

Cancun Charter on Occupation Health for All

Having convened on 18-23 March 2012 in Cancun, Mexico, we, the Organizers and participants of the 30th International Congress on Occupational Health, including Leadership and members of ICOH, International NGOs in the field of occupational health and safety, professional Associations active in occupational health and safety, with the participation of academia, researchers, educators, experts and practitioners in occupational health, by

Recognizing the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights declaring everyone the “*right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment*”;

Recognizing the UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights proclaiming the “*right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health and the improvement of all aspects of environmental and industrial hygiene; prevention, treatment and control of epidemic, endemic, occupational and other diseases; and creation of conditions which would assure to all medical service and medical attention in the event of sickness*”;

Recalling the UN Millennium Development Goal 3 “*on promoting global public health for all and strengthening the effectiveness of health systems and proven interventions to address evolving health challenges, including the increased incidence of non-communicable diseases, road traffic injuries and fatalities and environmental and occupational health hazards*”;

Recalling the Constitution of ILO that emphasizes the importance of the “*protection of the worker against sickness, disease and injury arising out of his employment*”, and the Declaration of Philadelphia, calling for “*adequate protection for the life and health of workers in all occupations and the extension of social security measures to provide a basic income to all in need of such protection and comprehensive medical care*”;

Recognizing the ILO Fundamental Conventions and Convention No 155 on Occupational Safety and Health and Convention No. 161 on Occupational Health Services;

Recognizing the Constitution of the WHO declaring the “*enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health as one of the fundamental rights of every human being*” and authorizing the Organization to “*promote, in co-operation with other specialized agencies where necessary, the improvement of nutrition, housing, sanitation, recreation, economic or working conditions and other aspects of environmental hygiene*” and recalling the WHO Global Strategy on Occupational Health for All and the Global Plan of Action on Workers’ Health emphasizing the need for access to **occupational health services for all workers**;

Recalling that 2.3 million people lose their lives because of occupational injuries and diseases annually, resulting in immeasurable human suffering and economic loss amounting to 4-5.9% of GDPs of the countries;

Keeping in mind that major part (80-85%) of the global employed population does not have access to occupational health services in spite of high risks and obvious occupational health needs,

Reminding that the infrastructures, human and financial resources for provision of good occupational health services for every working individual are under-developed and unequally distributed in view of occupational health needs,

Recognizing the most valuable international instruments and programmes by UN, ILO and WHO launched for promotion and implementation of occupational health and occupational health services and for providing guidance for the national policies, programmes, legislation and practices.

Observing the limited and unequal implementation of those instruments and programmes leaving uncovered and unattended those most in need, the small-scale and microenterprises, the self-employed, informal sector and domestic workers and several high-risk groups such as agricultural and rural workers, have agreed upon the following:

We, participants of the XXX International Congress on Occupational Health, state the following:

1. Occupational health, including healthy, safe and secure work, workplace and working conditions, constitute a basic human right of working people regardless of occupation, sector of economy, gender, ethnicity, social or labour market status.
2. The right to health and safety at work belongs equally to every working individual including workers in the formal employment, private and public sectors, in large, small and medium-sized and microenterprises as well as to the self-employed, informal and domestic workers and permanent, casual and precarious workers.
3. Ensuring occupational health and occupational health services for every working individual is a shared responsibility of the international organizations, governments, occupational health authorities, community authorities, individual employers and their associations, individual workers and their unions, organizations of the self-employed, community interest groups, professional associations and other non-governmental organizations, academia, researchers, educators and experts.
4. The international organizations should in collaboration with national authorities promote and follow up and support the implementation of once unanimously approved international instruments on occupational health, particularly the ILO Convention No. 161 on Occupational Health Services.
5. Governments should ratify the international instruments and the national legislatures should draw up legislation and other relevant regulations for occupational health services according to the international guidance. National Programmes for Occupational Health Services should be drawn up aiming at full coverage by occupational health services of all working individuals and with content adjusted to the health and safety needs of every workplace and every worker. Where possible, such services should cover prevention, promotion of health and work ability, diagnosis and control of occupational injuries and diseases, rehabilitation and return to work, and where appropriate, general health services to the extent defined by national law.
6. Special attention should be paid on provision of adequate occupational health services for recently non-served groups, such as workers in small and micro-enterprises, agriculture, self-employed and to domestic, family and informal sector workers. Workers at the highest risks such as construction, mining, fishery, forestry and numerous manufacturing industries should be provided with intensive preventative programmes.
7. Governments should ensure availability of appropriate infrastructures for provision of occupational health services for all workers and particularly to the currently non-served and high risk workers. Most of the currently non-served or underserved sectors and groups can be provided with occupational health services collaboration of occupational health with primary health care services. The Basic Occupational Health Service approach has been developed and experimented as option for provision of competent occupational health services in connection with primary health care and other grassroots level services.
8. In order to provide competent occupational health services, competent occupational health experts, occupational health physicians, occupational health nurses, occupational hygienists,

ergonomists, psychologists and other relevant experts are needed. Strengthening of such human resources for provision of occupational health services for all workers is needed in both industrialized and particularly in the developing countries. Where the organization of multidisciplinary, comprehensive occupational health services is not possible at grassroots level, the support for the occupational health service providers at primary level should be ensured by secondary level organizations.

9. Every government should ensure the availability of adequate training and education programmes and services for occupational health experts. The training should be available for specialist training and for training adjusted for the personnel providing occupational health services as a part of their overall activity in order to ensure human resources competent in occupational health and ensure appropriate contents of the services in all combinations of service provision. The quality and competence of training and education programmes and the achievement of training objectives should be ensured and controlled by the government or other national body authorized by the government.
10. Research on occupational health should be ensured in every country by including occupational health as one of the priorities on the national research agenda. The governments should ensure sustainability of such research with the help of national institutes of occupational health, other relevant research institutes and academia.

The participants of the XXX ICOH International Congress on Occupational Health pledge the following:

- a) by calling the international organizations, governments and other international and national bodies to give higher priority to occupational health on the international and national policy agendas, for development of occupational health services, training and education and research programmes,
- b) by encouraging social partners at international and national levels to consider the development of occupational health and occupational health services as a priority instrument for the development of work life in general, for improvement of health and well-being of working people and for supporting the development of healthy and productive sustainable economies,
- c) to join forces for better and wider implementation of international instruments on occupational health, strategies and programmes for occupational health at the national level and for equalizing the conditions of work and right to healthy work and work environment for every working individual.

We, occupational health communities, associations, researchers, experts and practitioners, commit ourselves to:

- a) work with all our means for the realization of workers' right to health and safe work and work environment and best available occupational health and occupational health services
- b) provide our research and professional capacities and competence to advise and support international organizations, governments, employers and workers, communities and workplaces in their efforts for the improvement of occupational health and other conditions of work; prevent hazards and risks and to make an *effective transfer of research to practice*,

- c) by joining our forces and collaborating with other international and national occupational health organizations and actors for *ensuring every working individual in the world the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of occupational health as a part of their basic human rights.*

Cancun, Mexico, 23 March 2012,

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