

## ITUC Statement following approval of the ISO Standard 45001 on Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems

On 23 September 2017, a Project Committee (PC283) of the International Standard Organisation (ISO) reaffirmed the approval of a draft International Standard on Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems (45001). Accordingly, the ISO will soon decide whether to adopt the standard immediately or issue a new draft for a final yes-no ballot by National Standardisation Bodies. The decision of the project committee follows several years of ballots and negotiations, culminating in six days of Working Group and Project Committee meetings to address final comments to the standard. These meetings took place between 18-23 September 2017 in Ayer Keroh, Malaysia.

The ITUC participated in these meetings, along with representatives of national trade unions, including the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC), the Argentine Construction Union (UOCRA - CGT RA), the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) and Unionen Sweden. Representatives of the International Labour Organisation also took part. The meetings predominantly consisted of industry representatives, employers, private consultants, auditors, and national standardisation body members.

Despite the imbalanced representation, unions managed to achieve, in partnership with the French and Italian delegations, some significant success in adapting the draft standard to the benefit of workers as well as preserving previously hard-won gains in the face of strong opposition from industry representatives and many standard organisations. Notably, it was agreed to include in the standard:

- Requirements for worker consultation and participation in OSH management systems;
- Requirements to respect collective agreements on OSH;
- Requirements to support the establishment and functioning of health and safety committees;
- Comparable OSH protection for contractors, workers on irregular contracts, and outsourced workers as standard employees;
- Strengthened measures to eliminate hazards and minimise risks;
- Inclusion of psycho-social risks as those that need to be addressed by OSH management systems;
- Requirements for providing relevant information to workers and their representatives; and
- Protections for workers against reprisals when reporting occupational health and safety risks.

Notwithstanding these gains, the ITUC maintains several critical reservations on the standard, as it is still lacking key OSH safeguards for workers. The ITUC also notes that the text is not fully aligned with existing international labour standards - namely ILO Convention 155 and Recommendation 164 – as well as the ILO's OSH management system guidelines. The ITUC regrets that members of the working group had voted against even *discussing* several of the comments that the ILO and workers' representatives had raised as priorities, despite the fact that workers are the primary beneficiaries of OSH management systems. These comments had suggested to include in the standard:

- the requirement to provide personal protective equipment at no cost to workers;
- the requirement to provide OSH training at no cost to workers and during working hours; and
- ensuring that workers have the authority to remove themselves from hazardous situations, and that they are protected from reprisals when doing so (as the standard would only provide for means to ensure workers' awareness of such measures).

The ITUC also expresses its dissatisfaction that the ISO Working Group and Project Committee had refused to address several editorial comments that had been made by the ISO secretariat that weakened the text to the detriment of workers – namely to remove the specification that personal protective equipment should be provided by the employer and its use should be ensured. Worker delegates nevertheless ensured they retained the requirement to implement the hierarchy of hazard controls, which requires use of protective equipment when hazards cannot be eliminated or controlled using the preferred more effective measures required.

Comments from union representatives who participated in the negotiations around the standard:

*“We have fought hard throughout six meetings of the project committee to defend worker rights to a safe and healthy workplace, and require organizations to ensure full worker participation in all aspects of a health and safety management system. We have worked closely with our ILO colleagues and other trade union participants insisting that International Labour Standards (ILS) embedded in ILO Conventions and Recommendations be respected and incorporated into this draft standard. We have done well in spite of an ISO structure and procedural rules that restrict the ability of trade unionists, worker representatives, and other delegates to fully discuss and debate these issues”, Larry Stoffman, Canadian Labour Congress.*

*“The ACTU is pleased that significant progress has been made in addressing its concerns over the issues of supporting the establishment and functioning of health and safety committees and ensuring that outsourced work processes remain part of the principal employer’s health and safety OHSMS. The lack of progress on the other priority issues as identified by the ITUC, is disappointing, but the ACTU remains committed to ensuring the rights of workers are understood and respected in the implementation of ISO 45001”, Sean Marshall, Australian Council of Trade Unions.*

*“We are pleased with what we have reached so far, especially regarding worker participation, but are unsatisfied with the process on this last meeting. We were not able to properly discuss and deal with important issues, which we think should have improved the standard”, Martine Syrjänen Stålberg, Unionen Sweden*

The ITUC would like to draw attention to the hard-won successes and outstanding concerns with the standard, and with the process by which it has been developed. While this standard could provide some important benefits to workers, especially those who do not have strong OSH protections in their national legislation or collective agreements already, the standard is still weak on several critical worker protection issues and may not address those required for effective OSH management systems.

If a final draft of this standard is voted on by ISO members, the ITUC recommends that unions take a close look to determine if their national standard bodies should accept this. If it is adopted without further ballot, as national standardisation bodies may still have the opportunity to revise the standard before implementing it in their national contexts, unions would be encouraged to consider the above concerns and advocate for amendments as they see fit. The ITUC moreover encourages unions around the world to be active in ensuring that the positive provisions in the standard, once adopted, are respected and interpreted as intended when they were negotiated by worker representatives.

The ITUC will moreover continue to call on the ISO to refrain from unilaterally developing standards related to labour issues that lack coherence with international labour standards and stem from non-transparent and unrepresentative processes.

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