



International Commission on Occupational Health - ICOH
Commission Internationale de la Santé au Travail - CIST
Founded in 1906 as Permanent Commission



ILC 114 Plenary Speech of ICOH (INGO)

Scheduled in the afternoon on Thursday, 4th June 2026.

Name of the speaker: **Prof. Seong-Kyu KANG, President**

Name of the organization:

International Commission on Occupational Health (ICOH)

Title: Updating the ILO List of Occupational Diseases: A Necessary Step for Prevention, Recognition, and Justice

Dear delegates from governments, employers' organizations and workers' organizations,

I am Seong-Kyu Kang, President of the International Commission on Occupational Health, ICOH, the world's oldest international professional association in occupational health, founded in 1906. ICOH brings together occupational health professionals from more than 100 countries and across a wide range of disciplines.

Today, I emphasize the importance of keeping the ILO List of Occupational Diseases relevant to changing work.

The primary purpose of the ILO List is prevention. By identifying occupational risks and making occupational diseases visible, the List supports governments, employers, workers and occupational health professionals in strengthening preventive action. Recommendation No. 194 encourages member States to review national lists and consider lists of suspected occupational or work-related diseases. In this way, the ILO List supports prevention, recognition, recording and notification, while facilitating compensation where appropriate.

The ILO's commitment to occupational diseases dates back to 1919. The first formal ILO List was established in 1925 under the Workmen's Compensation Convention, mainly for compensation. Today, under Recommendation No. 194, the List serves broader objectives: prevention and compensation.

In 2022, the ILO recognized a safe and healthy working environment as a fundamental principle and right at work. This commitment cannot be fully realized unless occupational diseases are effectively prevented. Recognition, identification and recording are essential tools for prevention. Without them, it is difficult to identify priorities, target preventive measures and assess progress. Prevention must remain the first objective, but when prevention fails, affected workers must be recognized and, where appropriate, compensated.



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The current ILO List was last updated in 2010. Since then, work has changed significantly. New technologies, digitalization, platform work, climate change, migration, ageing workforces and global supply chains have altered exposure and disease patterns. Some traditional hazards may be less visible in certain countries, but they continue to affect workers elsewhere. New and emerging occupational risks are appearing across all regions of the world.

The current List was designed with flexibility. Through open items, member States may recognize additional occupational diseases according to national conditions, scientific evidence and practice. This flexibility has maintained the List's relevance across contexts. However, new and emerging occupational risks require continuous scientific attention. As the international professional body in occupational health, ICOH is pleased to contribute technical and scientific expertise to the ILO's review of national practice, emerging occupational health issues and scientific evidence.

ICOH is well placed to contribute through its diverse scientific structure. Its 37 scientific committees cover five areas: hazards, organ systems, sectors, disciplines, and preventive approaches. Together with its National and Area Secretaries and group members, ICOH can gather scientific knowledge, compare national experience, and identify emerging occupational health concerns.

Should the ILO, through its tripartite processes, consider a future update of the List, ICOH would be pleased to support that process.

Occupational diseases reflect both the past and future of work. The ILO List must remain evidence-based, practical and responsive to change. The existing List remains a strong and flexible framework for protecting workers' health.

ICOH remains committed to supporting the ILO and its constituents. Let us continue working together to strengthen prevention, promote evidence-based dialogue and ensure that occupational disease policies keep pace with changing work.

Thank you for your attention.