



Geneva, 8 February 2008
G-2008/4 (46.20(a))

Dear Madam, dear Sir,

OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY (OSH):
ESTABLISHMENT OF AN IOE GLOBAL OSH NETWORK

At its recent session in November 2007, the IOE Management Board approved the establishment of an IOE Global OSH Network¹.

The Network, which is envisaged to consist of approximately 30 senior OSH managers from multinational enterprises and several OSH specialists from interested IOE member federations, would meet at least once a year to discuss, *inter alia*, global issues affecting OSH and would ensure better consolidation of business positions within the myriad of forums dealing with OSH issues.

The enterprises wishing to participate in the Network must be affiliated to and proposed by an IOE member federation, and their access to the Network will be on the basis of an annual fee of 3,000 Euros per company. This annual fee is to ensure that the costs associated with servicing and supporting the Network by the IOE Secretariat are covered. IOE member federation OSH specialists, on the other hand, would not be required to pay this fee, but *all* participants would be required to meet their own costs when participating at meetings.

Attached please find some additional information about the IOE Global OSH Network that you may wish to use either in discussions you may have with your companies over their interest in participating, or in nominating an OSH specialist from within your federation.

Should, as we hope, your organization be interested in nominating a participant to the IOE Global OSH Network on the terms outlined above, kindly forward the name(s) and contact details of your nominee(s) to the IOE by 27 February 2008.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Antonio Peñalosa', written in a cursive style.

Antonio PEÑALOSA
Secretary-General

Circular addressed to IOE member federations and employer members of the ILO Governing Body

¹ Document G-2007/48- Item 8 (a) refers.

IOE GLOBAL OSH NETWORK

The International Organisation of Employers (IOE) is the unified global voice of business. Its mission is to promote and defend the interests of employers and their organizations at the international level in all labour and social policy debates.

Through its 146 national member employer organizations representing millions of enterprises, the IOE provides a business network unparalleled in the world. Who knows better the business challenges within a country than its members ? Access to that network provides a unique value-added service which is unavailable elsewhere.

In keeping with this existing network, the IOE is pleased to announce the creation of its new Global Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Network.

Consisting of senior OSH managers from a range of multinational enterprises throughout the world nominated by their national IOE member, as well as a number of OSH specialists from IOE member federations, the Network will :

- Provide a forum for senior OSH managers from multinational enterprises affiliated to their member federations to come together to discuss issues of common interest together with OSH specialists from IOE member federations.
- Provide overall political guidance to the diverse debates taking place and better coordinate the manner in which business puts forward policy positions in the various OSH fora and ensure, where possible, consistency in views expressed by employers.
- Identify and anticipate emerging OSH issues.
- Provide a unique space for participating companies to discuss global issues affecting OSH with specialists from business community, civil society, trade unions leadership and international agencies.
- Help companies better manage current and emerging OSH issues.
- Help strengthen ways by which the IOE can engage with the World Health Organizations (WHO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the UNAIDS, the Arab Labour Organization (ALO), the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and others.
- Help inform the IOE on policy development needs in the field of OSH.
- Build learning networks among participants.
- Give leadership to the IOE Statement on Occupational Safety and Health¹.

¹ Copy attached.

Supported by the IOE Secretariat, the Network – which will operate in English only – will set its own agenda, venue and timing of meetings. The IOE can enhance the discussions in the Network by providing :

- Insights into OSH initiatives by the UN and other organizations proposed or impacting on business.
- Access to key figures within the international OSH debate, including the UN, trade unions and other international organizations relevant to its discussions.
- Dedicated and ongoing information from the IOE between meetings.

Access to participation in the Network by senior OSH managers of multinational enterprises is by payment of an annual subscription of 3,000 Euros and all Network members, including those from member federations, would meet their own costs of participation.

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IOE STATEMENT ON OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH

INTRODUCTION

Occupational Safety and Health has been an integral part of the ILO's mandate since its creation in 1919. Over the years, a considerable number of instruments – Conventions, Recommendations, Codes of Practice and Guidelines – addressing the very many aspects of occupational safety and health have been created. While the vast majority of the OSH Conventions have enjoyed full tripartite support, they have proven difficult for many countries to ratify.

This led to the pursuit of a new approach to standard-setting, with the adoption by the International Labour Conference in 2006 of the Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention (No.187). For the first time, a non-prescriptive enabling Convention has been created that focuses occupational safety and health at the national level.

Enjoying tripartite support, the new Convention also clearly positions the ILO as the UN agency mandated to address occupational safety and health, engaging as it does the real actors from the world of work.

For the IOE, the Convention gives space to the role of IOE member federations in elaborating the national safety and health culture promoted by the instrument. It enables the national response to reflect national realities whilst at the same time giving support to this new type of approach to standard-setting.

THE ILO WITHIN A WIDER DEBATE

The adoption of the new Convention coincides with an increased interest by other bodies – notably the World Health Organization (WHO) and, perhaps more importantly, the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) – in the issue of workplace safety and health. The Convention therefore provides an opportunity to reinforce the ILO's mandated role, and that of the constituents, in elaborating the appropriate national-level response.

Indeed, if the ILO is to respond effectively to the interest now being shown by others, the social partners – and in particular employers – have an important role to play in ensuring that this new approach receives national engagement.

WHY SHOULD EMPLOYERS' ORGANIZATIONS ENGAGE?

Employers have been long concerned with reducing occupational accidents, injuries and disease. Most jurisdictions have in place legislation to address the issue, with varying degrees of success. ILO Convention No.187 proposes a new approach that invites employers to engage at the national level with governments and workers in creating a safety and health culture to reinforce national efforts to reduce occupational accidents, injuries and disease. Society as a whole needs to be part of the wider solution of creating a mentality and culture of safety and health that will underpin employers' efforts to reduce accidents at work.

At the same time, the Convention allows for each country to shape its own response – which does not necessarily mean a centralized national approach, particularly where other existing approaches at enterprise or sectoral level are proving effective. Creating the safety and health culture does not mean that changes to national systems are needed; rather, it enables the national actors to spread the successful messages from their practice more widely and to call upon society to act safely outside of the workplace.

Moreover, the Convention does not look to question efforts by employers to address occupational safety and health at the workplace or to make employers more responsible *per se*. Nor does it question efforts by employers to take insurance measures against occupational accidents, injuries and disease. Rather, it is designed as a tool whereby helping to create a wider societal approach to safety and health can reinforce the efforts of employers and thereby lessen the risk of occupational accidents, injuries and disease at work and improve productivity and competitiveness, not only of the enterprises themselves but, as a consequence, of the national economy as a whole.

HOW CAN EMPLOYERS' ORGANIZATIONS ENGAGE?

While overall responsibility for safety and health at the workplace is the responsibility of the employer, its management can be enhanced if those entering the workforce already have a preventative safety mentality. It therefore makes business sense for employers to be part of a national effort to create a safety and health culture to ensure it includes the elements employers need to reinforce their own efforts at creating safe and healthy workplaces.

ILO Convention No.187 can do much in this respect as it:

- Recognizes that governments, employers and workers all have a role to play in securing a safe and healthy working environment.
- Highlights the importance of developing a national preventative safety and health culture that includes information, consultation and training.

- Stresses that the creation of a safety and health culture, where the principle of prevention is accorded the highest priority, will positively impact on safety messages in the workplace, thereby reducing risks.
- Recognizes that collaboration at the national level can contribute to developing the necessary societal safety and health culture that will inform occupational safety and health polices in the workplace.
- Recognizes the primary role of government, through its regulatory approach and targeted educational programmes, in creating the wider safety and health culture.

For employers' organizations, options could include:

- Participating in national initiatives, investigations and activities related to safety and health to ensure the needs of business are properly reflected in any approach developed.
- Sharing good practices in safety and health amongst member companies.
- Helping develop educational materials for inclusion in any governmental education programme.
- Promoting among governments, workers' organizations and other concerned parties effective polices to minimize workplace accidents, injuries and diseases.
- Raising awareness of and promoting the use, as appropriate, of the various occupational safety and health tools developed by the International Labour Organization, in particular the Guidelines on Occupational Safety and Health Management Systems (ILO-OSH 2001).
- Sharing with the IOE examples of good practice of national engagement in the development of a safety and health culture that the IOE, in turn, can share with its worldwide membership. Such exchanges can be further enhanced by the IOE facilitating meetings of members.

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Geneva, May 2007