

Report on ILO Tokyo's activities for World Day for Safety and Health at Work 2003

I would like to extend our sincere and heart-felt appreciation of your kind and thoughtful cooperation for the ILO Forum on Safety, Health and Environment at Work, held on 21 April in commemoration of the World Day for Safety and Health at Work.

The Forum ended with much satisfaction for the participants from tripartite constituencies and the general public in Japan, as well as speakers/panelists and the organizer. More than 100 people gathered and discussed OSH issues from broad perspectives including its relevance to global and community environment and development. They wore yellow and black ribbons.

In the opening ceremony, Ms. Horiuchi, Director, ILO Office in Japan, summarized the current OSH situation in the world and ILO initiatives in pursuit of Decent Work. Mr. Oishi, Director, Safety and Health Department, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, then made a guest speech and expressed his high appreciation of the initiative of the ILO to promote safety and health at work.

The Forum was programmed as follows:

1. Keynote speech on "Safety, Health, Environment at Work and Development" by Mr. Kogi, former Director, Department of Working Conditions and Environment, ILO ;
2. Showing the video "The Face of Decent Work";
3. Special Report on "The Current Situation of Asia and the Pacific countries and the ILO Technical Cooperation" by Mr. Kawakami, ILO Subregional Office for East Asia;
4. Panel Discussion on "The Current Situation and Challenges of Japan's International Cooperation" with four experts including tripartite representatives from our constituencies, coordinated by Ms. Horiuchi.

Among the wide range of remarks made by the speakers/panelists, I would like to note the following that I felt contribute to the worldwide discussion of this year's ILO World Day theme "Promoting a Safety Culture at Work":

- OSH now has an internationally common trend for comprehensive management approach by workplace initiatives, addressing cumulative risks by participatory approach, and seeking best practices through regional exchanges of experiences, as evident from wider use and successes of the OSH management system on the one hand, and of the WISE/WIND/POSITIVE methods for technical cooperation on the other (Mr. Kogi)

- participatory approach to OSH works everywhere and is culture-free (Mr.Kawakami, ILO);

- a norm/quota approach to OSH issues prevents honest notification of work-related accidents and diseases that have occurred (Mr.Kawakami)

- raising safety consciousness and firm commitment to primary OSH principles such as maintenance of clean, orderly and organized setting of the workplace, should come first (Mr. Igarashi, a panelist from the government/public side)

- workers can create useful ideas to address OSH problems in their workplace, based on their cultural backgrounds, if assisted in starting discussion of OSH matters with provision of a checklist (Ms. Akiba, a panelist from the worker side);

- such a problem-solving experience raises workers' confidence and provides good entrance dialogue between employers and workers as they can easily find common interests in OSH matters (Ms. Akiba);

- in the case of a global operation of automobile manufacturing different types of OSH problems occur between different regions: ergonomic problems in developed countries, and caught-in accidents with machines and heavy cargoes or contact with cars in developing countries (Mr. Koide, a panelist from the employer side);

- the awareness that safety and health is profitable should be shared by top management and OSH staff, which is feasible if an integrated or comprehensive approach is taken for OSH and production/quality/cost concerns (Mr. Koide);

- Japanese primary OSH principles such as clean, orderly and organized setting of the workplace are world-class features as evidenced from a Japan-US joint research, and form the basis of manufacturing method by the TOTOTA motor company (Mr. Koide);

- praise is better than criticism in promoting OSH (Mr. Koide);

- there has been also a paradigm shift from macro-basis approach to micro-basis approach in the field of population policies (Mr. Suzuki, gender and family planning expert).

After the Forum, the participants responded to our questionnaire. The results were as follows:

- discussion of OSH issues from broader perspectives was very enlightening;

- an integrated or comprehensive approach to OSH issues was felt necessary with environment, management and employment perspectives taken into account;

- presentations with first-hand information of particular cases and activities were vividly informative;

- the information given at the Forum should be widely disseminated;
- the ILO video "The Face of Decent Work" was useful in showing surprisingly unsafe and unhealthy types of work in developing countries today;
- wider coverage of OSH protection, including agriculture and informal sectors is felt necessary in Japan, too;
- the higher transparency of work-related accidents/diseases information in Germany is impressive.

The Forum was followed by a reception where the speakers/panelists, the participants and the organizing staff of the ILO Office in Japan had opportunities to network with each other.

In front of the meeting room, a booth was set up to promote sales of ILO publications on OSH including the ILO International Classification of Radiographs of Pneumoconioses (2000 Edition). The Japanese version of Encyclopedia of Occupational Health and Safety, 4th Edition was also exhibited.

Before the opening of the Forum, another video "Shipbreaking" was shown.