



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Global Coalition calls on WHO to take action to improve worker health as 2.9 million die each year from work-related causes

- Work-related deaths have risen 12% since 2000, yet worker health is disappearing from the WHO strategic agenda
- Poor occupational safety and health is estimated to cost the equivalent of up to \$3 trillion annually – equivalent to 5.8% of GDP
- 19 organisations across five continents have united as the GOSH coalition to demand urgent, binding action and have written directly to WHO Director General.

The Global Occupational Safety and Health (GOSH) Coalition is urging the WHO and delegates to its World Health Assembly to ensure that worker health is enshrined in its strategy and plans.

While the WHO continues to meet pressing global health challenges, changes in its strategic focus and budget constraints have led to reduced attention on worker health. This pull back on its commitments is a critical gap in its global health leadership, when worker health is fundamental to global health and sustainable development.

The scale of the problem is stark and progress appears to be going backwards. An estimated 2.9 million people die from work-related causes every year – a figure that has risen by nearly 12% since 2000. On top of this, more than 395 million workers suffer non-fatal occupational injuries, and around 160 million new cases of work-related disease emerge each year. Globally, the cost of poor occupational safety and health runs between USD \$2.8- \$3 trillion annually, or up to 5.8% of world GDP.

What makes this especially troubling, the Coalition argues, is that existing international frameworks already recognise the problem. International Labour Organisation (ILO) Conventions and parts of the WHO's own Programme of Work commit the WHO to action on occupational and workplace health. However, occupational health and safety is not reflected in the six strategic priorities of the Programme.

In a letter sent to the WHO Director General, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the GOSH Coalition sets out three specific demands.

First, the continuation of the Health in the World of Work Network, launched by WHO in 2021 to strengthen collaboration and knowledge-sharing on safe and resilient workplaces.

Second, a new Workers' Health Global Plan of Action, succeeding the 2008-2017 plan, to reinforce and strengthen global standards, prevent occupational illnesses and injuries, protect and promote the health of all workers globally and address emerging risks, such as those associated with climate change, digitalization and psychosocial hazards.

Third, the continuation and expansion of the Global Network of WHO Collaborating Centres for Occupational Health, with a view to bringing in non-state actors alongside stronger coordination between WHO and ILO at global, regional and country levels to drive partnerships between health and labour ministries.

Marianne Levitsky of Workplace Health Without Borders (WHWB) and Chair of the GOSH Coalition said: *“Member states and the WHO should commit to a resolution and framework that ensures the global protection and promotion of workers’ health. Strengthened collaboration and coordination of WHO and the International Labour*



Organization to stimulate intersectoral partnerships between health and labour ministries are also needed”.

Dr Richard Heron, Co-Chair of the International Occupational Medicine Society Collaborative (IOMSC) said: *“Investing in a healthy workplace is one of the smartest economic decisions Governments can make: it pays back many times through lower absenteeism, increased productivity, and a more resilient workforce”.*