

Editorial

Those of you familiar with the ILO will have noticed that the institution has changed more in the last nine months than perhaps in the last 20 years. This change for the better has taken place since the appointment of Juan Somavía as Director-General. We welcome the changes made to an Organization which since 1919 has shown the world that governments, workers and employers can work together to achieve progress in labour and social protection.

Today more than ever this unique tripartite Organization is placed at the centre of the debates surrounding globalisation, particularly those relating to the social impact of trade liberalisation. This places employers in a position where we must confront those issues crucial to maintaining the strength and relevance of the ILO. Next week the Office will embark on an informal discussion concerning precisely such an issue. The discussion will focus on how the ILO has to proceed with standards and standard-setting in the new century. In this discussion, the constituents face a difficult issue but one that must be resolved. In the modern world we must allow enterprises to develop and sustain themselves and their employees whilst balancing this with acceptable levels of social protection (ref. page 6).

Creating enterprises that cannot or will not employ is not the answer. Nor is it an answer to stymie enterprise development and employment through onerous and irrelevant international instruments. Within this debate a balance must be found. The tripartite structure of the ILO supports rather than hinders the establishment of that balance. At the same time it is a debate that requires the full and open commitment of all the constituent parties, as an impasse on this issue is in nobody's interest. Be assured the IOE will be playing its full part.

Antonio Peñalosa
Secretary-General

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<p>International Labour Organization</p>	
<p>Manufacturing, working with and using insulation wools has often been exaggeratedly quoted as being very hazardous. Industry stepped forward therefore to propose not only to work hand-in-hand with the ILO in the elaboration of a Code of practice in this area but, for the first time in the Organization's history, offered to finance a substantial part of the project.</p> <p>After much preparation by the Office, a tripartite meeting of twenty-one experts met in Geneva from 17 to 26 January last to examine and approve a "Code of practice on Safety in the use of synthetic vitreous fibre insulation wools (glass wool, rock wool and slag wool)". All three parties were extremely well prepared for and represented at the meeting, which concluded with the adoption of a Code of Practice as a <i>“reference document for the development of workplace strategies, policies and mechanisms for dealing with safety in the use of insulation wools”</i>.</p> <p>The provisions of the Code are aimed at minimizing exposure to fibres and dust from insulation wools at work; and preventing the mechanical irritation and discomfort known to be associated with these materials. Annexed to the Code, for additional guidance, are descriptions of a number of systems of classification of insulation wools, exposure limits in various countries and an example of a format for risk assessment and action plan.</p> <p>Once approved for publication by the ILO Governing Body, the experts have recommended that the Code be made available in electronic version, including on the ILO Website.</p>	<p>Safety in the use of insulation wools</p>
<p>The issue of "Contract Labour" is about to be revisited. As a result of the deadlock in the second discussion of this subject at the International Labour Conference in June 1998, the Governing Body in June 1999 proposed an ILO meeting of experts to consider "workers in situations needing protection" which is where the Contract Labour debate has moved to. This meeting in Geneva from 15 to 19 May is to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • which workers, in the situations that began to be identified in the Committee, are in need of protection; • appropriate ways in which such workers can be protected, and the possibility of dealing separately with the various situations; • how such workers would be defined, bearing in mind the different legal systems that exist and language differences; 	<p>Contract Labour - Meeting of Experts</p>

<p>and to advise the ILO on what further action should be taken. In our circular to members of 13 January, we asked for nominations of specialists on this subject to be sent to the IOE by 17 March 2000.</p>	
<p>A Symposium on "Information Technologies in the Media and Entertainment Industries: Their Impact on Employment, Working Conditions and Labour-management Relations" will be held in Geneva from 28 February to 3 March, 2000.</p> <p>Sixty-three experts (twenty-one for each of the three groups) will draw up conclusions that will provide guidance for ILO's future work in the sector.</p> <p>The week's debate will focus on the following issues: new occupations, new forms of work organization and changing skills training needs; safety and health in relation to new technology in media and entertainment; social dialogue, social responsibility and voluntary initiatives; employment status, contractual arrangements and social protection, and combating piracy of media and entertainment products.</p> <p>The discussions will be based on a background document prepared by the ILO, which should soon be available on the ILO Website (http://www.ilo.org).</p>	<p>Symposium on Information Technologies in the Media and Entertainment Industries</p>
<p>It has just been brought to our attention that, following a proposal by the British Standards Institute (BSI) that the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) should once again consider elaborating an ISO standard covering Occupational Safety and Health Management Systems (OSH-MS), ISO is inviting all its member bodies to comment on this proposal by 10 March 2000 at the latest. Employers were strongly opposed to an earlier initiative for such an ISO Standard, discussed at an ISO International Workshop in September 1996. We urge all our members to take whatever action they deem appropriate with their national ISO member bodies to persuade ISO not to go ahead with this initiative. More details concerning this and ILO planned activity in the field of OHS-MS will be sent to all IOE members next week.</p>	<p>New ISO move to standardize occupational health and safety management systems</p>
<p>The questionnaire for the ILO's seventh survey on the effect given to the Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy was sent by the ILO to national employer organizations worldwide on 3 September 1999. Replies should reach the ILO by 29 February 2000. The IOE would appreciate receiving copies of replies submitted by employers' organizations, whether sent via their governments or directly to the ILO. For further information, contact Barbara Perkins at perkins@ioe-emp.org</p>	<p>Multinationals Questionnaire</p> <p>A reminder</p>

<p>Since its unanimous adoption by the ILO Conference in June 1999, Convention No.182, on the elimination of the worst forms of child labour, has become the fastest ratified Convention ever. Already it has received seven ratifications with six more due before the end of February. In addition to this, the ILO has also received from 30 African countries a commitment to ratify the Convention by the end of this year. This success provides a perfect example to the ILO to be followed.</p>	<p>Child Labour: Convention No. 182</p>
<p>United Nations Agencies and other International Organizations News</p>	
<p>The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) is currently reviewing its guidelines for multinational enterprises with the new text scheduled to be approved by the annual OECD Ministerial meeting in June 2000. The guidelines, which are voluntary, cover a range of subjects including employment and industrial relations, competition policy, tax, corruption and information disclosure and have to date enjoyed wide support from the business community in the OECD.</p> <p>Since the guidelines were adopted in 1976, there have been periodic review exercises, with the basic text remaining relatively unchanged in order to preserve the stability of the guidelines. However, the current review has been marked by greater pressure from some governments and NGOs (including trade unions, environmental organisations and human rights groups) for the guidelines to contain more "teeth", a wider list of subjects (e.g. references to human rights) and a move away from a voluntary instrument to a quasi compulsory code (for example by naming companies in cases of alleged non observance). In addition a wider role for NGOs is foreseen in the monitoring and "compliance" process.</p> <p>BIAC (the Business and Industry Advisory Committee to the OECD) has expressed concern that there is a presumption that the guidelines should serve as a central "code of conduct" for multinationals to follow wherever they operate.</p> <p>It is not yet clear whether OECD governments will approve the final draft in June as differences over scope and implementation of the guidelines remain. Nevertheless, IOE members should remain alert to these developments: the potential for this debate to cut across into the ILO and lead to pressure for amending the ILO's Tripartite Declaration on Multinational Enterprises is great. For more information, please visit the BIAC Website: http://www.biac.org/Framedir/newsgdln.htm</p>	<p>OECD: Revision of the Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises</p>

<p>In conjunction with the UN special session to be held in Geneva in June 2000, as a five year follow up to the Copenhagen Social Summit, there will be a number of parallel events held as part of a forum under the banner "Geneva 2000: the next step in social development". As part of this event the IOE and ICC will again host a joint roundtable discussion in two panel sessions on Wednesday 28 June which will focus on issues arising from the world of work in the 21st century, particularly the knowledge economy. More specific information regarding the details of this joint discussion will follow.</p> <p>General information and registration brochures for the Geneva 2000 event are now available. For copies contact: The Secretariat - Geneva 2000 9-11 rue de Varembe CH-1211 Geneva 20 or visit their web site www.geneva2000.org</p>	<p>"Geneva 2000" UN General Assembly Special Session</p> <p>IOE/ICC Joint Round Table</p>
<p>Aid and Trade Conference 31 May to 1 June 2000 in New York. To be held in conjunction with the first conference on UN-Business partnerships.</p> <p>The Conference will provide an annual forum for the UN to inform the international media, the private sector and the public at large on the successes of its collaboration with the business community.</p> <p>For Information concerning this event, please contact: www.aidandtrade.com</p>	<p>UN Office for Project Services</p>
<p>IOE Activities</p>	
<p>In December 1999, both IOE President, Ashraf Tabani, and ILO Director-General, Juan Somavía, wrote to Member Federation Presidents seeking their support for the Global Compact initiative and to identify examples of how their federations were actually promoting the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work as a part of the Compact.</p> <p>To date nearly 40 responses have been received, which will assist the ILO in showing how employers are reacting to the challenges of the Compact at the World Economic Forum in Davos.</p>	<p>The Global Compact</p>

<p>However, we would ask all members to respond to the request and forward copies to the IOE as it will assist us in further Global Compact discussions this year. Information arising from these responses will also soon be placed on an IOE page on the UN Global Compact Website. http://www.un.org/partners/business</p>	
<p>The development of a system of international labour standards was one of the main purposes behind the creation of the ILO and still remains one of its essential activities.</p> <p>Like all legislative actions, the ILO's standards setting activities are also an ongoing process, fuelled by one of its primary roles, that of responding to a constantly changing world environment. And yet, it is not merely a question of producing standards for standards' sake. Standards should be ratifiable and capable of application, thereby contributing to the relevance and credibility of the Organization. In the words of Juan Somavía, ILO's Director General, "it is important that the ILO concentrate its attention on high-impact standards".</p> <p>As we enter this year's debate on ILO standards, we must keep this in mind. The question nevertheless arises whether retaining the current approach to standard-setting is desirable, or whether the sheer mass of instruments may not in the end obscure the identification of relevant items for discussion, thereby undermining ILO standards as a whole. We should also ask ourselves whether the pace of setting new standards is to be maintained.</p> <p>In considering future approaches to standards activities, one should recognise their limitations. Not all the social problems that call for attention by the ILO necessarily lend themselves to standard-setting. Some would be better dealt with through the use of technical assistance and co-operation, voluntary codes, practical manuals or directives. One of the basic questions for the future is therefore whether greater use should be made of non-mandatory instruments, reserving standards for important issues capable of precise definition, action and agreement.</p> <p>The ILO Governing Body will be debating this issue at its March meeting. As part of the preparatory process, employers will participate in consultations with the workers' and governments' groups next week. In our circular to members on 17 December 1999, we asked for your thoughts on this process. If you have already sent them to us, we thank you. If you have not, we would appreciate it if you could send them to us as soon as possible.</p>	<p>Relevant standards for a relevant ILO</p>

<p>Frederick Muia (Kenya) will join the IOE Secretariat as Adviser at the beginning of February. He will be responsible, among other matters, for the African region and technical cooperation issues. Frederick Muia holds a diploma of advanced studies in Communication from the University of Montpellier (France) and an Economics Degree from the University of Nairobi (Kenya).</p> <p>Before joining the IOE, he was Market Analyst for the Commission for Eastern Africa. He worked as Editor of the economic magazine "French Business News". He has also spent the last month training with the Federation of Kenya Employers. Frederick replaces Ousmane Touré who has left us to join the ILO multidisciplinary team in Dakar.</p>	<p>New Appointment</p>
<p>The IOE Executive Vice-President, Rolf Thüsing, will be visiting the Indian employers from 16 to 19 February 2000. During his stay he will release the Hindi version of the IOE Handbook on Child Labour and participate in a National Workshop on Strategic Planning for Job Creation in the Urban Informal Sector.</p> <p>From there, he will travel to Karachi (Pakistan) to take part in the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of the Employers' Federation of Pakistan from 20 to 23 February 2000.</p>	<p>IOE Executive Vice-President to visit India and Pakistan</p>
<p>The IOE Secretary-General, Antonio Peñalosa, will address the Asean Confederation of Employers' (ACE) meeting to take place in Bali (Indonesia) on 25 February 2000. The ACE meeting will be attended by the Presidents and Chief Executive Officers of employers' organisations from Indonesia (APINDO), Malaysia (MEF), Philippines (ECOP), Singapore (SNEF) and Thailand (ECOT).</p>	<p>IOE Secretary-General to visit Indonesia</p>
<p>IOE Members</p>	
<p>Anne Knowles, Employer Group spokesperson on the Maternity Protection Convention revision discussions has been appointed Chief Executive of the New Zealand Employers Federation.</p>	<p>New Zealand Employers' Federation</p>
<p>The Pan-African Employers' Confederation (PEC) with the support of the IOE has agreed with the ILO on an action programme for the years 2000-2001.</p> <p>The envisaged projects with the full financial support of the ILO are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The publication of a Brochure to raise the awareness and importance of PEC for employers. • To conduct a major study on investment in Africa. 	<p>Pan-African Employers' Confederation</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To conduct a study to look into current practices in certain countries regarding the elimination of child labour. • The preparation of material for employers relating to the causes, consequences, treatment, prevention and control of Aids at the workplace. • The preparation of a PEC strategy for the future. • The development of a PEC Website <p>The IOE is pleased to have been able to assist PEC in the development and realisation of this programme with the ILO.</p>	
<p>The IOE's member in Uganda, the Federation of Uganda Employers, in collaboration with the ILO and the Pan-African Employers' Confederation is organising a three-day Conference of the East, Central and South African Employers' Organisations from 1 to 3 February 2000 in Kampala (Uganda). Eighteen employers' organisations from the region will participate in this Conference, the theme of which is "Employment Challenges in a Globalised Market: The Role of Enterprises and Employers' Organisations". IOE adviser, Georges James, will participate in the meeting.</p>	<p>Conference of Employment Challenges in a Globalised Market</p>
<p>In December 1998, the Confederation of German Employers' Associations (BDA) set up a Working Party to discuss questions and appropriate action on the issue of Codes of Conduct and Enterprise Ethics. As one result of this work a Position Paper on the "social responsibility of internationally operating enterprises" has just been adopted.</p> <p>In this Position Paper, BDA emphasizes that the most important contribution of internationally operating enterprises to the improvement of living and working conditions in poorer countries is their economic engagement in these countries, reinforcing structural adjustment, enhancing economic power, promoting a better trained workforce and creating jobs.</p> <p>Over and above this, BDA encourages internationally operating enterprises to cooperate with their suppliers and subcontractors with a view to promoting decent working conditions in their operations in addition to national legislation and practice, which is the basis, upon which international instruments such as the new ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work provide important guidance for enterprises in this regard.</p> <p>However, it is imperative that internationally operating enterprises are free to shape their social engagement according to their specific situation and the specific</p>	<p>BDA Position Paper: The Social Responsibility of Internationally Operating German Multinational Companies</p>

<p>means of action available to them. In this respect, Codes of Conduct are just one option among others. Any binding standardisation of contents, implementation and supervision of social responsibility impedes the innovative potential of enterprises in this respect and is therefore counterproductive.</p> <p>In the BDA's view, the social engagement of enterprises can be most effective when governments assume their respective responsibilities in enforcing labour laws, promoting education and training, providing adequate social security and in setting a reliable framework for investment and operations of enterprises.</p> <p>This Position Paper shall very soon be available in English.</p> <p>For more information, please contact the BDA Office: Abt_09@bda-online.de</p>	
<p>The MEDEF (Mouvement des Entreprises de France) General Assembly was held on 18 January 2000 and adopted a Resolution which proposes a new social dimension with the trade unions in order to reinvigorate social dialogue in France. MEDEF specifically proposes opening discussions with the trade unions to put in place a new "social constitution". The MEDEF's proposal would involve debating a complete overhaul of the labour relations system, greater autonomy and widening of the social dialogue to new areas such as vocational training and definition of new forms of work.</p> <p>The project comes against the background of MEDEF demands to reshape the French social protection system. At the moment, MEDEF takes part in the management of several social security institutions with the trade unions, but the recent MEDEF General Assembly decided to end this participation in all joint institutions. This decision will take effect from 31 December 2000 at the latest. MEDEF is proposing to use this intervening time to negotiate a new structure of unemployment insurance and health insurance, a new pension system, a new family allowance system and the modernisation of the health system at work with the trade unions.</p> <p>This represents a large challenge for MEDEF. The French Government regrets the decision of MEDEF to withdraw from joint management of social security institutions. However, it has stated it is ready to await the result of discussions between MEDEF and the trade unions before reacting.</p> <p>For more information, please visit the following Website: www.medef.fr</p>	<p>MEDEF: New social constitution with the trade unions</p>

Other news	
<p>The world's largest single trade union was launched in London on 10 December, covering 15.5 million workers in 800 separate unions in 140 countries. It is to be called the Union Network International (UNI) and follows the merger of four existing International Union Federations. The new union will cover a range of workers in commercial and financial services, telecommunications, the media, entertainment, printing and e-commerce. UNI intends to establish itself as a countervailing influence to global corporations in the new information economy.</p> <p>For more information, please visit the Website:</p> <p>www.union-network.org</p>	Trade Union News
New publications	
<p>With direct services to enterprises becoming an important part of what employers' organisations are expected to do for their members, ACT/EMP has been training employers' organisation officials in providing such services. In addition to the skills and knowledge transferred to the officials, ACT/EMP has also produced tools that they can use. The recently published training material on human resources and industrial relations and on human resources development for adjustment at the enterprise level are tools that can be used to help enterprises successfully manage change. Both training packages were based on case studies of enterprises that had actually gone through major restructuring, successfully and unsuccessfully. The case studies and the lessons learned form the core of the training packages. They were the products of projects financed by the Danish and Norwegian governments, which are major contributors to ACT/EMP's programme of assistance to employers' organisations in developing and transition countries.</p> <p>ILO, 1999: Human Resources and Industrial Relations - Volume 1: case studies, Volume 2: Teaching Notes ed. C.S. Venkata Ratnam</p> <p>ILO, 1999: Human Resource Development for Adjustment at the Enterprise Level - Volume 1: Case Studies, Volume 2: Facilitator's Guide - ed. C.S. Venkata Ratnam</p> <p>(English only)</p> <p>Employers' organisations may obtain the publications from the Bureau for Employers' Activities, International Labour Office, 4 route des Morillons, 1211 Geneva 22, Fax: +41-22-7998948, e-mail actemp@ilo.org.</p>	ACT/EMP Publications

<p>The IOE Guide for Employers on the ILO Declaration of Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, currently in English, French and Spanish, will soon be available in Arabic.</p>	<p>Declaration of Fundamental Principles and Rights at work</p>
<p>Peter Auer, from the Employment Department of the ILO, has written a publication entitled “Employment revival in Europe”, based on a tripartite seminar in March 1999 on the subject. The book explains the reasons for the success of the employment policy of Austria, Denmark, Ireland and the Netherlands. To obtain a copy contact the ILO Office. publns@ilo.org</p>	<p>Examples of Successful Employment policy</p>