



# Violence and Harassment at the Workplace:

## Implications on Occupational Health and Safety (OHS)

### National Occupational Health and Safety Conference

Protea Hotel Klerksdorp

Klerksdorp

26-28 Feb 2025

### **Simphiwe MABHELE**

ILO Decent Work Team for East and Southern Africa

Gender, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Branch (GEDI)

Conditions of Work and Equality (WORKQUALITY Department)

Sectoral Activities Department (SECTOR)



- About the ILO
- **Safety and Health as a 5<sup>th</sup> Element of FPRW**
- International Labour Standards (OSH and V&H)
- **Locating Violence and Harassment within OHS**
- Why Should the Iron and Steel Industry Address V&H at Work...?
- **Conclusion:** Theory-to-Practice in Addressing V&H



# About the ILO

ILO Convention No. 144 on Tripartite Consultation gives effect to Tripartism (NEDLAC)

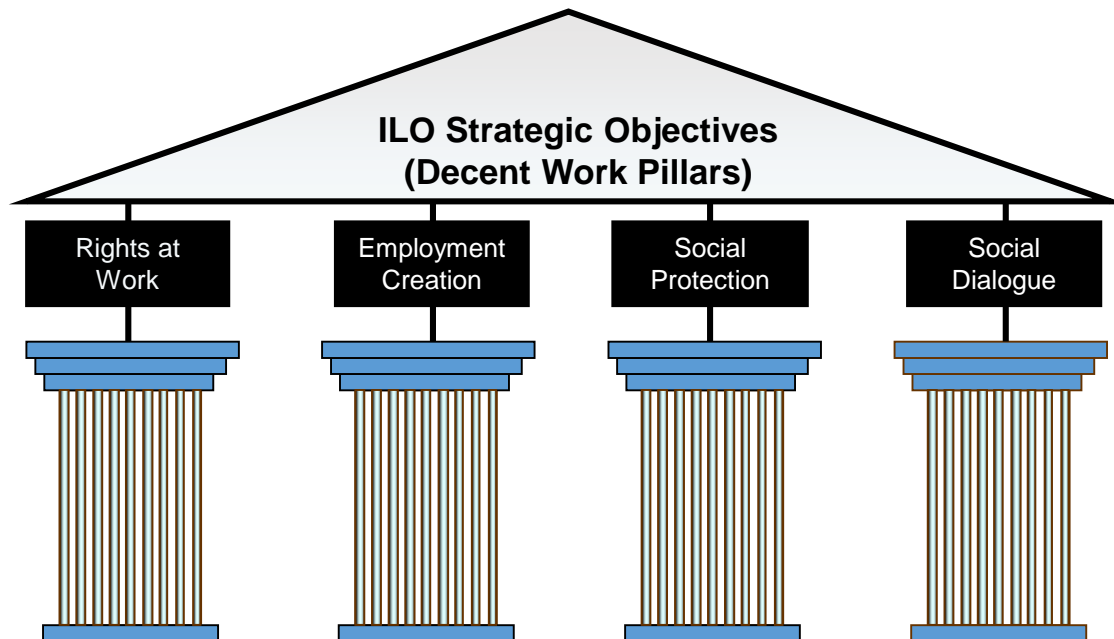
- An international labour standard setting organization (since 1919)
- 187 Member States and 405 ILO Instruments (191/6/208)
- South Africa has ratified **28-Conventions (23 are in-force)**
- First specialized agency of the United Nations (1946)
- Tripartite structure of the ILO gives an equal voice to **workers, employers and governments**



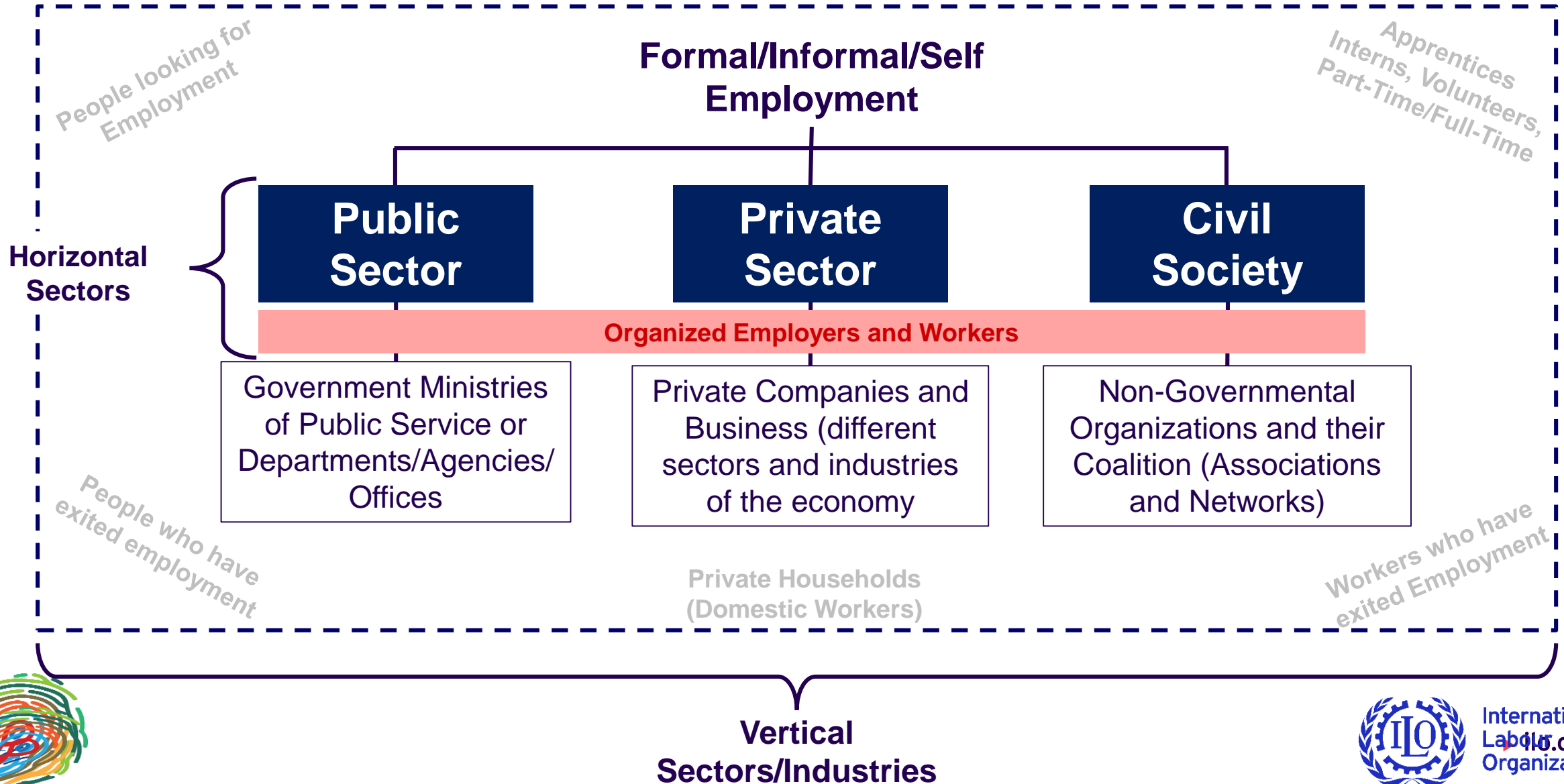
Government



Social Partners



# Defining and Locating the World of Work

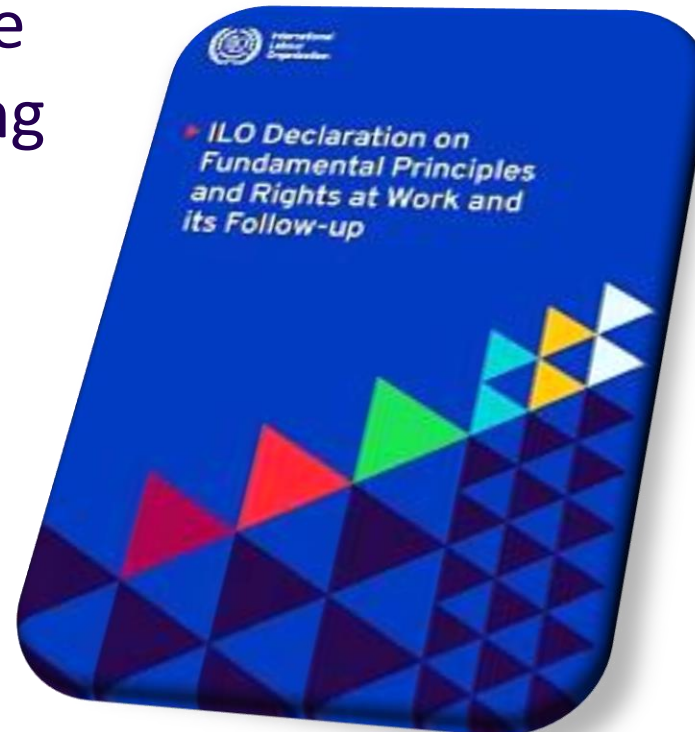


# What rights has ILO designated as fundamental?


**a safe and healthy working environment  
(C155 and C187)**

freedom of association and the  
effective recognition of the  
right to collective bargaining  
**(C87 and C98)**

elimination of all  
forms of forced or  
compulsory labour  
**(C29-and-C105)**



elimination of discrimination  
in respect of employment  
and occupation  
**(C100-and-C111)**

effective abolition of  
child labour  
**(C138-and-C182)**  [ilo.org](http://ilo.org)



## ► Violence and Harassment in the world of work to consider the following:

1. Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155), its accompanying Recommendation (No. 164),
2. The Protocol of 2002 (P155)
3. Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 (No. 187) and its accompanying Recommendation (No. 187)
4. Occupational Health Services Convention, 1985 (No. 161)
5. Safe and Healthy Working Environment (Consequential Amendments) Convention, 2023 (No.191)



In light of the FPRW-related developments, the Governing Body of the ILO requested that the International Labour Office conduct research on how **to ensure that occupational safety and health (OSH) legislation and management systems address Violence and Harassment.**





January 2024

**Chapter-1:** Defining the parameters of **violence and harassment** within systemic approaches to Occupational Safety and Health (OSH)

**Chapter-2:** Integrating violence and harassment into OSH frameworks: Legal and institutional responses

**Chapter-3:** Policy interventions beyond the legal frameworks: Global overview of national guidance and tools

**Chapter-4:** Tackling **violence and harassment** at work: Country-level responses

**Chapter-5:** Future of work



## ▶ 2

Integrating violence  
and harassment into  
OSH frameworks:  
Legal and institutional  
responses

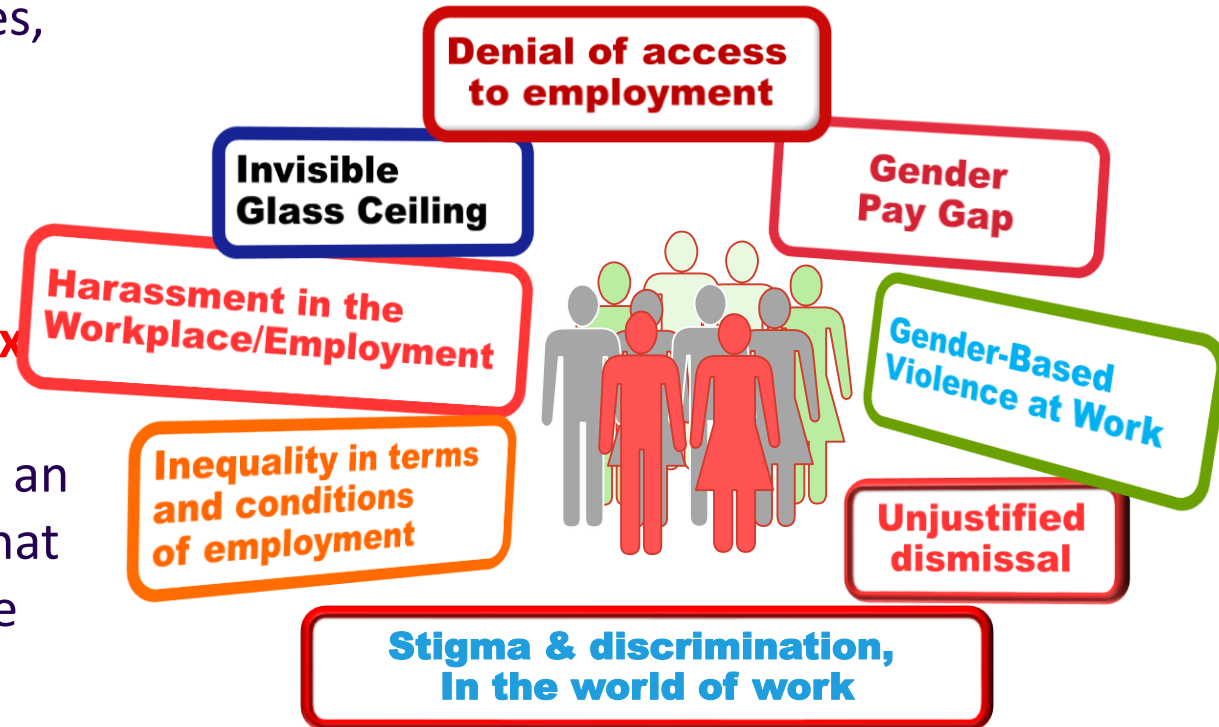
# 66%

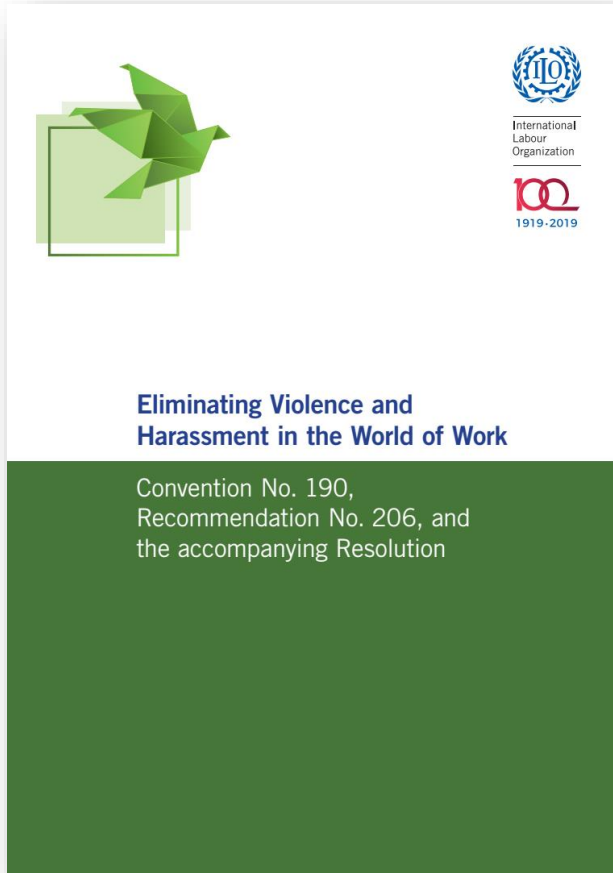
of provisions that relate  
to workplace violence and  
harassment in the 25 countries  
examined are found in the labour  
and OSH legal framework.



- Unemployment and under-employment
- Unproductive and poor-quality jobs, indecent wages, unsafe work, and insecure income;
- Rights that are denied at work; gender inequality (conscious vs. unconscious bias);
- **Discrimination at the workplace on the basis of sex, age, perceptions vs. reality**, minority status, child labour, pay differentials between women and men, an increasingly growing unregulated informal sector that offers little or no social protection or security to the worker.

Some of the challenges Workers are faced with in the world of work...!





- In 2019, the International Labour Conference adopted the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work, expressing a clear commitment to a world of work free from violence and harassment.
- ILO also adopted the 1<sup>st</sup> standards on the **elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work**, (Convention No. 190 and Recommendation No. 206).
- The framework set out in these instruments provides a clear roadmap for preventing and addressing violence and harassment in the world of work,



## ▶ What is violence and harassment in the world of work..?

- ▶ ... a range of unacceptable behaviours, practices or threats thereof, whether a single occurrence or repeated, that aim at, result in, or are likely to result in physical, psychological, sexual or economic harm

*Convention No. 190, Art. 1(a)*



... cover a broad range of concepts that are very common such as:

---

**Bullying**

**abuse**

**mobbing**

**insulting**

**threats**

**exclusion**

**sending offensive words/images**

**use of offensive language**

**Displaying offensive words or images**

**making sarcastic or snide remarks**

**Humiliating unwanted physical contact**

**circulating offensive words or images**

**Abusing a position of power**

**inappropriate jokes or banter**

**Making suggestive behaviour**

**making unwelcome sexual advances**

**Article 4:** ... emphasizes the need for a comprehensive approach to prevent and address violence and harassment in the world of work, including through OSH measures

**Article 9:** ... requires member states to adopt laws and regulations ensuring the right to equality and non-discrimination, which are integral to creating a safe and healthy work environment.

**Article 10:** ... mandates the implementation of workplace policies on violence and harassment, which should be integrated into OSH management systems.

**Article 12:** ... specifically highlights the importance of extending or adapting existing OSH measures to cover violence and harassment, and developing specific measures where necessary



International  
Labour  
Organization

100  
1919-2019

**Eliminating Violence and  
Harassment in the World of Work**

Convention No. 190,  
Recommendation No. 206, and  
the accompanying Resolution

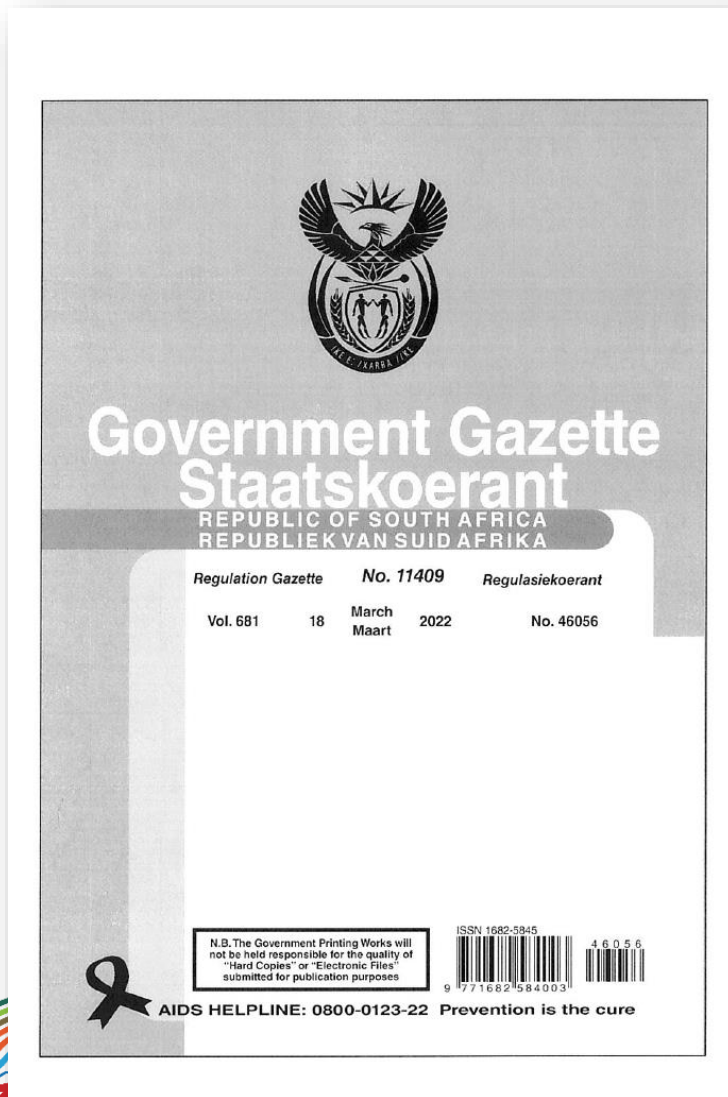
## ▶ Data collection on workplace violence and harassment

---

- ▶▶ Member States should make efforts to collect and publish statistics on violence and harassment in the world of work disaggregated by sex, form of violence and harassment, and sector of economic activity

*Recommendation No. 206, Para. 22*

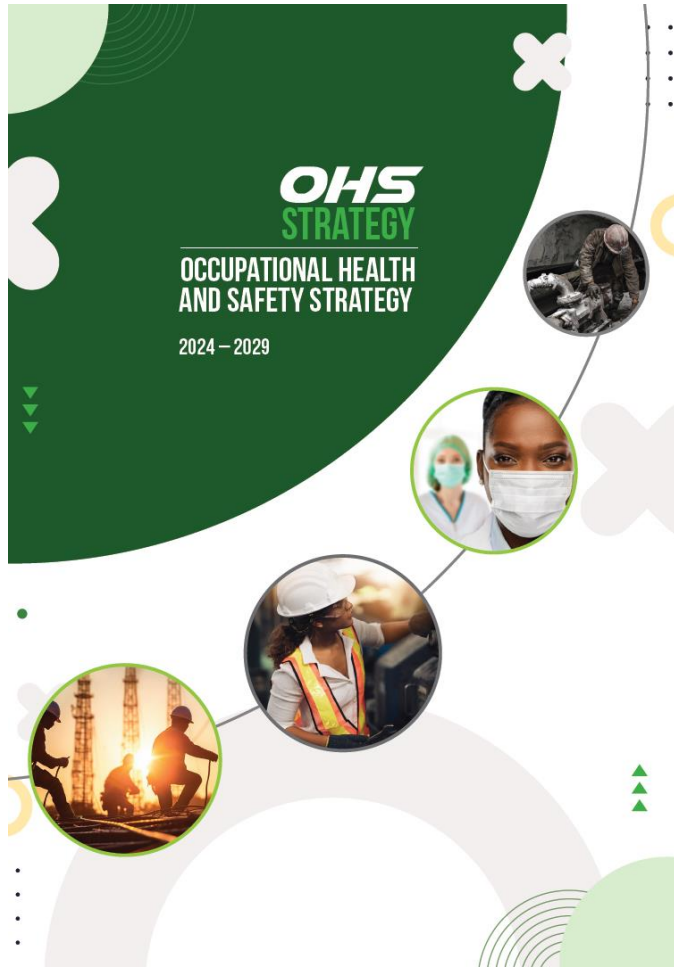
- ▶ Direct measuring. E.g. formal complaints; specific questionnaires on violence and harassment; measuring items in existing periodic labour/working conditions surveys; trade union members' surveys; etc.
- ▶ Indirect measuring. E.g. absenteeism and sick (personal) leave; staff turnover; exit interviews; workers' compensation claims



**Section 5.1:** "Employers should take appropriate steps to prevent and eliminate all forms of harassment in the workplace, including through the implementation of effective policies and procedures."

**Section 5.2:** "Occupational safety and health measures should be integrated into the overall management system of the organization to address harassment as a critical aspect of workplace safety."

**Section 6.3:** "Employers are required to conduct regular risk assessments to identify potential hazards related to harassment and implement control measures to mitigate these risks."



## Section 3.2.1.1: Strategy - Implementation Principles

... emphasizes the need for OHS legislation to include measures for preventing and addressing violence and harassment in the workplace. It highlights the importance of aligning with international standards (C190).

**SRA-1:** Legislation, Policy Review, and Development

**SRA-2:** Advocacy, Communication, Cooperation, Capacity Strengthening, and Development

**SRA-3:** Enforcement and Labour Inspection

**SRA-5:** Strategic Information (Proactive Research and Data Collection):

**SRA-4:** OHS Management System and Preventive Risk Management at Enterprises

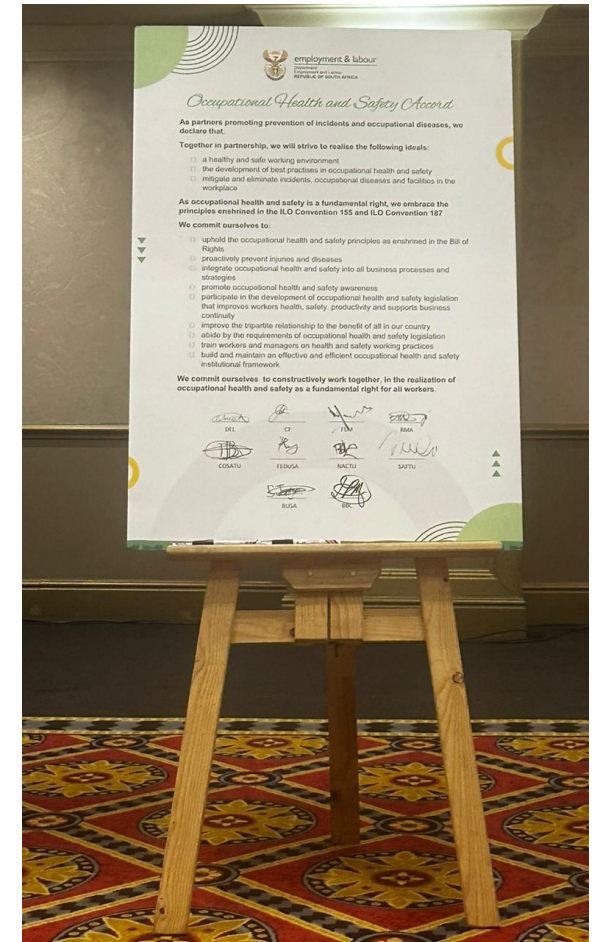


## Occupational Health and Safety Accord (Oct-2024) ...

*3-Ideals*

*9-Commitments*

“... build and maintain an effective and efficient occupational health and safety institutional framework”

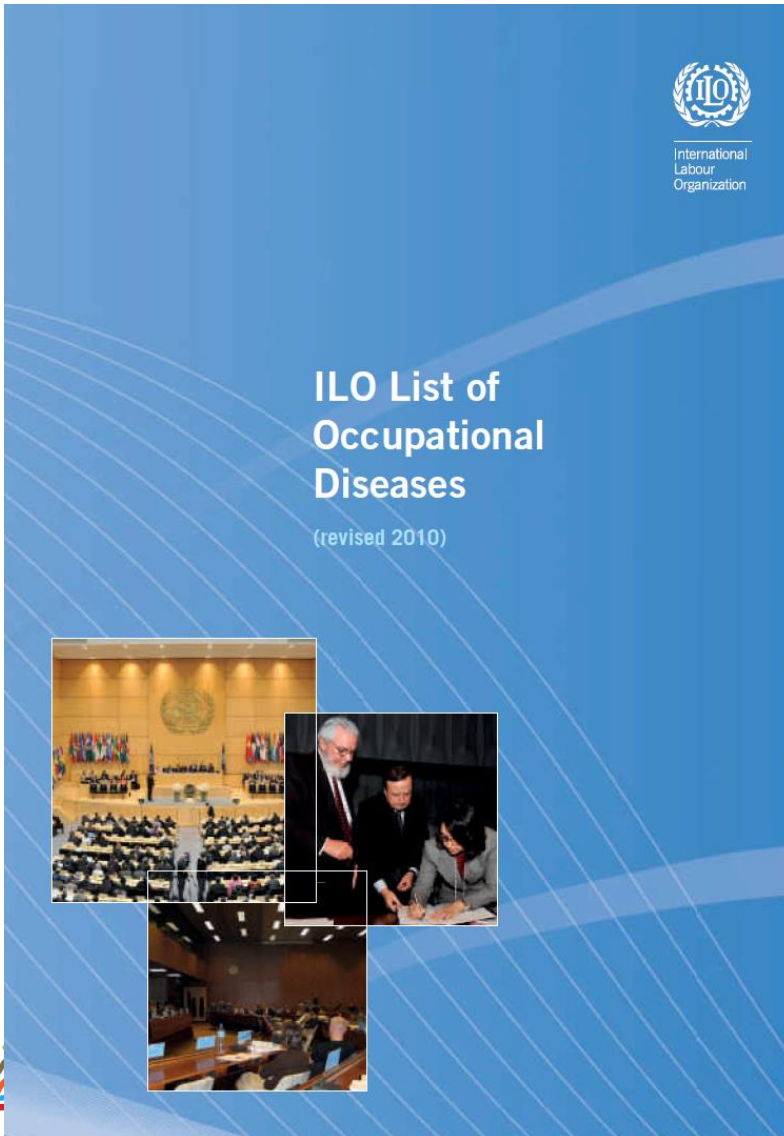


# Why should the Iron and Steel Sector

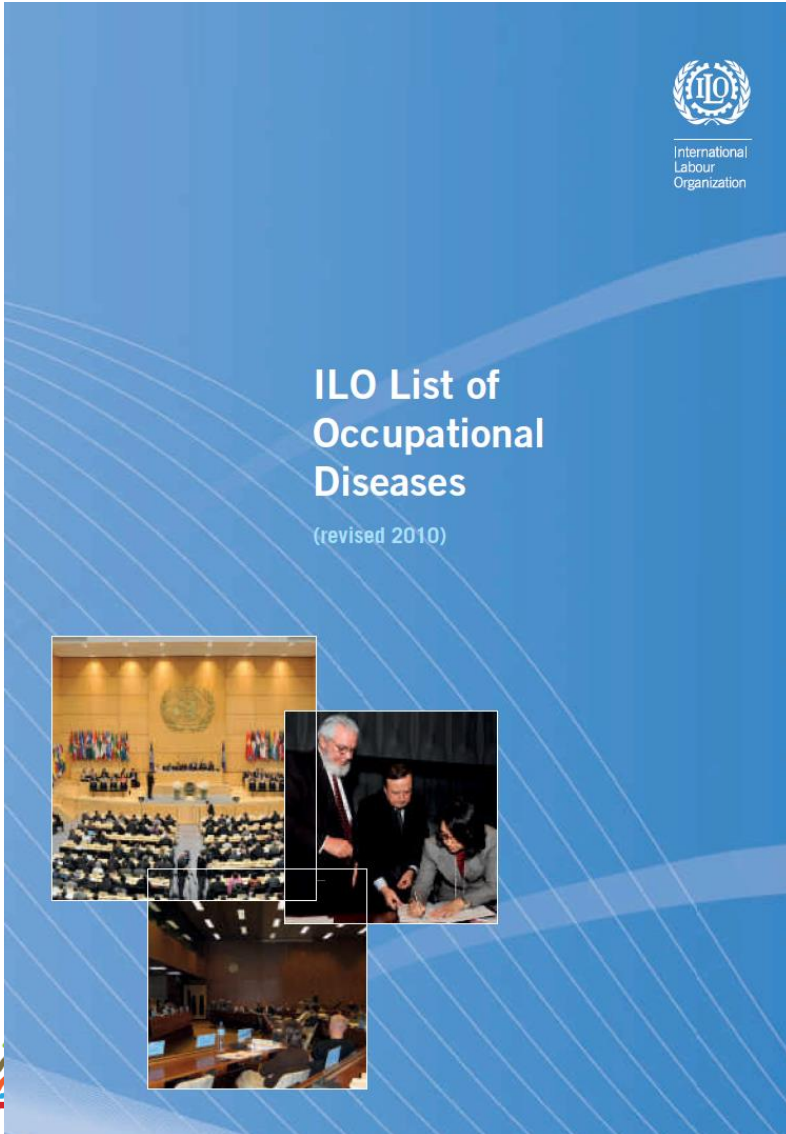
Address

Violence and Harassment in the World of Work  
Particularly through Occupational Health and Safety





- 1. Occupational diseases caused by exposure to agents arising from work activities**
  - Diseases caused by chemical agents
  - Diseases caused by physical agents
  - Biological agents and infectious or parasitic diseases
- 2. Occupational diseases by target organ systems**
  - Respiratory diseases (OLDs)
  - Skin diseases
  - Musculoskeletal disorders
  - Mental and behavioural disorders
- 3. Occupational cancer (21)**
  - Cancer caused by specific agents = 21 (e.g. asbestos, benzidine and its salts)
  - List includes Wood dust, benzene, Hepatitis-B and C Viruses (HBV-and-HCV)
- 4. Other Diseases**
  - Other specific diseases caused by occupations or processes not mentioned in this list where a direct link is established scientifically, or determined by methods appropriate to national conditions and practice, between the exposure arising from work activities and the disease(s) contracted by the worker



## 2.4 Mental and Behavioral Disorders

### 2.4.1 Post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

2.4.2 Other mental or behavioural disorders not mentioned in the preceding item where a direct link is established scientifically, or determined by methods appropriate to national conditions and practice, between the exposure to risk factors arising from work activities and the mental and behavioural disorder(s) contracted by the worker...

## CONTEXT



**60%**

of the world population  
is in work



**61%**

of workers work in the  
informal economy

**207 million**

unemployed people  
are expected in 2022

## PREVALENCE

**301**

million people lived with

**anxiety**

in 2019<sup>a</sup>

**280**

million people lived with

**depression**

in 2019<sup>a</sup>

**703 000**

people died by

**suicide**

in 2019<sup>a</sup>



**15%**

of working-age adults had a  
mental disorder in 2019

## IMPACT



**50%**

of total societal cost of mental  
health conditions is driven by  
indirect costs such as reduced  
productivity

**12 billion**

working days are lost every year to  
depression and anxiety

**US\$ 1 trillion**

cost to the global economy  
due to depression and  
anxiety, predominantly from  
lost productivity

<sup>a</sup> Many of these people are working-age adults.

Sources:

IHME, 2019 [5]; ILO, 2018 [7]; ILO, 2022 [8]; Christensen et al., 2020 [9]; Chisholm et al., 2016 [10].

# 1

## **Physical and Mental Health Impacts:**

Violence and harassment can lead to severe physical injuries and long-term mental health issues such as stress, anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). These health impacts can significantly affect workers' overall well-being and productivity.

## 2

### **Increased Risk of Accidents:**

A hostile work environment can distract workers, making them less attentive to safety protocols and increasing the likelihood of accidents. In the iron and steel industry, where heavy machinery and hazardous materials are common, this can lead to serious injuries or fatalities.



## 3

### **Reduced Productivity and Efficiency:**

Workers who experience violence and harassment are more likely to be disengaged, leading to higher absenteeism and turnover rates. This can disrupt production processes and reduce overall efficiency in the workplace.

# 4

## Legal and Compliance Issues:

Addressing violence and harassment is essential for compliance with international standards, such as ILO Convention No. 190 (C190).



# 5

## **Promotion of a Safe and Inclusive Work Environment:**

Addressing violence and harassment fosters a culture of safety and respect, which is crucial for attracting and retaining a diverse workforce. This is particularly important in the iron and steel industry, where women and minority groups are often underrepresented.

“As we transform Theory into Practice, we must forge a workplace in the iron and steel sector where violence and harassment have no place. Together, let's build not just stronger structures, but a safer, more respectful industry for all.”



**Thank you for you ATTENTION...!**

**International Labour Organization**

**(<https://www.ilo.org/global/lang--en/index.htm>)**