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TO ALL MEDIA HOUSES

WORLD DAY FOR SAFETY AND HEALTH AT WORKPLACE 2022

Ladies and gentlemen of the press, fellows, and members of the National Safety Council, and others in the fraternity. I wish to thank you for making the time to be a part of this press encounter. This afternoon's meeting is aimed at marking the World Day for Safety at the workplace which is tomorrow 28th April, and every 28th of April across all of ILO member states.

The theme for this year's occasion is "Act together to build a positive safety and health culture".

The incidence of ceaseless fire outbreaks, especially in commercial spaces and industry settings, the rising trends of road traffic crashes, and the growing phenomena of employment that does not pay fair income, and do not guarantee a secure form of employment and safe working conditions, and associated work-related injuries, diseases, and fatalities in Ghana are indicative of the challenges the government faces in improving its efforts in the area of occupational safety and health (OSH) administration.

Ghana, as a member of the ILO, has ratified a number of ILO conventions including Convention 029, Forced Labour Convention, 1930; Convention 138, Minimum Age Convention, 1973; Convention 182, Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999. However, the country is yet to ratify Convention 155, Occupational Health and Safety Convention, 1981, which specifically concerns "Occupational Safety and Health and the Working Environment" in all economic sectors.

We cannot underestimate the great benefit our country stands to gain by aligning the national OSH management effort with the ILO standards and programs. Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155) calls for a national policy on OSH. This Policy will

1. Promote communication and cooperation at the national/policy level, enterprise/workplace level, and at the community level.
2. Indicate the respective OSH functions and responsibilities of the public authorities, employers, workers and others, taking into account the complementary character of such responsibilities.

3. Enable workers and their representatives to cooperate with employers in the field of OSH
4. Help provide adequate information and training to enhance worker wellbeing and productivity
5. Allow workers or their representatives to enquire into, and be consulted on, all aspects of OSH associated with their work

Convention 155 provides that government shall, “in consultation with the most representative organizations of employers and workers, formulate, implement and periodically review a coherent national policy on occupational safety, occupational health, and the working environment.” The policy aims at the prevention of “accidents and injuries to health arising out of, linked with or occurring in the course of work.

According to the WHO, work-related accidents and diseases contribute significantly to the global burden of disease. Deaths due to occupational risk factors constitute 43% of ILO’s estimated 2.2 million deaths worldwide due to work-related risks.

COVID-19 pandemic has changed worker health and safety in permanent ways. From the rise of remote work and manufacturing automation to the effects of burnout and unsafe working environments, we all experience work differently. Ladies and gentlemen, the absence of a national policy on OSH, a modern bill that factors or addresses the evolving world of work, and an overarching State agency to efficiently coordinate workplace safety and health leave Ghana’s economy and its productive workforce at the mercy of fate.

It is important to mention that the safety, health and welfare of persons employed at workplaces in Ghana are guaranteed by Article 24(1) of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana, which states that, inter alia, “Every person has the right to work under satisfactory, safe and healthy conditions,”. Article 36(10) states that “The State shall safeguard the health, safety, and welfare of all persons in employment, and shall establish the basis for the full deployment of the creative potential of all Ghanaians.” These constitutional provisions mean that all persons working both in the formal and informal economies, including self-employed persons, are to be protected by ensuring that they work under safe conditions devoid of any adverse effects on their health. It behoves the government to ensure that the safety, health, and wellbeing of persons at work are safeguarded in line with these constitutional provisions.

On the occasion of this year’s World Day for Safety at the workplace, the National Safety Council, Ghana and the Bureau of Public safety call on Government of Ghana one more time just as we have been doing year on year in the last decade to:

1. Pass the National Policy on Occupational Safety and Health which has been in limbo in the last twenty or so years, and

2. Get Parliament to pass the new bill for Occupational Safety and Health administration to replace the over 50-year-old Factories Offices and Shops Act of 1970.
3. We further call on Government to commit to actively promote social dialogue on occupational safety and health at the national, enterprise, and community levels.

The occurrence of occupational safety and health injuries and fatalities at workplaces in Ghana is a serious phenomenon that needs to be addressed in a comprehensive and coordinated manner; if Ghana is to achieve its constitutional mandate of protecting lives and property and harnessing them for national development if Ghana truly wants to live up to its touted credentials of being the gateway to Africa we cannot continue to rely on a 52-year-old law to regulate occupational safety and health in a post-covid world of work.

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for your attention. I will stop here and take questions if any.

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