



**PROGRAMME ON SAFETY AND HEALTH AT  
WORK AND THE ENVIRONMENT**



**DEPARTMENT FOR PUBLIC HEALTH AND  
ENVIRONMENT**

## **Protecting Workers' Health in a Climate of Change: Policy Options for Action**

### **WHO/ILO Roundtable**

Co-Chairs:

Maria Neira, Director, Director, WHO Department for Public Health and Environment  
Sameera Al Tuwaijri, Director, ILO Programme on Safety and Health at Work and the  
Environment

21 October 2009, 15:45 - 17:30 h., WHO, Geneva, EB Room

### ***Scope and purpose***

Over the past three years both WHO and ILO have undertaken several specific and cross cutting policy initiatives that require profound changes in way of working towards protecting and promoting the health in the world of work.

The ILO Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 (No.187), emphasizes the systems approach to occupational safety and health, the establishment of national action programmes and the development of country profiles and working culture. Similarly the WHO Global Plan of Action on Workers' Health endorsed by the World Health Assembly in 2007 highlights the importance of achieving coherence in the actions by all public health programmes at the workplace. It also reiterates the need to

increase the coverage of workers in small and medium sized enterprises, agriculture and informal economy with essential interventions and basic services to prevent ill health related to work.

The World Health Assembly in 2009 emphasized the need to strengthen health systems based on primary health care. This requires ensuring political commitments to the values and principles of primary health care enshrined in the Alma Ata Declaration from 1978. Action needs to be taken to provide universal access to primary health care by developing comprehensive health services and by introducing national equitable and sustainable financing mechanisms. Primary health care puts people at the centre of health care by adopting, as appropriate, delivery models focused on the local and

district levels that provide comprehensive primary health-care services. The renewal of primary health care provides policy opportunities for scaling up the process of improving the quality and the coverage of preventive and curative health services to workers.

The International Labour Conference adopted in 2009 a Global Jobs Pact to implement the ILO Agenda for Decent Work for All in a time of financial and economic crisis. Measures include improving employability, access to health care and respect for international labour standards, such as those on occupational safety and health. Appropriate health services are seen as one element needed to protect jobs and employment in a time of crisis. Furthermore, under the UN Joint Crisis Initiative, WHO and ILO are leading the global efforts to build a social

protection floor of essential services and mechanisms to safeguard human development in a time of financial and economic crisis.

The purpose of this round table is to identify opportunities for protecting the health of workers arising from the above-mentioned policy initiatives, particularly in the context of ongoing economic, environmental, or epidemiological insecurities. Representatives of WHO, ILO, national governments, employers and trade unions will share views about the occupational health and safety response to the unfolding crises. WHO collaborating centers and ILO Centers for Information of Safety and Health are expected to discuss the action they could undertake for implementing public health and labour policies in the context of unfolding global crises.

### **Provisional Programme**

- What can primary health care deliver for workers' health? - M. Neira, WHO
- Labour policies and action on occupational safety and health during jobs crisis - S.Al Tuwajri, ILO
- Keeping people healthy at work: UK Government strategy - Dame Carol Black, National Director for Health and Work, United Kingdom
- How employers' organizations can protect workers' health in a time of economic crisis? response of employers - J. Asherson, International Organization of Employers
- Workers' health in a climate of change: What role for trade unions? - R. Gonzalez, International Trade Unions Confederation
- Policy options for joint action - round table discussion
- Interventions from the floor
- Closing remarks: WHO and ILO