

II HEMISPHERIC WORKSHOP ON OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

“The Challenges of Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) in relation to the IV Summit of the Americans mandates and subregional experiences”- San Salvador, May 16 and 17, 2006

STRATEGIC GUIDELINES OF TOPIC 1

Implementation of Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) management systems

The questions that guided the discussion of Topic 1 and around which these guidelines arose are:

What strategies should be adopted to improve national and private OHS management systems, taking into account successful experiences on a local and sub-regional level?

What mechanisms of strengthening the OHS government inspection systems should be developed to assure that companies are upholding legal standards in this area?

The strategic guidelines for this topic, which were agreed upon in a plenary session during the workshop, are presented below:

STRATEGIC GUIDELINES FOR ACTION

- Promotion of social dialogue between workers and employers, and the strengthening of dialogue and cooperation with other civil society actors. The tripartite approach is vital for the implementation of public OHS systems based upon the premise of shared responsibility.
- Promotion of management systems based on international models drawn up and agreed upon in a tripartite manner, such as the ILO guidelines on Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems (2001).
- Strengthening of the labour inspection systems through better planning and the availability of competent human resources and sufficient financial resources in line with the resolutions of ILO Convention 81 (on Labour Inspection in Industry and Commerce) and Convention 129 (Labour Inspection in Agriculture).

ACTIONS TO COMPLEMENT STRATEGIC GUIDELINES

- The tripartite focus should continue to be consolidated, reinforcing the concept of shared responsibility on OHS. Technical efforts in this area will be insufficient or scarcely effective if they cannot be backed up by a strong culture of dialogue that involves all sides in a constructive effort to carry out the mandates of the Summits.
- Social dialogue guarantees that technical efforts and political priorities enjoy consensus and legitimacy. The participation of civil society is fundamental on several fronts: in revising and updating the legislation, in formulating policies, in defining and implementing programmes and concrete tools in OHS.
- Tripartite national coordination structures in the area of occupational health and safety exist in most countries in the hemisphere; nevertheless the implementation of national policies is a priority. It is necessary to formulate national policies on occupational safety and health that reaffirm the

commitment of the states in the promotion of effective action in this area. These national policies should have an inter-sectoral focus.

- For the definition of policies, it is necessary to elaborate and/or finalize the pending diagnoses and national profiles at the country level as a starting point for the implementation of action strategies of the National OHS Systems.
- Promote the revision and updating of laws to adapt to the new labour environment guaranteeing the protection of workers' health and safety. With that purpose, take into account the international labour laws especially the "Promotional framework for occupational safety and health," which will be analysed in the next ILO International Conference of Labor with a view to adopting the model of the national system that these instruments propose.
- In the majority of countries, labour inspection continues to have a limited coverage, which has been complemented by voluntary initiatives. It is necessary to strengthen the national management structures and, particularly, the inspection services by integrating the strategies of OHS departments into their functions.
- The management systems will make it possible to introduce the companies into a virtuous circle where OHS stops being an isolated and momentary event but is converted into an element of continuous improvement of conditions of work, health and safety of workers, the productivity and competitiveness of the company. To that extent, these management systems should be promoted following the available international models of a general character like the ILO guidelines, or of a sectoral character such as the PAHO Health and Safety Manual for health sector workers. Likewise, the adoption of these management systems requires adaptation of these models to the reality, the sector and the size of the company. Therefore, the design of the actions for the implementation of management systems should give priority to small and micro-enterprises as well as those in the informal sector, with the goal of facilitating the fulfilment of existing laws.
- It is necessary that countries initiate the design for the implementation and evaluation of OHS management systems targeting the informal sector (i.e. non-registered workers, self-employed or without contracts), given informal workers are the majority of the labor force in most of the countries of the Hemisphere.
- The large corporations incorporate occupational safety and health management systems into their processes with the outstanding collaboration of their labour organisations, which contributes to a good labour climate and competitiveness. As a contribution of the business community, the large corporations promote good practices among its providers, helping them in applying these practices, which in turn contributes to the development of medium- and small-sized enterprises. *(Text jointly drawn up by COSATE and CEATAL)*
- The application of OHS management systems in the national and business sphere should take into account the new forms of labour organisation, labour relations and the new forms of contracting. In this sense, it is necessary to highlight the responsibility of the main employers or contractors in protecting the conditions of workers health and safety and the empowerment of those through their participation in the company's measures of prevention and control be they temporary or permanent.
- Consolidate the actions of forming and training of the social actors according to their framework of responsibility in OHS area. Likewise, strengthen the training of technical and professional teams in OHS.

- To build a genuine culture of prevention in OHS it is necessary to include this issue within the educational content, even from the basic level. Therefore, in the framework of the strategic alliance among the labour, health, education and environmental sectors, work will be carried out to incorporate the teaching and promotion of OHS into study plans.
- In the framework of the processes of integration and free trade, it is important to continue strengthening the sub-regional entities of OHS that work in the interchange of experiences and the construction of a common agenda of priorities for the region in this issue, and at the same time give advice on the definition de policies, strengthen and support the consolidation of roles, responsibilities, coordination and competencies.