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ILO standards-related activities in the area
of occupational safety and health: An in-depth study
for discussion with a view to the elaboration of a plan
of action for such activities

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ILO

ILO standards-related activities in the area of occupational safety and health: An in-depth study for discussion with a view to the elaboration of a plan of action for such activities

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Abbreviations and acronyms used in the report

ACT/EMP	Bureau for Employers' Activities
ACTRAV	Bureau for Workers' Activities
ANSI	American National Standards Institute
APOSHO	Asia Pacific Occupational Safety and Health Organization
ASEAN	Association of South-East Asian Nations
CAN	Andean Community of Nations
CEACR	Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations
CEN	European Committee for Standardization
CIS	International Occupational Safety and Health Information Centre
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FINNIDA	Finnish Department of International Development Cooperation
GDP	gross domestic product
GHS	Globally Harmonized System for the Classification and Labelling of Chemicals
GNP	gross national product
IACRS	Inter-agency Committee on Radiation Safety
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IALI	International Association of Labour Inspection
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organization
ICEM	International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions
ICFTU	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
ICOH	International Commission on Occupational Health
ICRP	International Committee on Radiological Protection
ICRU	International Commission on Radiation Units and Measurements
ICS	International Chamber of Shipping
ICSC	International Chemical Safety Card
IEA	International Ergonomics Association
IFCS	Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety
IFP/SEED	InFocus Programme on Boosting Employment through Small Enterprise Development
IFP/SKILLS	InFocus Programme on Skills, Knowledge and Employability
IGO	intergovernmental organization
IMF	International Metalworkers' Federation
IMO	International Maritime Organization
IOE	International Organisation of Employers
IOHA	International Occupational Hygiene Association
IOMC	Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals
IPCS	International Programme on Chemical Safety
IPEC	International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour

IRPA	International Radiation Protection Association
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
ISSA	International Social Security Association
ITC	information and telecommunications
ITF	International Transport Federation
JSHC	Joint safety and health committee
LABORSTA	ILO database on labour statistics
LEGOSH	CIS Database of Legislative Texts on Occupational Safety and Health
LILS/WP/PRS	Working Party on Policy regarding the Revision of Standards of the Committee on Legal Issues and International Labour Standards
MARIT	Maritime Industries Branch
MDT	Multidisciplinary Advisory Team
MERCOSUR	Southern Common Market
MNE	multinational enterprise
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NGO	non-governmental organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OECD/NEA	OECD Nuclear Energy Agency
OSH	occupational safety and health
OSHMS	Occupational safety and health management systems
PAHO	Pan American Health Organization
PIACT	International Programme for the Improvement of Working Conditions and Environment
PROTECT	Social Protection Sector
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
RBTC	Regular Budget for Technical Cooperation
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SafeWork	InFocus Programme on Safety and Health at Work and the Environment
SECTOR	Sectoral Activities Department
SLIC	Senior Labour Inspectors Committee
SMEs	small and medium-sized enterprises
SOC/POL	Social Security Policy and Development Branch
STEP	Strategies and Tools against Social Exclusion and Poverty Programme
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNITAR	United Nations Institute for Training and Research
UNSCEAR	United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation
VDU	visual display unit
WHO	World Health Organization
WSSD	World Summit on Sustainable Development

Introduction

1. The ILO's primary goal is to promote opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and dignity. In this formulation of decent work in the context of ILO action, the protection of workers against work-related sickness, disease and injury, as embodied in the Preamble to the Constitution of the ILO, is an essential element of security and continues to be a high priority for the ILO. While operationally the InFocus Programme on Safety and Health at Work and the Environment (SafeWork) represents a focal point for the ILO's work in this area, concern for occupational safety and health (OSH) is engrained in the very fabric of the daily activities of the Office in a large number of the areas of action presented under the ILO's four strategic objectives.
2. Over the years, the ILO has multiplied the number of tools and activities in which it is engaged in order to carry out its mission. This multiplication stems from the realization that actual impact requires more than the signature of an instrument of ratification of an ILO Convention and that such a signature does not by itself guarantee that the objectives the constituents articulated in such an instrument will become reality. The promotion of standards is thus a fundamental task, and an indispensable complement to the process of developing them. There are many standards to be promoted and transformed into reality and the ILO's normative mission has to be carried out on a large number of fronts at the same time.¹ But today, the role and function of the diverse activities in relation to the standards which they are intended to promote, and vice versa, does not appear to be sufficiently clear. Furthermore, as different standards-related activities – development, supervision, promotion, technical assistance and cooperation – are functionally separated within the Office, it is institutionally difficult and cumbersome to create synergies and avoid fragmentation of action and dispersion of resources, both human and financial.
3. Remediating this situation is a major challenge. It is against this background that at its 279th Session (November 2000) the Governing Body of the ILO decided to apply on an experimental basis an integrated approach to ILO standards-related activities in order to

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