

Remarks for Myanmar Safety and Health Day

Your Excellency Union Minister

Permanent Secretary, DG U Win Shein and Government colleagues

Workers and employers representatives and other colleagues and partners

Mingalabar and good morning.

ILO is very pleased to lend its support to this important event to mark Myanmar Safety and Health Day as part of the 2017 World Day for Safety and Health at Work.

This is a very welcome opportunity to highlight and reflect on the importance of occupational safety and health, not only to Myanmar's workers but to Myanmar's economic development.

While occasional disasters put this issue in the spotlight, working in hazardous conditions is actually a daily, routine and unseen reality for many workers. According to the latest ILO estimates, every year 1.4 million workers die from an occupational related accident or disease in the Asia-Pacific region. This is about 70 per cent of the 2.3 million deaths worldwide.

It is difficult to assess the extent of work-related death and injuries in Myanmar as a proper record system is not in place. The number of reported cases during the fiscal year 2013-2014 was only 56 accidents in total, but we know this is far too small considering the size of the working population.

Beyond this human cost are the economic losses in terms of lost working time and productivity, medical costs, rehabilitation and compensation, amounting to trillions of dollars each year.

For this reason, occupational safety and health has been placed at the heart of the 2030 Sustainable Development agenda and is an integral part of achieving SDG 8 of decent work for all.

This year ILO is focussing the World Day on the critical need for countries to improve their capacity to collect and utilize reliable occupational safety and health (OSH) data.

Having reliable and accurate OSH data is essential for building a culture of prevention. It helps to detect new workplace hazards and emerging risks; identify hazardous sectors; develop preventive measures; set evidence-based priorities and targets; and inform the implementation of policies, systems and programmes.

Comprehensive national data, covering all branches of economic activity, permits the design of preventive measures at enterprise and sector level. It helps to make injury compensation schemes more responsive and effective.

Gathering timely and accurate information on occupational accidents and diseases is a key part of improving the collection of OSH data. OSH injury and disease information often is collected by different parties for different purposes, for instance by labour inspectors such as FGLLID, by health personnel in clinics and hospitals, by employment insurance schemes for compensation purposes, but workers organisations and by employers.

As a result, the collection of data suffers from incomplete coverage, inconsistent definitions and under-reporting. The challenge therefore is to build a comprehensive system which uses uniform terms and definitions and brings data together to a central point for analysis. Special attention should be given to the particular hazards and health risks for women and young workers.

There will be important new opportunities to strengthen OSH systems in Myanmar in the coming year: a new comprehensive OSH law will hopefully be adopted shortly; a list of hazardous work for children is in development; data collection is being strengthened including through the Labour Force Survey; and there is ongoing social security reform.

The ILO has a wealth of tools and guidance to support member States in improving OSH data collection. The ILO also has a Code of Practice on Recording and Notification of OSH Accidents and Diseases.

Important steps include improving collaboration among government institutions; integrating OSH prevention in labour inspection and health surveillance programmes; strengthening employment injury schemes and improving OSH health services. New technologies on our tablets and smartphones also provide important new tools for reporting and data collection.

Minister, colleagues

In all of this, social dialogue between Government, workers and employers has a critical role to play in raising awareness of OSH, helping to build a culture of prevention, and putting in place the measures and practices that will make a difference.

We look forward to working with the Government, social partners and other stakeholders to help improve the collection of OSH data and strengthen OSH systems in Myanmar.

Together, we can build a culture of OSH prevention, a safer future for all workers, and sustainable and people-centred development for Myanmar.

Thank you.