Report of the CIS Centres' Meeting
"New ILO OSH information management strategy and Global networking for knowledge-sharing on OSH"
Geneva, 2-3 November 2011

Introduction

1. The ILO SafeWork Programme brought together a number of leading CIS Centers to revitalize the role of the CIS Network and to discuss the priorities for future CIS information products and services. The meeting took place at the ILO's Headquarters in Geneva from 2 to 3 November 2011. *A list of participants is attached in Annex I.*

2. The meeting was opened by the newly-appointed Director of the ILO's Labour Protection Department (PROTRAV), **Ms Manuela Tomei**, who welcomed the participants and introduced the objectives of the meeting. Ms Tomei recognized the pioneering role of CIS when it was first established in 1959, and its contribution to OSH information-sharing ever since. However, she highlighted that technological progress, the shifting needs of ILO's constituency, and the emergence of well-resourced national and regional CIS Centers, made it necessary to rethink and refocus the overall direction and strategy of the CIS. Ms Tomei encouraged the audience to discuss during the meeting ways to enhance the relevance and cost-effectiveness of collecting and disseminating OSH information on a global basis, and thus provide better-informed policy advice and technical assistance to the ILO's constituents and other concerned institutions.

3. **Mr. Seiji Machida**, Director of the ILO's Programme on Safety and Health at Work and the Environment (SafeWork), pointed out that this was an exceptional meeting aimed at seeking feedback and cooperation from the most prestigious and dynamic national CIS Centers in the world regarding a new strategy for CIS. **Ms Suvi Lehtinen** from the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health (FIOH) was then called upon as Chairperson of the first day's meeting. *The agenda of the meeting is attached as Annex II.*

Session I: SafeWork/CIS and information-sharing on OSH

4. This first session began with an overview presented by **Mr. Machida**. He evoked the main pillars of the OSH strategy, i.e. a preventative safety and health culture as a basic requirement for any OSH programme, and the development of integrated ILO "tools" to assist tripartite constituents in achieving safety and health goals. He then presented the ILO's Promotional Framework for the OSH Convention (No. 187) which: a) calls for continual improvement of national OSH systems and performance through national OSH programmes (the management system approach); b) places OSH high on national policy agendas; and c) promotes the application of existing ILO OSH instruments. Mr Machida presented the key elements of the promotional framework, including a National OSH Policy (system, programme and profile). It was noted that the transfer of knowledge and information is essential for achieving a successful national OSH system. The CIS should not only provide information, but collect it at national and workplace levels. This would include the analysis, and the sharing and promotion of this

information via global CIS information resources. Mr Machida ended his presentation with the following questions for the participants to consider and discuss:

a) How can the ILO/CIS improve its functions?
b) What are your needs for international exchange of OSH information?
c) How can adjustments be made to meet the needs of the constituents?
d) How can new technologies be better used?
e) How can CIS members be encouraged to contribute more actively?
f) How can ILO/CIS funding mechanisms be improved?

5. The second presentation, an overview of CIS products, was made by **Dr. Begoña Casanueva** (an ILO Technical Specialist). She pointed out that the CIS was created by the ILO's Governing Body in 1959 with a mission to collect, process and disseminate information on OSH. She mentioned the main information products, starting with the CISDOC database which has more than 70,000 references to OSH documents. She stressed that the importance of this database lies in document selection and in the variety of materials referenced. She called upon the CIS Centres to send, on a regular basis, relevant documents for selection and inclusion in the database. The next product presented was the Encyclopaedia on Occupational Health and Safety, which was then discussed in detail during the afternoon session and led to the topic of International Chemical Safety Cards (ICSCs). Currently about 1,700 cards are available and they are updated regularly in English and translated into different languages by national institutions. The value of the ICSCs lies in the fact that they undergo a peer review process by a group of scientists from different institutions around the world. Dr Casanueva went on to describe the e-OSH, a new CIS product in the form of a DVD which will be updated every year. This an electronic library with all ILO OSH documents and publications in English, French and Spanish. It contains ILO instruments on OSH (ILO Conventions, Recommendations and Codes of Practice), training and practical materials, ICSCs, the Encyclopaedia of Occupational Health and Safety in three languages, materials and reports for the World Day for Safety and Health at Work (28 April), and reports for the World Congress on Safety and Health at Work. Her presentation ended with the following brainstorming questions to the participants:

a) How to improve our services and products?
b) How to better use IT?
c) How to adjust to needs?
d) How to get active contributions from CIS Centres?

6. The main points brought forward during the discussion include:

a) OSH is broadening its objective to cover the health promotion aspect in many countries.
b) There is also a shift from the enforcement of OSH legislation to internal responsibility (management leadership and worker participation) in improving OSH.
c) OSH information sharing is an essential component of national OSH systems and programmes supporting proper functioning of OSH management systems approach. Hence, CIS Centres have a key role to play in national OSH systems.
d) Knowledge on OSH needs to be improved at the enterprise level (CIS Centres could transfer knowledge to enterprises). Information is also needed to influence attitudes and help change managers' and workers' behaviour and practices.
e) Need for sharing OSH information targeted for migrant workers was highlighted.

f) OSH information should integrate other themes, such as HIV/AIDS, working conditions, the informal economy, small and medium enterprises (SMEs), and psycho-social issues at the workplace.

g) The World Day for Safety and Health at Work is an important worldwide event which should be actively promoted by CIS Centres. The theme and materials for this event should be developed by the ILO as early as possible so that CIS Centres can prepare their respective promotional products accordingly.

h) Translation of the ICSCs into local languages by national institutions and their regular updating should be promoted.

i) SafeWork/CIS website should have a more user-friendly layout, taking into account different target group users: enterprise-level workers, employers, OSH managers and/or national level constituents.

j) The CIS should play a more promotional and active role in the dissemination and use of its products beyond the ILO's head quarters.

k) The use of social media/networking (Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Linked-in) should be considered. Managing such a network would require staffing resources and quality outcomes, and it would have to broadcast innovative and engaging themes. It was noted that many researchers use Linked-in and Facebook. It is important to bear in mind not only of the number of people who access information through such social networks, but also the purpose for which they resort to them, in addition to how they then use the information obtained. These social networks are not only about offering information, but also about providing answers to queries and requests. However, it is important to remember that such instant information on display concerning technical OSH aspects may be incorrect because it was neither checked nor approved. Nonetheless, some CIS centres resort to social networks for OSH information-sharing as a means of promoting their OSH activities and services.

l) All information products need to define the beneficiary groups to address the different requirements in a productive way. Products aimed at a worker differ significantly from those aimed at a technical OSH specialist, which also vary to those aimed at decision-makers at the national level. Products may also vary if they are intended for small versus large enterprises or if they are aimed at developing versus developed countries.

m) Duplication of OSH products and information resources should be avoided. Many renowned regional and national OSH institutions produce quality information and maintain useful databases; these should be cross-referenced or merged to avoid replication. EU-OSHA information resources include case studies, policy briefs and other international material; therefore, a link with EU-OSHA information resources should be established to avoid duplication.

n) ILO/CIS should improve collaboration with other international agencies, particularly WHO. Some national enters already collaborate with WHO and other agencies.

o) To enhance communication between the relevant ILO staff and CIS Centres, it was recommended that the ILO assign focal contact points in the ILO field Offices as well as at ILO headquarters.

p) Regular communication between the ILO/CIS and the rest of the CIS network is important and should be organized on a regular basis.

q) It is also important to evaluate the impact and usefulness of CIS information products. As a point of reference, experience of using such evaluations was shared by the USA National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) and the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS). Google analytics tools showing the number of hits to the ILO products could be used for this purpose.

Session II: Developing of the new edition of the ILO OSH Encyclopaedia

7. This topic was presented by **Prof. Jeanne Mager Stellman** (ILO Consultant). She
    began with a historical overview (outlining the form of previous editions), and then
    presented the new online edition of the Encyclopaedia. Prof. Stellman explained the
    main particularities and advantages of the new Encyclopaedia Website:

a) New, modern Content Management System (based on Joomla CMS software) that is
    flexible and allows updating many of the Encyclopaedia Website elements and modules
    rapidly without involving programmers.
b) Understandable user interface with a help system of frequently asked questions (FAQ)
    and video tutorial materials.
c) Good search tools.
d) Well-organized, flexible link system for articles and chapters connecting them to the
    main CIS products (CISDOC and ICSC), the ILO Conventions and Recommendations,
    as well as other OSH information resources around the world, for example Pub Med
    database.

Prof. Stellman indicated that the aim of the new Encyclopaedia is to provide rapid access to
the information in the new Encyclopaedia Website for a wide range of OSH specialists,
including scientists, OSH specialists, trainers and workers, via a user-friendly, flexible and
understandable WEB interface. She suggested that one task to be undertaken by the
national CIS Centres could be the translation of the Encyclopaedia into different languages.
For updating the Encyclopaedia, certain chapters could be assigned to the CIS Centres to
coordinate the work.

8. The main points brought forward during the discussion include:

a) The ILO should develop a clear strategy for updating the Encyclopaedia (staff/team to
    manage the bulk of the work, clear tasks for CIS Centres, updating plan). Such a strategy
    should address managing both the scientific content of the Encyclopaedia and the
    Website. For the whole project to be successful, effective management of both aspects is
    essential.
b) All the CIS Centres expressed willingness to work on the Encyclopaedia, but stressed
    that this work required good coordination. In particular, it would be necessary to identify
    and agree upon the following: chapters of the old edition of the Encyclopaedia to be
    updated, and emerging themes warranting specific chapters, as well as editors for both;
    clear tasks to be carried out; who will carry out those tasks, under which conditions and
    within which time-frames. In this regard, it was suggested that interested CIS Centres
    could be responsible for revising and updating several chapters.

c) The ILO should have the personnel and financial resources required to ensure the
    adequate management of this online version of the Encyclopaedia. Such resources would
    cover a coordinator's collaboration with the various authors responsible for revising the
    different chapters, among other tasks. The ILO should decide, as soon as possible, on
    whether user access to the Encyclopaedia would be free of charge or not. This
    clarification is important to allow for better promotion and further development of this
    new resource.

Session III: Sharing of good OSH practice

9. For the second day of the meeting, Dr. P.K. Abeytunga was assigned as Chairperson. The concept of a good practice database, along with some examples of existing databases, was presented by **Mr. Roman Litvyakov** (an ILO Senior Officer). Mr Litvyakov ended his presentation with following questions:

    a)   What kind of good practices should be shared?
    b)   For whom are they aimed?
    c)   How could we establish a system to collect and disseminate good practices?
    d)   What should be the concept of a database on global OSH good practices?

10. The main points brought forward during the discussion include:

a) It is important to define a theme and/or sector and target group (workers, managers and OSH professionals) for which information on good practices should be compiled, based on the type information: product, process, campaign, programme, tools etc. Good practices could encompass a range of different material from innovative regulatory and enforcement mechanisms or checklists, to effective mechanisms for the recording and notification of work-related accidents and diseases.

b) The content of such material would have to comply with the criteria set by the ILO.

c) The ILO needs to be strategic and avoid duplicating databases already established by other institutions, such as EU-OSHA. An ILO database on good practices should build upon and add value to existing databases. A possible scenario would be for the ILO to link up with good practice databases already run by other organizations around the world. The ILO could then collect information on good practices related to specific themes, or from countries where little information, if any, is available. CIS Centres could provide information about relevant databases existing in their respective countries.

d) There is an increasing need for simplified information and picture formats, which could be used universally.

e) Occupational Hazard Data Sheets (OHDS) were found to be too sophisticated, by some participants at the meeting, as they seemed to target OSH professionals at the enterprise. Other participants found that, depending on the level of literacy and awareness of the worker, the OHDS were useful.

f) Collaboration and coordination between the ILO and other international agencies, such as the WHO, was encouraged for the sake of greater cost-effectiveness. Some national CIS Centres already worked with the WHO and the ILO but this was done in a rather compartmentalized way. Criteria to help substantiate good practice information needed to be established. The Centres acknowledged that such criteria should include good practices which could be tailored to specific needs and applied worldwide.

11. **OSH Legislation Database**. **Ms Manal Azzi** (ILO Technical Officer) presented the main features of a new global database on selected dimensions of national OSH legislation across regions, and outlined its purpose. Furthermore, she explained the background and reasoning behind establishing the database. It would comprise a set of categories on specific OSH provisions normally found in national OSH law. A number of researchers would help gather national OSH law from all countries around the world, extract the relevant provisions of interest and insert them in the matrix of pre-fixed indicators of interest. This would allow a vertical and horizontal analysis of trends over time and between countries/regions and help advocate for the ratification of ILO Convention Nos. 155 and 187, among others.

12. The main points brought forward during the discussion include:

a) The OSH legislation database would eventually be used as an advocacy tool, to show the fundamental elements that should be reflected in all national OSH legislations, for example, or to lay down the foundations for the terms of reference of national OSH institutions. It could also be used as a peer pressure tool for comparing countries that belong to the same regions or similar income groups, creating a sense of positive competition and encouraging the improvement of national laws, in addition to the ILO playing a leading role in monitoring legal and policy trends in the field of OSH.

b) The CIS Centres could provide assistance to the ILO by reporting any legislative reforms or the enactment of new laws in their respective countries. The Centres could also help in accessing the law in each country, translating it where necessary, and identifying OSH legal experts in the regions to assist in analysing national laws.

Session IV: CIS Centres and CIS Network

13. An Overview of the CIS Centres Network was presented by **Ms Annick Virot** (ILO-CIS Centres Coordinator). Ms Virot described the current situation of the Network and identified the main issues regarding non-active members and the challenge to motivate the Centres again. She ended her presentation by asking:
    a) Should we eliminate CIS Centres which have been inactive?
    b) What are your expectations from the CIS Centres Network?
    c) What are you willing to do to make the Network work?
    d) How can we promote and develop the Network?
    e) Should we abolish the adjective national / collaborating?

14. The main points brought forward during the discussion include:

a) The CIS Centres' contact information should be updated more frequently and they need to keep in touch with the ILO/CIS by way of regular dialogue and communication, including face-to-face meetings.

b) CIS should identify and clarify the objectives, targets and perceived outcomes of the CIS Network in light of the new CIS strategy.

c) Membership requirement to CIS Centres needs to be reviewed to avoid them becoming non-active. A clear set of criteria for membership, the possibility of a fee, a system for accountability, and a defined active role for the Centres are needed. New Centres joining the CIS Network, as well as those which are already members, should comply with the new membership requirements.

d) The CIS brand should be reviewed to increase the visibility and credibility of the ILO OSH International Information Centre. The French acronym "CIS" was not considered to be useful in current times and created unnecessary confusion (e.g. CIS is the acronym used to refer to the Commonwealth of Independent States).

e) The CIS should establish its own priorities and products according to: constituents' demands, available resources, and possible synergies or linkages with existing products or databases.

f) It was stressed that the ILO is unique, with its comparative advantage lying in its global vision, the fact that it enjoys international credibility, and the leverage it has to host meetings, such as the present one, with lead organizations, which resulted in establishing or consolidating further good professional connections among participants

themselves. The CIS should capitalize upon those advantages to strengthen its position as a global reference point in the domain of OSH.

g) Many agencies expressed their enthusiasm about collaborating further with the ILO CIS, provided clear tasks and timeframes were given. The UK Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and the Korean Occupational Safety and Health Agency (KOSHA) offered to cooperate by sharing good practices and policies. The Finnish Institute of Occupational health (FIOH) was interested in collaborating in any initiative which would produce material aimed at promoting OSH issues in small and medium-size enterprises, in addition to providing any related material they already had. The Japan Industrial Safety and Health Association (JISHA) suggested that they could conduct training activities targeting developing countries. Many of the agencies stressed the current, dire economic circumstances in their respective countries which limited the extent of their contributions.

Closing

15. **Mr. Seiji Machida** appreciated the active participation of all experts in a constructive manner in support of future CIS activities. He underlined the importance of the support and contributions from leading CIS Centres, particularly in the work of updating the Encyclopaedia and the collection and sharing of good OSH practices. In order to take concrete steps forward, he asked Mr Abeytunga to come up with a concrete proposal for collecting multilingual OSH material for migrant workers, and Ms Lehtinen to prepare a proposal for sharing OSH information on SMEs. Mr Machida informed that he would work with his staff to come up with concrete areas of priority and steps as the basis for active networking and collaboration of CIS Centres.

16. **Ms Manuela Tomei** thanked the participants for sharing their constructive ideas which would help set and re-define the priorities for the work of CIS in the near future. She emphasized that the meeting served as a forum for bringing together the leading CIS Centres, with whom the ILO would like to partner and rely upon in the launch and implementation of the new CIS strategy and operational plan. She invited the national CIS Centres to help the ILO set the new global OSH agenda and, to this end, she suggested creating a Steering Committee of which they would form part.

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