</sup> GB.277/11/2, Appendix I.

<sup>4</sup> See GB.279/LILS/WP/PRS/5.

---

ILO's objectives as restated in the 1999 Report of the Director-General on *Decent work*,<sup>5</sup> with a view to reinforcing the coherence and relevance of ILO standards and their impact.

## Methodology

6. The starting point of the analysis is the mandate and objectives of the ILO in the field examined. The next step is to make an inventory of relevant ILO standards-related activities. This inventory should cover: (a) ILO Conventions and Recommendations in this field; and (b) other types of instruments developed, such as codes of practice, and activities undertaken to further the objectives in this area by promoting the standards and increasing their impact.
7. On this basis, an evaluation should be made of whether or not the existing standards meet the objectives. The purpose would, in particular, be to determine: (a) whether there are any gaps or lacunae in the coverage that would require the development of new standards; (b) the object and form of the new standards; (c) the object and form of the revisions of the five Conventions and six Recommendations;<sup>6</sup> and (d) whether existing standards overlap in a way that could call for a consolidation of these standards.
8. As regards the revision of occupational safety and health standards, it should be recalled that the identification of 11 such instruments derives from decisions taken by the Governing Body based on recommendations by its Working Party on Policy regarding Revision of Standards.
9. The examination of other types of instruments and activities would be aimed at assessing their relevance and importance for the promotion and implementation of the standards in the light of the objectives in this area. The most efficient way to enhance the impact of ILO occupational safety and health standards should be explored.
10. In conclusion, this analysis should result in a proposed programme of action, to be submitted for tripartite examination at the Conference, which would include: (a) proposals for potential new or consolidated standards, as well as their object and form; (b) proposals concerning the object and form of the standards to be revised; and (c) indications regarding the most efficient ways to promote standards and to contribute to their intended impact. This could involve advice, assistance and technical cooperation.
11. Following this examination and discussion at the Conference, it would then be for the Governing Body to determine the specific consequences that the outcome of the Conference discussion may have in terms of standard setting and in relation to other ILO activities in the area at issue.
12. In order to give to the members of the Governing Body an indication of the scope of the proposed examination in the field of occupational safety and health, a preliminary overview has been made of some of the presently available information in this respect.

<sup>5</sup> International Labour Conference, 87th Session (1999), Report I.

<sup>6</sup> See Appendix III.

---

## Preliminary overview

Every year about 250 million workers suffer accidents in the course of their work, and over 300,000 are killed. Taking account of those who succumb to occupational diseases, the death toll is over 1 million people a year. Yet international concern with awareness of health and safety remains surprisingly modest and action is limited. Many developing and transition countries have little public information on this subject and need to reinforce their capacity to design and implement effective policies and programmes. Even today, many investment decisions continue to ignore safety, health and environmental considerations.

*Decent work*, p. 37.

## ILO mandate and objectives

13. The Preamble to the ILO Constitution states that an improvement of working conditions is urgently required, inter alia, for "... the protection of the worker against sickness, disease and injury arising out of his employment ...". The appalling conditions of work in industrialized countries in the early twentieth century were one of the decisive reasons for the creation of the International Labour Organization. A more recent expression of the ILO's objectives in the area of occupational safety and health is found in the resolution adopted by the International Labour Conference in 1984 concerning the improvement of working conditions and environment (PIACT).<sup>7</sup> This resolution formulated the objective in terms of three principles: (i) work should take place in a safe and healthy working environment; (ii) conditions of work should be consistent with workers' well-being and human dignity; and (iii) work should offer real possibilities for personal achievement, self-fulfilment and service to society.
14. The most recent restatement of the objectives in this area is contained in the Director-General's 1999 report, *Decent work*. The protection of the safety and health of workers is restated as an essential element in achieving decent working conditions for all in the current context of change and globalization. Occupational safety and health is therefore considered not only to be at the heart of the requirement to improve social protection, but also to be a major and positive factor in favour of economic growth and productivity.<sup>8</sup>
15. Furthermore, to achieve these objectives, the *Decent work* report states that the ILO must concentrate its efforts: "It cannot do everything simultaneously and so it must choose the areas in which to focus its resources."<sup>9</sup> Against this background, the InFocus Programme on SafeWork was established. The four major goals of the SafeWork Programme for this and probably the next biennium are:<sup>10</sup>
  - preventive policies and programmes are developed to protect workers in hazardous occupations and sectors;

<sup>7</sup> ILC, 70th Session (1984), Resolution concerning improving working conditions and environment: An international programme.

<sup>8</sup> *Decent work*, pp. 19 and 37.

<sup>9</sup> *Decent work*, p. 14.

<sup>10</sup> InFocus SafeWork: Human security and productivity through safety and health at work: A new global initiative.

- 
- effective protection is extended to vulnerable groups of workers falling outside the scope of traditional protective measures;
  - governments and employers' and workers' organizations are better equipped to address problems of workers' well-being, occupational health care and the quality of working life;
  - the social and economic impact of improving workers' protection is documented and recognized by policy- and decision-makers.

16. These objectives have been identified as a primary response to the effects of the ongoing globalization of world economies on the world of work as regards occupational safety and health and consequently as a contribution to the Programme on the Promotion of Decent Work for All.

### **Existing standards and related instruments**

17. The ILO has over the past 80 years elaborated and adopted 35 Conventions, 37 Recommendations and 25 codes of practice and published over 200 technical publications directly concerned with occupational safety and health issues. While an examination of Conventions and Recommendations will be the main part of this study, it will also include a systematic presentation of the other technical publications.

18. The result of a recent effort by the Office to classify occupational safety and health standards as well as related instruments and documents illustrates very clearly the wealth of the material to be covered. The classification undertaken regroups these instruments into different categories – in relation, inter alia, to their subject, whether they directly concern occupational safety and health matters, and the sector of economic activities covered.<sup>11</sup> In addition, a systematic presentation is made of all other relevant instruments and ongoing activities.<sup>12</sup>

19. On the basis of the examination of existing standards and related instruments and documents, an evaluation will be made of the possible lacunae in the protection provided and of whether the existing standards overlap or there is a possible need for their consolidation.

### **Substance**

20. In terms of substance, the occupational safety and health standards can by and large be regrouped into six categories of standards: (i) standards which aim at guiding policies for action,<sup>13</sup> (ii) standards providing for protection against specific occupational hazards, such as ionizing radiation, benzene, asbestos, occupational cancer and chemicals; (iii) protection in specific branches of economic activity such as mining, the building industry, commerce

<sup>11</sup> See Appendix I.

<sup>12</sup> See Appendix II.

<sup>13</sup> The Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155), and Recommendation (No. 164), and the Occupational Health Services Convention, 1985 (No. 161), and Recommendation (No. 171).

---

and offices; (iv) standards concerning measures of protection, such as the guarding of machinery, the maximum weight of loads to be transported by a single worker, and diseases; (v) protection related to specific professions (nurses, seafarers) and categories of workers having particular occupational health needs (women, young workers); and (vi) administrative and organizational measures and procedures, such as labour inspection and compensation for occupational injuries and diseases.

21. The basic or fundamental occupational safety and health principles contained in these standards include: (i) the responsibility of the employer towards the health and safety of the workers in his or her employment, workers' participation, the role of the competent authority: national policy, regulation, inspection and enforcement; (ii) the hierarchy of preventive measures: technical measures, organizational measures, personal protective equipment,<sup>14</sup> and more recently measures to eliminate the risk, control it, minimize it and use personal protective equipment;<sup>15</sup> (iii) the hierarchy of approaches: prevention, rehabilitation and compensation; (iv) the five principles in the practice of occupational safety and health: prevention, protection, adaptation, promotion and mitigation; and (v) basic workers' rights in occupational safety and health: the right to participate, right to know, and right to stop work in the case of imminent danger.

## Coverage

22. In addition to instruments which mainly concern occupational safety and health issues, several ILO instruments dealing with certain categories of workers include specific provisions on occupational safety and health. Instruments pertaining to aged workers, indigenous workers and migrant workers are examples. It should therefore be considered whether and to what extent instruments related to, but not wholly concerned with, occupational safety and health should be included in the examination.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, several other instruments are essential to occupational safety and health objectives, although they do not specifically deal with this issue.
23. In terms of coverage, it should be noted that it is part of the present objectives to extend occupational safety and health protection to vulnerable groups of workers falling outside the scope of traditional protective measures.<sup>17</sup> The labour force is covered fully only in a handful of countries in terms of protection against hazards, enforcement or compensation. Most workers in the world have no coverage by protective legislation against hazards, have never encountered an inspector, received compensation in the event of accidents or been protected by preventive occupational health services. This issue should be further examined.

<sup>14</sup> The Working Environment (Air Pollution, Noise and Vibration) Convention , 1977 (No. 148).

<sup>15</sup> The Safety and Health in Mines Convention, 1995 (No. 176), Article 6.

<sup>16</sup> Such instruments are frequent: in addition to the instruments referred to in para. 17 above, an additional 136 Conventions and 155 Recommendations contain provisions relating to issues concerned with the protection of the safety and health of workers, but are not wholly devoted to this subject.

<sup>17</sup> See para. 15, point 2.

- 
24. Another aspect of coverage to be examined is the type of sectors of economic activity that are covered by standards.<sup>18</sup> Standards limited to certain sectors of economic activity may need to be reviewed in order to determine if, and how, they overlap with other standards of a more general scope.

### ***Status of existing standards***

25. As a result of the work of the Working Party on Policy regarding the Revision of Standards, at this stage 26 occupational safety and health instruments have been declared to be up to date,<sup>19</sup> while 11 have been determined to be in need of revision.<sup>20</sup> With respect to one instrument the Governing Body has decided to maintain the status quo.<sup>21</sup>

### ***Revisions***

26. An important part of the examination will be to explore the appropriate direction that the revision of the 11 occupational safety and health instruments should take. The evaluation should rest on the outcome of the examinations undertaken as described above and also take into account the views expressed in the proposals developed in the context of the 1999 portfolio of items for the Conference agenda.<sup>22</sup>

### ***Proposed new standards***

27. It should be noted that one proposal for new standards in the area of prevention of biological hazards in the workplace has been submitted in the context of the portfolio. In the course of the written consultations on the portfolio which took place between 1997 and 1999, it was proposed to explore further the prevention of psychosocial disorders and mental stress and the question of substance abuse at the workplace.<sup>23</sup>

### ***Impact of occupational safety and health standards***

28. This examination comprises the means available to the ILO to contribute to ensuring that ILO standards have their intended impact. Such means include other types of instruments and other types of action.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>18</sup> See Appendix I.

<sup>19</sup> See GB.279/LILS/WP/PRS/5.

<sup>20</sup> See Appendix III.

<sup>21</sup> See *supra* footnote 18.

<sup>22</sup> GB.276/2.

<sup>23</sup> See Appendix III, including references.

<sup>24</sup> Appendix II.

---

## **Codes of practice**

29. Among the other types of instruments, the use of codes of practice is of special importance. Better documentation would improve the status, function, characteristics and impact of such guides.

## **Technical cooperation**

30. Other means of action include capacity-building assistance to countries through advice and technical cooperation. This is done on the basis of the traditional processes of awareness-raising workshops, training, the provision of information and assistance in improving national laws and regulations. This can also be achieved through the provision of occupational safety and health information based on the International Occupational Safety and Health Information Centre (CIS) database and its network of 135 national centres, the preparation and dissemination of occupational safety and health publications, and the development of databases and publications in collaboration with other intergovernmental organizations (WHO, UNEP, IAEA), international and national professional occupational safety and health organizations, and organizations of workers and employers.

## **Inter-agency cooperation – Technical documents and information**

31. In addition to the promotion of ILO standards in inter-agency coordination mechanisms such as the IOMC<sup>25</sup> and the IACSD,<sup>26</sup> and other intergovernmental forums such as the CSD,<sup>27</sup> the IFCS,<sup>28</sup> four types of activities have given rise to a series of technical documents with international status. These technical documents seem to have a high impact and include:
- the peer-reviewed international risk assessments of the International Programme on Chemical Safety such as the International Chemical Safety Cards, the Environmental Health Criteria, and the Concise International Chemical Assessment documents;
  - the globally harmonized system for the classification and labelling of chemicals, elaborated by the ILO together with the United Nations and the OECD (completion in 2002);
  - the *International basic safety standards for protection against ionizing radiation and for the safety of radiation sources*, published by the IAEA and elaborated through cooperation between the ILO, WHO, FAO, OECD, NEA, PAHO, and the IAEA;<sup>29</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals.

<sup>26</sup> Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development.

<sup>27</sup> Commission on Sustainable Development.

<sup>28</sup> Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety.

<sup>29</sup> In the context of the application of the terms “the minimum compatible with safety” in Article 2.2 of the Occupational Cancer Convention, 1974 (No. 139), the Committee of Experts make specific references to these documents, inviting member States to report on their application.

- 
- ILO guidelines on occupational safety and health management systems (OSHMS), to be issued as a code of practice (publication expected in 2002).

32. This wide range of activities and cooperation mechanisms should be examined in order to be able to assess their role in the promotion and implementation of occupational safety and health standards.

### ***Ongoing and further research***

33. The examination should include a review of ongoing<sup>30</sup> and planned research, as well as an overview of possible areas for further research.

34. It should be noted that the information available to the Office will no doubt have to be supplemented. In particular it will be necessary to collect information on the obstacles to the ratification of occupational safety and health standards by member States and on the direct or indirect impact of these standards through their use as models for national regulatory processes and practices.

### **Conclusion**

35. As stated in the paper on possible improvements in the standards-related activities of the ILO and as is clear from the above,<sup>31</sup> the present proposal is experimental in nature and is intended to enable the Governing Body to better appreciate the aims and possibilities of the integrated approach.

36. Guidance is thus sought from the Governing Body in the first discussion on this proposal regarding the purpose and scope of the proposed integrated analysis. Should the Governing Body approve the proposal to follow this integrated approach (contained in the point for decision in the paper on possible improvements in the standards-related activities of the ILO), a more detailed proposal will be submitted to the Governing Body for examination at its 280th Session in March 2001.

Geneva, 23 October 2000.

<sup>30</sup> Four reports of particular relevance in this context should be mentioned: Establishment of a Global Programme on Occupational Safety, Health and the Environment, Occupational, Safety and Health Branch, 1998; International Labour Standards on Occupational Safety and Health, Occupational, Safety and Health Branch, 1998; Fundamental Principles of Occupational Health and Safety, Occupational, Safety and Health Branch, 1999 (accepted for publication as a book in 2000).

<sup>31</sup> GB.279/4.

---

# Appendix I

## International labour standards on occupational safety and health

### 1. Classification by subject

#### 1.1. *Standards considered to have a framework status*

- Occupational safety and health (C.155; R.164); occupational health services (C.161; R.171).

#### 1.2. *Standards on specific types of hazards and risks*

- Machines, weights, air pollution, noise, vibration, radiation, coal, chemicals, lead, benzene, cancer, asbestos, major industrial accidents, etc.

#### 1.3. *Standards on the implementation of occupational safety and health*

- Labour inspection, occupational health services, labour statistics, insurance against occupational accidents and diseases.

### 2. Standards concerning occupational safety and health matters

#### 2.1. *Standards directly related to occupational safety and health*

#### 2.2. *Standards containing specific prescriptions on occupational safety and health*

- Older workers, indigenous workers, migrant workers.

#### 2.3. *Standards covering subjects that are essential to occupational safety and health objectives*

- *Specific needs*: maternity protection, minimum age, indigenous and tribal populations, migrant workers, vocational training and rehabilitation.
- *Prohibitions and limitations*: night work, forced labour, child labour.
- *Organization of working time*: working hours, holidays with pay.
- *Social security and social services*: sickness insurance, social security.
- *Labour relations*: collaboration, association and negotiation.
- *Social context*: policy and employment, contracts, salaries, unemployment, discrimination, etc.

---

**3. Occupational safety and health standards by sector of economic activity**

**3.1. *Harbours and navigation (sea and inland)***

**3.2. *General industry***

**3.3. *Non-industrial work***

**3.4. *Small and medium-sized enterprises***

**3.5. *Mining***

**3.6. *Agriculture***

**3.7. *Construction***

**3.8. *Healthcare work***

**3.9. *Transport***

**3.10 *Commerce and offices***

**3.11. *Entertainment***

**3.12. *Hotels, restaurants, and food processing***

**3.13. *Home work***

**3.14. *Public works***

---

## Appendix II

### Other relevant instruments and ongoing activities

#### 4.1. *Documents adopted by the International Labour Conference*

- Declarations.
- Resolutions.

#### 4.3. *Technical documents whose publication is approved by the Governing Body*

- Codes of practice.
- Guidance documents (Occupational Safety and Health series No. 72).
- International basic safety standards for protection against ionizing radiation and for safety of radiation sources.

#### 4.4. *Technical recommendations whose distribution is approved by the Governing Body*

- Regional meetings.
- Sectoral meetings.
- Meetings and working groups of experts.
- Joint Committees (ILO/WHO; ILO/FAO/ECE; ILO/UNESCO/ECE).

#### 4.5. *Technical standards*

- Classification of pneumoconiosis radiographs.
- Certification of lifting devices.
- Classification of professions.
- List of occupational diseases.
- Classification of sectors of economic activity.
- Globally harmonized system for the classification and labelling of chemicals (due in 2002).

---

## Appendix III

### Proposals for new standards and decisions to revise

#### Possible new standards

- Prevention of biological hazards in the workplace.<sup>1</sup>

#### Instruments to be revised<sup>2</sup>

- White Lead (Painting) Convention, 1921 (No. 13).
- Guarding of Machinery Convention, 1963 (No. 119), and Recommendation (No. 118).
- Maximum Weight Convention, 1967 (No. 127), and Recommendation (No. 128).
- Benzene Convention, 1971 (No. 136), and Recommendation (No. 144).
- Marking of Weight (Packages Transported by Vessels) Convention, 1929 (No. 27).
- Anthrax Prevention Recommendation, 1919 (No. 3).
- Lead Poisoning (Women and Children) Recommendation, 1919 (No. 4).
- White Phosphorus Recommendation, 1919 (No. 6).

#### Themes suggested for consideration

- Prevention of psychosocial disorders and mental stress.<sup>3</sup>
- Substance abuse at the workplace.<sup>4</sup>
- The present role and function of occupational safety and health.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See GB.276/2, paras. 151-161.

<sup>2</sup> See GB.276/2, paras. 243-301, GB.277/LILS/WP/PRS/4 and GB.277/LILS/4, under the heading of Occupational Safety and Health.

<sup>3</sup> See GB.276/2, paras. 332-333.

<sup>4</sup> See GB.276/2, paras. 339-341.

<sup>5</sup> See GB.276/2, para. 352.