

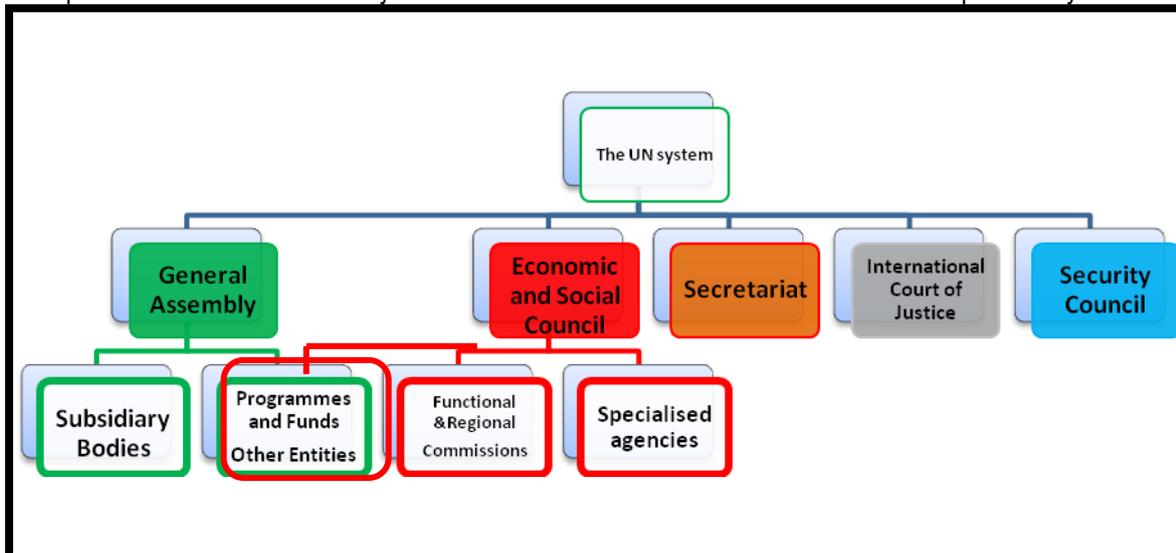


## FACT SHEET FOR BUSINESS: INFLUENCING ENVIRONMENT, OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH AT UN LEVEL

### The IOE and the UN system

The Charter of the United Nations came into force in 1945. It has been amended many times but has established six principal organs of the **United Nations**: the **General Assembly**, the **Economic and Social Council**, the **Secretariat**, the **International Court of Justice**, the **Security Council** and the now suspended **Trusteeship Council**. The United Nations family, however, is much larger, encompassing 15 agencies and several programmes and bodies.

A simplified schematic shows the system and identifies the main bodies to which the IOE particularly relates.



#### Subsidiary Bodies of General Assembly

*Human Rights Council, International Law Commission*

#### Programmes and Funds

*UNCTAD United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, UNDP United Nations Development Programme, UNEP United Nations Environment Programme, UNHCR Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UN-Women United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women*

#### Other Entities

*UNAIDS Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, UNISDR United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction,*

#### Functional and Regional Commissions and Other bodies

*UNCSD Commission on Sustainable Development,*

#### Specialised Agencies

*ILO International Labour Organization, FAO Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, UNESCO United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, WHO World Health Organization, World Bank Group, IMF International Monetary Fund, ICAO International Civil Aviation Organization, IMO International Maritime Organization, ITU International Telecommunication Union, UPU Universal Postal Union, WIPO World Intellectual Property Organization, UNIDO United Nations Industrial Development Organization,*

### The IOE work on Occupational Safety and Health (OSH)

All international OSH standards are developed by the **ILO** which is the **only UN organization whose Governing body requires consultation between employers and workers representative bodies and Governments**. The IOE provides the secretariat for employers' representatives and a permanent link with ILO staff. Over half of all ILO standards (legally-binding Conventions and non-binding Recommendations) relate to OSH and have been developed with the input of IOE nominated representatives and experts. The IOE is engaged in the priority programme to develop Codes of Practice for those sectors and topics where current standards are missing or out-of-date and where there is a pressing need for practical information. The IOE also represents the interests of employers at the **WHO**, particularly in their **work on health and the workplace**.

## The IOE work on Environment and Climate Change

Over the last 20 years many institutions, both within and outside the United Nations have been involved with sustainable development, climate change and other environmental issues. The main players in the environmental Institutional Framework are, the **UN General Assembly, Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)** and the **High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development** which has taken over from the **Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)**. The ILO deals with the employment and social implications of sustainable development. The IOE is recognized as representing business as a member of the **Major Groups** of the UNEP and is involved with the World Bank/UNEP initiative on the **Green Economy** and the ILO/UNEP work on **Green Jobs**.

## Why is this work relevant for business?

- Many businesses manage environment, occupational safety and health within the same reporting line within their **sustainable development agenda** for environmental, economic and social well-being for today and tomorrow. There are also synergies for **Corporate Social Responsibility reporting**.
- The IOE can use its formal status as an employers' representative organization at the ILO as leverage to influence other parts of the UN family on the effects their policies and programmes have on business. The UN values this perspective even though the outputs from discussions at UN level are directly **addressed to Governments**.
- Business is ultimately affected by UN policies and programmes because when a country ratifies a Convention, this instrument sets the **framework for national law and practice** on the particular subject. Consequently business may be required to develop new, or change existing, environment and labour practices, which can involve significant capital investment, administrative measures and costs.
- Even if international standards are not taken up by national law, the contents of **collective agreements** may be inspired by them; and enforcing authorities and judicial systems may cite them as acceptable standards.
- Whilst some of these developments at international level may be seen as a cost to some businesses, they often provide a relevant source of standardised **practical guidance** for global businesses, who may gain competitive advantage by early implementation. To other businesses they may provide opportunities for the supply of goods and services.

## How does the IOE's work at the UN on environment and occupational safety and health advance the agenda for business?

- Given the relevance and potential impact of UN measures, when they are being developed, the IOE, on its own and working with other business groups such as ICC and BIAC, plays a key role in involving and consulting our Members – some 150 national business and employers' organizations - on the implications.
- We can then ensure that due account is taken by the UN of the business perspective, including the needs of enterprises of all sizes operating in different geographical areas, economic sectors and social frameworks by arguing that measures
  - ✓ concentrate on setting worldwide relevant minimum rules, rather than seeking international harmonization at an ideal level;
  - ✓ provide realistic and practicable orientation to assist businesses;
  - ✓ are flexible enough to accommodate differences of development levels and changing needs;
  - ✓ are based on a thorough assessment of their likely impact.
- When UN measures are adopted we can equip business organisations at national level to be in an informed position on ratification and implementation and be able to advise their own members of the implications for business operations.

## For more Information and Answers to your Questions

Please visit the *Environment and Climate Change* and *Occupational Safety and Health* sections of our website [www.ioe-emp.org](http://www.ioe-emp.org). If you do not find what you are looking for, please contact the IOE's Adviser Dr Janet Asherson at [asherson@ioe-emp.org](mailto:asherson@ioe-emp.org) or call +41 22 929 00 08.