

**ADDRESS BY HON. JEAN FRANÇOIS CHAUMIÈRE
MINISTER OF LABOUR, INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND
EMPLOYMENT**

Tripartite Workshop

On

Risk Assessment

(In collaboration with ILO)

Date: Monday 22 March 2010

Time: 09.30 hrs

*Venue: Imperial China, Restaurant
Trianon*

Mr. Franklin Muchiri, Senior Occupational Safety and Health Specialist, ILO

Mr. Pavan Baichoo, Technical Officer, Occupational Safety, International Programme on Safety and Health at Work and the Environment, Safework, ILO,

Mrs Ramsamy, Permanent Secretary of my Ministry

Representatives of employers

Representatives of workers

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen

A very good morning to everyone of you. It gives me much pleasure to be amongst you, this morning, on the occasion of the opening ceremony of this **‘National Tripartite Workshop on Risk Assessment’** organised by the Ministry of Labour, Industrial relations and Employment in collaboration with the ILO.

I am informed that the objectives of the workshop are to train participants in the concepts and principles of occupational safety and health, risk assessment and management, hazard identification, risk assessment methodologies, hazard control and preventive measures and risk communication and reporting.

I am pleased to note that two eminent experts from the ILO, namely Mr. Franklin Muchiri, Senior Occupational Safety and Health Specialist and Mr. Pavan Baichoo, Technical Officer, Occupational Safety, International Programme on Safety and Health at Work and the Environment, Safework will be the resource persons for the workshop and let me take this opportunity to extend a special welcome to them and wish them a pleasant stay in the country.

Ladies and gentlemen, the holding of this tripartite workshop is a testimony to the continued commitment and effort of my Ministry in creating a long lasting and sustainable safety and health culture in Mauritius. This workshop goes in the right direction of providing the stakeholders with the appropriate skills, knowledge and attitude with the view of enhancing the general knowledge of safety and health at workplaces.

My Ministry is closely monitoring the compliance by employers with the provisions of the OSHA 2005 relating to safety and health policy, health surveillance and most particularly risk assessment as this is the tool that will help employers to manage risks at workplaces.

An exercise undertaken by the Ministry in October last year to find out whether enterprises are carrying out the risk assessment required under OSHA 2005 has revealed that so far **93 risk assessments** have been carried out at places of work where more than 50 employees are employed.

In the light of the feedback received from employers and given that risk assessment is a new and technical concept, my Ministry has promptly reacted to the situation through:

- the preparation of Guidelines in Risk Assessment (Safety and Health) to help employers to conduct their risk assessment exercise in their enterprises. After extensive consultations at the level of the Advisory Council on OSH, draft Guidelines have been prepared and the draft document has been submitted to the ILO for its views and comments before finalization;
- enlisting ILO's assistance for the organization of this Workshop on Risk Assessment which has been possible due to the personal initiative of Mr Muchiri to whom we are very thankful today – thank you Mr Muchiri.

Here I would also like to place on record the continued and unflinching support of ILO to the project of my Ministry.

Ladies and gentlemen, globalisation, intense competition and technological progress, new trends in economic structures and working conditions and changes in occupational structures are leading dramatic and rapid changes in the working environment and eventually to new emerging workplace hazards. All these result in a lot of pressure on all stakeholders in the world of work, including workers, employers and also on the enforcing authority. And in this context, this workshop is most welcomed as it will equip the participants with the necessary knowledge and skills for effective management of risks at workplaces.

As you are aware, risk assessment is the cornerstone of occupational safety and health. If the risk assessment process, the start of the risk management approach, is not done well or not done at all, then the appropriate preventive measures are unlikely to be in place.

Integrated risk assessment is part of a good management approach. As it takes into account the different steps of risk assessment, the different needs of individual employers, the changing world of work, and a participatory approach involving everyone in the workplace. Employers in each workplace have a moral and a legal responsibility to ensure the safety and health of workers in every aspect related to work.

It is sad to note that another tragic and fatal accident occurred on Saturday 20 March 2010. I would like to express my sympathy to the members of the family of the deceased. 'Un accident c'est toujours un accident de trop.' Hence, I again make an appeal to all stakeholders, in particular to the Mauritius Employers' Federation and other employers to redouble their efforts so as to prevent recurrence of such mishaps.

The risk associated with any work activity depends on the severity of an accident or ill health that may occur, and the likelihood of its occurrence. All workplaces need to have risk assessments conducted to help identify the sources of risks, actions that should be taken, and parties responsible for doing so. A risk assessment enables effective measures to be taken to protect the safety and health of workers which include

- Preventing occupational risks,
- Providing information and training to workers, and
- Putting in place the organization and means to implement the necessary measures.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Occupational Safety and Health Act 2005, which came into force on 01 September 2007, prescribes specific duties for employers regarding risk assessment. Every employer is required to make a suitable and sufficient assessment of any risk to the safety and health to which any employee is exposed whilst he is at work for the purpose of identifying the measures he needs to implement in order to comply with the requirements imposed upon him by the Act. Any such assessment shall be reviewed by the employer not later than two years after any assessment or earlier where there has been a significant change in the matters to which it relates. Where an employer employs more than five persons, the significant findings of any assessment should be recorded.

Ladies and gentlemen, this government has pledged to 'put people first' and we share the belief of the ILO that the right to life is the most fundamental right and that workers' protection against work-related accidents and illnesses is one of their fundamental rights. That is why we have come up with such a comprehensive and modern piece of legislation on occupational safety and health.

Furthermore it is an undeniable fact that occupational safety and health has gained much importance on the international scene over the past years. However, we should not ignore the new threats and challenges facing us. The recent financial crisis has been a factor of concern for the safety and health of workers around the world. Workers will be stressed due to the fear of losing their jobs and employers might reduce resources allocated to safety and health. These can culminate into a gloomier picture of occupational safety and health with possible increase in work accidents and work-related stress.

Before concluding, I would like to make an appeal to MEF to further strengthen the efforts in enabling its members to comply with the provisions of OSHA 2005 and in tackling new forms of hazards like stress and workplace violence.

On this note, I wish all the participants a fruitful interaction during this workshop and I have no doubt that they will make the most out of it and will benefit fully from the expertise of the two high calibre experts from the ILO.

I now have the pleasure of declaring the workshop open. I thank you for your attention.