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SUSTAINABLE WORK IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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DEFINITION OF SUSTAINABLE WORK

SUSTAINABLE WORK MEANS WORK ALLOWING THE WORKER, WHATEVER HIS AGE OR HIS STATE OF HEALTH MAY BE, TO BE REALIZED, IN HIS PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITY BECAUSE HE FEELS GOOD IN HIS WORK AND SECURED AGAINST RISKS INVOLVED BOTH, IN HIS HEALTH AND EMPLOYABILITY

March 20th, 2012
Speech of Mr. Gérard ROPERT

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DEFINITION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

AS FAR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IS CONCERNED, IT IS POSSIBLE TO REMEMBER OF THE BRUNDTLAND REPORT PUBLISHED IN 1987:

“IT IS A DEVELOPMENT COMING UP TO THE NEEDS OF TODAY’S GENERATION WITHOUT COMPROMISING FUTURE GENERATION CAPACITIES TO COME UP THEIR OWN NEEDS”



THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE AFOREMENTIONED DEFINITIONS

- IT APPEARS OBVIOUSLY THAT BOTH OF THEM SHARE VALUES FOCUSING ON THE FACT THAT ECONOMIC PROGRESS MUST COINCIDE WITH ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND CARRYING WELL BEING OF HUMANITY
- SO NONE COULD CONTEST SERIOUSLY THAT SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IS A FAVOURABLE LEVER OF A SUSTAINABLE WORK CONCEPT
- IT IS CLEAR THAT IT EXISTS A CLOSE TIE BETWEEN THOSE BOTH MAIN THRUSTS OF PUBLIC AND COMPANIES POLICIES

1. DESPITE THE FACT THAT THE SUPPORTERS OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT HAVE ADDRESSED THE ISSUES OF WORK THROUGH SOCIAL ASPECTS, THE QUESTION OF DECENT WORK IS STILL WAITING WORLDWIDE IMPLEMENTATION

3 STAGES CAN BE IDENTIFIED:

- 11. Emergence of the concept of Sustainable Development**
- 12. Reasons for the emergence of the concept of sustainable work / decent work**
- 13. Decent work is still awaiting implementation**



11. Emergence of the concept of Sustainable Development

- This expression began to spread from the 2nd Earth Summit in 1992. Its definition evolves so that Sustainable Development now depends on the congruence of the values carried by economic progress, social justice and environment preservation.
- A cross-disciplinary challenge must be added: The governance, which means that each organization defines and implements its policy of actions.

Actually the success of such an objective requires the help of all stakeholders in a sort of participative democracy.

12. Reasons for the Emergence of the Concept of Sustainable Work / decent work

- All over the world, public authorities must face consequences of a globalization which is neither equilibrated nor just nor sustainable. Market economy cannot bring all the answers.
- In this context, ILO set the following objective, allowing “each man and each woman to get access to a decent and productive job in conditions of freedom, equality, security and dignity.

❖ This goal consists in two axes:

- **Combining social, economic and environmental objectives**
- **Elaborating responses strategies regarding employment and social politics in order to take up the challenges linked to the world economic crisis and to the population ageing.**



13. But, unfortunately, decent work is still awaiting implementation Reasons for the Emergence of the Concept of Sustainable Work / decent work

- ❖ In reality Occupational Risks remain rather significant all over the world. Hereafter some examples, both in developed or developing countries.
 - According to the ILO, chemicals are a major cause of occupational mortality (480 000 death/year) plus 125 millions workers who are still exposed to asbestos of which 90 000 die every year.
 - According to the same source: 1,8 thousand millions workers are unofficially employed (half of the planer workers). In Latin America 7 new jobs out of ten would be unofficially created. That way, these workers do not benefit from any labour protection.

- Agriculture is, with the textile industry, one of the sectors where indecent work is the most widely spread. In many countries it means bad employment quality, unsafe working conditions, lack of rescue security and high unemployment rates. Even in France 100 farmers die yearly of an occupational accident.
- On another level, there would be approximately 90 millions of migrant workers who are much more exposed to occupational risks.

2. THE CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABLE WORK FITS IN THE BROADER CONCEPT OF SOCIETAL RESPONSIBILITY (C.S.R.)

2.1 TRADE UNIONS

- In 1924, at the occasion of the Vienna Congress the International Trade Unions Federation adopted a Minimum Programme of Actions requiring “The Ban of Work for Children under 15, education for all, improvement of working conditions, Hygiene, Safety and Health”.
- Further, the European Trade Unions Confederation has created the Foundation for Sustainable Labour.



- The Foundation conducts various training courses in Africa, Europe and Latin America to get guarantees in the fields of occupational safety and health and industrial risks assessment.
- Moreover, it also intends to reinforce trade unions position in confronting them with environmental matters on which they had even quite recently only limited knowledge.

2.2 COMPANIES PREFER TO EMPHASIZE THEIR FIELDS OF COMPETENCE AND THE EXPRESSION “COMPANIES SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY” (C.S.R.)

- The denomination “C.S.R.” declines for companies the concept of sustainable development with its three above-mentioned axes.
- The C.S.R. concept has been adopted worldwide by all the business partners during the Earth Summit of 2002 in Johannesburg.
- The C.S.R. aims at specifying enterprises responsibilities towards their stockholders, using the philosophy: “Local acting, global thinking”.



■ C.S.R. demands:

- ❖ Encouraging “citizen” enterprises
- ❖ Developing a dynamic perception of prevention

It's important to reaffirm that Safety & Health at Work are in the heart of social protection systems. Promoting prevention every day allows avoiding occupational accidents and diseases. Prevention saves lives and protect employees' and family's well being. Promoting prevention is also economically profitable, because safer working conditions are productivity factors.

- ❖ Creating and using tools, standards and notes in favour of the C.S.R.

3. SUSTAINABLE WORK DEVELOPMENT MAIN LINES

3.1 SUPPORTING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH PLANS:

As example: The Occupational Health Plan 2010-2014 elaborated by the French Ministry of Labour contains 3 main lines of actions:

- Improving occupational health knowledge
it means developing research on priority topics carcinogenic substances, nanomaterials, helping introduce new training paths on occupational health matters.



- **Going further with occupational risk prevention in direction of both priority risks and most exposed sectors (construction and civil engineering, agriculture, personal services). This objective also aims at integrating co-activity and subcontracting related problems.**

- **Accompanying companies**
The target objective is to raise the prevention awareness of the different branches sectors companies and employees. This help concerns at the same time diagnosis and elaboration of action plan.



3.2 ELABORATING SUSTAINABLE OCCUPATIONAL TRAINING PATHS

ISSA Construction Section's Declaration of Brussels 2009 mentions workers' ageing and recognizes the importance of implement the necessary measures to improve working conditions of the construction workers to continue until normal retirement age without damaging effects on their health, consistent with the principle of workability, in which occupational health services, workers and employers strive to create work tasks suitable to the functional capacity of the workers.

3.3 PLACING MANAGEMENT IN THE HEART OF THE CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABLE WORK

In view to implementing occupational health plans within companies it is of course essential to give the manager his whole place because he represents the main conductor for getting success in promotion of occupational health:

- securing teams**
- accompanying change**
- giving work security, meaning, visibility**
- preventing stress and promoting wellbeing at work**



CONCLUSION

SUSTAINABLE WORK REQUIRES A LONG TERM EFFORT

- Promoting health at work must be done through a process of education beginning at a very young age in elementary schools and continuing throughout the professional life.
- In this context, a true culture of health promotion may be strongly rooted in society and promote the development of sustainable work.
- The Berlin Declaration of the ISSA in 2006 and then the Lisbon Charter give an important signal for improving this approach.
- We hope it will be confirmed during ICOH Congress 2012 in Cancun.

Thank you

for your attention

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