

Keynote 9

THE ILO/WHO GLOBAL PROGRAMME FOR THE ELIMINATION OF SILICOSIS

Igor A. Fedotov, MD, In Focus Programme on Safety and Health at Work and the Environment, International Labour Office (ILO), 4, route de Morillons, CH-1211 Geneva 22, Switzerland. Email: fedotov@ilo.org

Silicosis is a highly disabling fibrogenic lung disease affecting millions of workers worldwide. Despite all efforts to prevent it, it continues to be among the leading occupational illnesses causing permanent disability and loss of life expectation. The experiences gained by a number of industrialized countries such as Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Japan, UK, and the USA, have convincingly demonstrated that it is possible to reduce the incidence rate of silicosis with effective prevention programmes and to eliminate it (Finland, Sweden, Switzerland). In 1995, the Joint ILO/WHO Committee on Occupational Health recommended to launch a global campaign towards its elimination and to serve as a model for the prevention of other pneumoconioses. As a result, the ILO/WHO Global Programme for the Elimination of Silicosis (GPES) was established. It requires the establishment of national action programmes and provides assistance in their implementation. Since then, prevention has intensified in many countries. Brazil, China, India, Thailand, South Africa and Vietnam are executing wide-ranging national programmes. Argentina, Colombia, Chile, Egypt, Iran, Indonesia, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mexico, Morocco, Peru, Poland, Tunisia, Turkey, Russia, Ukraine, Venezuela, Yugoslavia, Zambia and Zimbabwe are progressively intensifying their preventive efforts. The immediate objective of the GPES is to catalyse long-term efficient cooperation between countries with experience and those in need of it, and to promote partnerships and exchange of knowledge. The development objective of GPES is to eliminate silicosis by 2030. Countries need to upgrade their preventive capacities through actions at the national and enterprise levels undertaken by governmental agencies, OSH professionals, industry and workers. Partnerships with non-governmental organizations such as ICOH, IOHA, and ISSA are very important to ensure success of preventive efforts. Experiences gained and established preventive models will be used to target other pneumoconioses. Created national action programmes will enhance the entire national occupational safety and health infrastructures and will contribute to their further development.

Keywords: silicosis, prevention, elimination, Global Programme, ILO, WHO.