



ICOH, IOHA and IEA Joint Statement at the 72nd World Health Assembly on Universal Occupational Health Coverage, UOHC

Dates 20–28 May 2019

Venue: Palais des Nations Geneva

Item A72/12 under *Universal Health Coverage*

Nonstate actor (NSA) representatives:

Professor Jukka Takala, President of International Commission on Occupational Health, ICOH¹⁾

Dr Peter-John Jacobs, President of the International Occupational Hygiene Association, IOHA²⁾

Professor Michelle Robertson, PhD, Chair, International Ergonomic Association, IEA³⁾, Standing Committee for Communication and Public Relations.

The global workforce of the world, numbering to 3.4 billion people, produces the GDP of the world that amounts to 88 trillion US Dollars. The health and work ability of the working people (comprising 50–70% of the total population in countries) is a critical prerequisite for the sustainability of individuals, families, communities and nations and provides resources for all sectors of the society, including training and education, health services, social protection, research, defence, etc.

The ILO and ICOH estimate that exposures to the traditional and new physical, chemical and biological occupational health hazards and physical and psychological overload, result globally in 2.8 million fatalities a year from work-related diseases (WRDs) and occupational accidents and a manifold number of workers with non-fatal diseases and injuries, which affect their work ability. These result in a loss equal to 4% of the global GDP, i.e. an annual loss of 3.5 trillion USD. All these burdens are preventable.

About 85% of the global workforce lack access to occupational health services and the coverage of the existing services do not correspond the most striking needs. Extension of the coverage and development of the content of occupational health services is needed. The ICOH, IOHA and IEA welcome the initiative for Universal Health Coverage and proposes it to be complemented by Universal Occupational Health Coverage (UOHC), providing specialized or basic occupational health services for all working people including occupational hygiene and human factors/ergonomic design services. Such services should be provided for all sectors of working life, cover all working people; the organized work life plus the self-employed and informal sector workers in line with the WHO strategy on universal health coverage, UHC, and the UN Sustainable Development Goals No. 3 and 8. Special attention should be given to protection of health at work of vulnerable groups, and workers in high-risk sectors; older workers, female workers, migrants, refugees, child workers and workers in the informal sector who are also severely hit by the climate change-related disasters.

The ICOH, IOHA and IEA want to encourage the WHO to undertake following actions:

- 1) Establish a global programme for universal occupational health coverage, UOHC, by guiding the governments to organize specialized or basic occupational health services for all working people, starting from those most in need and most vulnerable.**
- 2) Provide technical support and guidance for training and education of necessary multidisciplinary human resources and experts (health, occupational hygiene, ergonomics, psychology) for occupational health services.**
- 3) To support the global development of occupational health services by collaboration with the sister UN organizations and NGOs and by revitalizing the ILO/WHO Joint Committee on Occupational Health.**

¹⁾ <http://www.icohweb.org/>; ²⁾ <https://ioha.net/>; ³⁾ <https://www.iea.cc/>