



**Message by Juan Somavia
Director-General of the International Labour Office
on the occasion of
World Day for Safety and Health at Work
(28 April 2005)**

On 28 April we observe World Day for Safety and Health at Work.

We have launched this day to put the spotlight on our goal of promoting safe and healthy workplaces for all workers. Meeting this objective calls for proper planning and coordination and the implementation of practical measures and common sense safety procedures. Experience tells us that prevention works. This is a message of our decent work agenda.

This year we focus on the construction sector. We also look at the particular needs of two sets of workers at different stages of the life cycle – older and younger workers.

In many countries, the construction sector generates a great deal of employment. But there are at least 60,000 fatal accidents each year on construction sites around the world. The sector also accounts for a disproportionate share of work-related deaths in industrialized countries. Potential hazards are associated for example, with working at heights, excavation work or the use of cranes. Yet these situations can be managed to prevent accidents. We must aim to establish a preventative safety and health culture. Safety must become a reflex in all workplaces.

Our sectoral focus on occupational safety and health issues must be complemented by recognition of the specific needs of particular categories of workers. Younger workers come to the job with little experience and understanding of workplace hazards. They need to learn quickly. Training and information should be presented in ways that appeal and make sense to them. Older workers have a wealth of experience, which they bring to the workplace. In their case, occupational safety and health strategies need to take into account the physiological changes that come with age.

Prevention begins with a commitment to put worker safety and well-being at the heart of policies at all levels. This is the point of departure for action to reduce the risk of work-related injury and ill health. The ILO's constituents are committed to this goal. Together we have developed a management systems approach that is key to prevention. Working women and men, their families, businesses and economies, all stand to benefit from safe work.

On World Day for Safety and Health at Work, the ILO thanks all of you who are taking part in this observance, promoting awareness and action and striving to ensure healthy workforces and safe workplaces.