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WORLD DAY FOR SAFETY AND HEALTH AT WORK

International Labour Organisation

Health and Life at Work: A basic human right

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The Employers Perspective

I would like to thank the ILO for organising the event at the International Labour Office in Geneva and inviting the IOE to represent global employers here to provide their perspective on occupational safety and health at work.

We support the focus of this initiative that gives thanks and respect to all at the workplace.

The IOE has had long involvement with the occupational safety and health activities at international level and endorses the shift from piecemeal legislative initiatives to the more strategic approach adopted by Convention 187 that looks at bringing the

many actors together at Member State level that have an impact on the health and safety system and performance. It requires them to have concerted strategies, plans and most importantly, actions aimed at improving occupational safety and health performance and systems to measure the improvements in performance. This recognises that it is not just laws that are required, but the development of a genuine safety culture, embedded, not just in the workplace, but in the education and social programmes, supported by prevention policies and occupational safety and health management systems inside companies and organisations. It is important that the current economic challenges, and now the potential public health crisis, do not deflect us from this mission.

IOE supported by their Global Occupational Safety and Health Network believe that all work-related accidents, incidents and illhealth episodes can be preventable. It is a question of the resources that are needed to make this happen. It is important to have systems to capture and learn from the past. Developing resilience, knowledge and experience in society, companies and workers is essential to enable them all to cope with the challenges, particular those of today, and even the promise of the future to return to sustainable growth. Employers support these endeavours, because as well as their own efforts, they have to rely on the resources of the seeds sown in the education systems and values of society

It is all too easy for critics and others to say, that, in times of economic downturn, workplace health and safety costs will be cut and there will be an associated increase in the accidents, diseases

and fatalities. But such an assertion, correlating workplace accident statistics with economic downturn, has to be more robust than the correlation between the state of the economy and hemlines. Workplace safety and health is not a discretionary spend, it is an essential component of the management systems that keep a business viable and people employed.

Now is not a time to distract businesses from their need to survive by having to field allegations that are all too easy for the critics to make and all too hard for business to spend time and scarce resources in defending. This is a time for pulling together - not pulling apart.

I thank you all for listening.