

João Antonio Felicio

President
Président
Präsident
Presidente

Sharan Burrow

General Secretary
Secrétaire générale
Generalsekretärin
Secretaria General

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Update on Draft International Standard on Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems (ISO 45001) following ballot

Dear colleagues,

The International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) recently held a ballot on the Draft International Standard (DIS) on Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems between 19 May and 13 July. The ballot was approved with 57 approvals, 7 disapprovals and 8 abstentions, which will lead to a new certifiable international standard.

The ITUC deeply regrets the approval of this standard. We note that some trade union representatives have expressed favourable views on the adoption of this standard. Nevertheless, a significant number of affiliates have raised genuine concerns that this standard would provide inadequate protection to workers from occupational health and safety risks, and that it would provide lower levels of protection than existing provisions at national level and international level. In particular, the ITUC is concerned that the standard would allow for deviations from collective agreements, allow employers to have workers personally bear the costs for personal protective equipment and training, and provide scope for outsourcing occupational health and safety risks. In addition, the ITUC finds that the draft standard does not provide clear enough protections for workers against dismissal or less favourable treatment for workers who refuse to work in unsafe or unhealthy conditions or who report breaches in health and safety requirements, in line with ILO recommendation 164. A summary of our concerns can be found in our letter to affiliates on 18 May, attached here.

Although the draft standard has been approved, some changes to the final draft may still be taken on board. The ISO will convene a meeting in Malaysia from 18-23 September, where outstanding comments to the DIS will be discussed and final changes to the text will be proposed. This meeting may be an opportunity for trade unions to raise these concerns again and propose improvements to the final draft. There is however also a real danger that the text may be further revised to the detriment to workers, and we must seek to ensure that this does not happen.

If you plan to take part in the Malaysia meeting, please let us know.

Yours sincerely,



General Secretary