THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

SYNOPSIS FOR COMMEMORATION OF WORLD DAY FOR SAFETY AND HEALTH

28TH APRIL 2023

THEME:

"A SAFE AND HEALTHY WORKING ENVIRONMENT AS A FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE AND RIGHT AT WORK"

Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development

P.O.BOX 7136, Kampala

E-mail: ps@mglsd.go.ug

1. INTRODUCTION

Every April 28, Uganda joins the rest of the world in observing World Day for Safety and Health at Work. It is an awareness-raising global campaign intended to focus international attention on emerging trends in the field of Occupational Safety and Health and on the magnitude of work-related injuries, disease and fatalities worldwide. It is a day to raise awareness on Occupational Safety and Health among Workers, Trade Unions, Employees, Employers, their Organizations and Government Representatives.

The commemoration of the World Day for Safety and Health was initiated by World Federation of Trade Unions (WTFU) funded by The United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) on 28th April 1996. In 2003, International Labor Organization (ILO) became officially involved in the commemoration upon a request from the WTFU. Since then, ILO has observed the World Day for Safety and Health at Work. Uganda joined the rest of the world in commemorating this day in 2004 for the first time and has sustained this culture to date. The theme for the World Day for Safety and Health at Work 2023 is: **"A Safe and Healthy Working Environment as a Fundamental Principle and Right at Work" as adopted from the ILO global theme.**

The ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work , adopted in 1998 and amended in 2022, is an expression of commitment by governments, employers' and workers' organizations to uphold basic human values - values that are vital to our social and economic lives. It affirms the obligations and commitments that are inherent in membership of the ILO, namely:

i.   Freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining;

ii. The elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour;

iii. The effective abolition of child labour;

iv. The elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation; and

v.   A safe and healthy working environment.

In addition, the new fundamental Conventions will be the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No.155) , and the Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 (No. 187). Convention 155, adopted in 1981, provides guidelines for national policies on OSH, emphasizing the prevention of accidents and occupational diseases. The Convention requires governments to establish and enforce laws and regulations to promote OSH, to provide training and education for workers, and to establish mechanisms for consultation and participation of workers and employers in OSH matters. Convention 187, adopted in 2006, provides a framework for promoting the safety and health of workers in hazardous work environments, including those in the mining and construction industries. The Convention requires employers to identify and assess risks to workers' safety and health, to develop and implement measures to eliminate or control those risks, and to provide training and information to workers.

The World Day for Safety and Health at Work provides an opportunity to raise awareness about these important international standards and the need to promote OSH in all workplaces. It also provides an opportunity to highlight the importance of preventing work-related accidents and diseases, which can have serious consequences for workers, their families, and society as a whole.

2. BUILDING A SAFE AND HEALTHY WORKING ENVIRONMENT

A safe and healthy working environment is a right for all workers. This can be achieved by applying some of the principles below:

i. **Legal Compliance:** Complying with National and International Laws and regulations regarding workplace Safety and Health.

ii. **Communication:** Employers should provide their employees with clear guidelines on how to perform their work safely and what to do in case of emergency. This includes providing written documentation, signs, and regular communication of updates and changes. Communication should

also provide a feedback mechanism.

iii. **Training:** Employers should provide regular training on recognizing workplace hazards, safe working practices, maintaining good health at the workplace, proper handling of hazardous materials and equipment, emergency preparedness, importance and use of protective equipment.

iv. **Hazard identification and control:** Employers, in collaboration with the workers, should identify and appropriately address potential hazards in the workplace, such as slips, trips, and falls, and take proactive steps to prevent them.

v. **Reporting:** Employers should create a culture where employees are encouraged to report safety concerns or near-misses without fear of reprisal. This can help identify potential hazards before an accident occurs.

vi. **Positive Health and Safety Culture:** Employers should prioritize employee well-being and promote a culture of safety and health in the workplace, which leads to increased productivity, workers' morale and job satisfaction.

vii. **Preventive maintenance:** Regular inspections and maintenance of machinery and equipment should be scheduled and conducted to ensure that the equipment is in good working order and to prevent accidents.

viii. **Protective equipment:** Employers should provide employees with the necessary collective and personal protective equipment (PPE), such as gloves, goggles, and helmets, to prevent or minimize injury and exposure to hazardous materials.

ix. **Ergonomics:** Employers should design the workplace or work stations and work tasks in such a way that reduces physical strain on employees or minimizes monotony, thus preventing injuries and musculoskeletal disorders. The Ministry has developed Occupational Safety and Health Guidelines for Office Environment which highlights safety and health measures in an office work environment including ergonomics.

x. **Housekeeping:** Employers should regularly clean and sanitize the workplace to prevent the spread of illness and infection and ensure work tools and equipment are stored in the right places

3. BENEFITS OF A SAFE AND HEALTHY WORKING ENVIRONMENT

Creating a safe and healthy working environment has numerous benefits for both employers and employees, including:

i) **Reduced accidents and injuries:** A safe and healthy working environment reduces the risk of accidents and injuries in the workplace, leading to fewer lost workdays and lower workers' compensation costs, and healthcare costs.

ii) **Increased productivity:** When employees feel safe and healthy (both physically and mentally), they are more productive and engaged in their work. This leads to increased efficiency and a better bottom line for the employer.

iii) **Improved employee morale and job satisfaction:** A safe and healthy working environment can improve employee morale and job satisfaction, leading to better retention rates and reduced turnover.

iv) **Improved reputation and public image:** Employers that prioritize workplace safety and health improve their reputation and public image, which attract new customers and top talents.

v) **Compliance with legal requirements:** Compliance with National Laws and regulations regarding workplace safety and health can prevent fines, legal disputes, and damage to the employer's reputation.

4. ROLES OF STAKEHOLDERS IN PROMOTING A SAFE AND HEALTHY WORKING ENVIRONMENT

4.1. GOVERNMENT

Government of Uganda embraces multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder action in addressing safety and health concerns, hence will involve the **various Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs).**

Every MDA is expected to implement the provisions of the OSH Act, in line with their respective mandate, both in-house (within the MDA as a workplace) as well as ensure compliance within their jurisdictions and the entities that they regulate or oversee.

The Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development, through the Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) department is mandated to promote and ensure that;

i)   employers undertake practical measures to ensure that their workers and workplaces are safe and healthy as mandated by the OSH Act.

ii)   workplaces observe national and international OSH legal requirements and standards

iii)   employers institute functional OSH management systems.

This mandate is achieved through the functions listed below:

i)   providing policy, legal and regulatory framework,

ii)   setting up a national frame work for OSH management system,

iii)   registration and inspection of workplaces,

iv)   approval of workplace building plans prior to local government approval;

v)   undertaking technical review and audit of proposed and ongoing projects,

vi)   review of workplace OSH management systems,

vii)   offering technical advice, information, training and sensitization to employers, employees and the general public,

viii) representation of Uganda at various international fora.

4.2. EMPLOYERS

The OSH Act obliges employers (organizations, workplaces, enterprises and businesses) to:

i)   provide dedicated leadership with well-defined roles for all to ensure safety and health compliance

ii)   ensure health, safety and welfare of persons at workplaces by putting in place supplementary organizational measures and technical measures to keep the workplace safe, healthy and pollution-free.

iii)   ensure safe working environment through arrangements to minimize safety and health risks, provision and maintenance of workplace welfare facilities and arrangements, including provision and maintenance of safe and risk-free means of access to and from the workplace.

iv)   ensure that workers are well informed of the real and potential dangers associated with their work, the substance handled and machinery used, including provision of adequate personal protective equipment to prevent the risks of accidents or of adverse effects on health.

v)   comply with all the requirements of the OSH Act, 2006 and international best practice in relation to safety and health

vi)   develop suitable Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for their respective working environments through proactive and preventive OSH Management systems

vii)   establish and empower emergency management system within the workplace

viii)   keep abreast with, and apply where possible, international best practice on safety and health culture.

Employers may embrace the following mechanisms for ensuring compliance with national legislation

Employers must realize the basic idea "to prevent, rather than to react to, hazards in the workplace".

This can be achieved through:

i. **Worker Participation** – having a clear and open policy for incident reporting, allocated resources to enable workers fulfill their responsibilities and involving workers in setting goals, identifying and reporting hazards and tracking progress generally. This will ensure that employees are proactive about understanding their responsibilities and, importantly, the reasoning behind them.

Hazard Identification, Assessment, Prevention and Control - In addition to a policy of assessing existing hazards, there should be clear procedures for identifying and evaluating risks on an ongoing basis. To this end, employers and employees should cooperate effectively to devise appropriate measures for controlling hazards in the workplace. The hierarchy of controls requires that the most effective measures for control of hazards are applied first. In this respect, prevention of the risk by eliminating the hazard is the first option. When prevention is not possible, then substitution of the hazard with a less hazardous one is preferred. Use of physical control measures such as machine guarding is the third option followed by administrative controls such as conducting hazardous work when the worker population is lower over the weekend, training and drills. The last control measure when all the others have been applied is the use of personal protective equipment. The first levels of risk control are usually applied simultaneously depending on the situation at hand.

Over time, it's also important to periodically assess the usefulness of these procedures and policies. Evaluation should be part of the plan to verify that the plan is actually being followed.

ii. **Education and Training** - A policy of safety and health training is integral to any overall plan. Initial and periodic safety and health quizzes are one means by which this can be accomplished. In particular, such quizzes can be useful to promote awareness of how to recognize hazards in the workplace. They can also help management to assess where there may be room for improvement. The idea is to ensure that all employees understand how the program works, and what their specific responsibilities are.

iii. **Coordination and Communication between Worksites** - Where a workplace operates multiple worksites, it is especially important for the host employer and all contract employers to coordinate on planning. A policy should be set up to schedule meetings to identify and resolve safety and health issues. Equally, workers from both parties should be informed and assessed for their knowledge of hazards at each of the worksites they may work at.

Mechanisms for ensuring compliance imply all the efforts, activities, initiatives or schemes undertaken by any of the stakeholders (public agencies, social partners and others) to promote, monitor and enforce compliance with OSH Act and regulations at the workplace. A strong labour inspection system in place is a prerequisite for giving effect to OSH regulations, identifying cases of non-compliance, helping to rectify them, and preventing new cases.

4.3. WORKERS

Workers are responsible for;

i. Working safely and complying with the national and employers' guidelines

ii. Protecting themselves from danger without endangering others,

iii. Knowing their rights and participating in the implementation of precautionary measures put in place by management.

iv. Being proactive and suggesting to the employer possible measures for OSH performance improvement

4.4. OTHER STAKEHOLDERS
4.4.1. Researchers and Academia

i. Join hands with the international community to research on, develop and publicize evidence-based information, on work place safety and health culture, lessons learnt and the best way forward.

ii. Enlighten the public on new and emerging ways to set up a successful

safety and health culture.

4.4.2. OSH Practitioners

i. Share their knowledge with beneficiaries of their practice, about lessons learnt from other functioning OSH Management systems.

ii. Play an active role in sensitization and awareness raising to help and guide workplaces set up a safety and health culture.

4.4.3. Media

i. Keep themselves safe and keep abreast of latest information

ii. Broadcast accurate and timely information about safety and health to the general public

4.4.4. Development Partners

i. Share experiences and international best practice through their development programs.

ii. Support programs to strengthen national and workplace Safety and health culture

iii. Play an active role in sensitization and awareness raising to facilitate the safety and health culture.

5. COMMEMORATION OF THE WORLD DAY FOR SAFETY AND HEALTH AT WORK: 28TH APRIL 2023

5.1. VENUE

The venue for commemoration of the WDSH 2023 is Jinja City.

5.2. KEY ACTIVITIES

The key commemoration activities are:

i. Preparing and disseminating OSH promotional materials, including an OSH Observance Calendar

ii. Poster presentations from different Workplaces detailing how they overcame particular OSH challenges. This will involve;

iii. Selection and an OSH award for best performing workplaces involving;

iv. OSH day preparatory activities
   a. Media Engagements (Radio Talk Shows, TV Talk shows, Newspaper Articles and supplements etc.)
   b. Special week for Workplace Inspection in Busoga Region
   c. NOC meetings
   d. OSH Symposium / Webinar
   e. Sports Gala and Entertainment
   f. Speeches and Awards ceremony

6. CONCLUSION

The landmark decision at the 110th International Conference in 2022 commits member states to respect and promote the fundamental right to a safe and healthy working environment, whether or not they have ratified the relevant Conventions. Building a safe and healthy working environment is critical for the well-being of employees, the success of any business enterprise and the building of a healthy national economy. If every stakeholder from the Government, the employer, the employee, private sector and other players all play their respective roles, there is guaranteed to be happier employees, an improved workplace environment and a blossoming nation.