

**9th International Symposium on Naturally Occurring Radioactive Material (NORM IX)**

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**Opening Remarks**

**By**

**Dr. Shengli Niu**

**Senior Specialist on Occupational Health**

**International Labour Office, Geneva, Switzerland**

Good morning ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the International Labour Organization I congratulate the Conference of Radiation Control Program Directors (CRCPD) of the United States and the IAEA for organizing the 9th International Symposium on Naturally Occurring Radioactive Material (NORM IX). The ILO is extremely pleased to collaborate in convening this important international symposium.

I thank the IAEA and the CRCPD for their commitment to involve the ILO in this international symposium.

The ILO was established in 1919 and this year is its 100 years anniversary. The ILO was founded to promote social justice as a contribution to universal lasting peace. Its mandate is to ensure everyone the right to earn a living in freedom, equity, security and dignity, in short, the right to Decent Work. The protection of workers against radiation falls naturally within the scope of ILO's programme of action. The ILO uses in a coordinated manner various means of action to provide support and services to governments, employers' and workers' organizations in drawing up and implementing programmes for the improvement of working conditions and environment. The ILO creates international labour standards including standards on safety and health at work and has a unique system to supervise their application. Between 1919 and 2019, 190 Conventions, 6 protocols and 206 Recommendations were adopted. Among them, the ILO Convention concerning the Protection of Workers against Ionizing Radiation (No. 115) and its accompanying Recommendation (No. 114) deal specifically with the protection of workers against radiation (ionizing). Convention No. 115 and Recommendation No. 114 have been the only international legal instruments on radiation protection of workers. The Convention applies to all activities involving exposure of workers to ionizing radiations in the course of their work and provides that each Member of the ILO who ratifies it shall give effect to its provisions by means of laws or regulations, codes of practice or other appropriate methods. The Convention and Recommendation lay down basic principles and establish a fundamental framework for radiation protection of workers. They also contain provisions which concern the protective measures to be taken, the monitoring of radiation and the medical supervision of workers. Convention No 115 has been ratified by 50 countries. ICRP recommendations and the Radiation protection and safety of radiation sources : international basic safety standards (BSS) published by the IAEA are important tools for the promotion of the ILO Convention No 115 and for the supervision of the application of Convention No 115 by countries which have ratified the Convention.

The ILO also has a number of Conventions and Recommendations on other topics in the field of safety and health at work. For example:

- the Occupational Safety and Health Convention (No. 155) and Recommendation (No. 164) concerning occupational safety and health and the working environment, adopted in 1981 and laying down for the first time at the international level the foundations of a national policy branching out to undertakings, in order to introduce a comprehensive and coherent system of prevention of occupational hazards.
- Convention (No. 161) and Recommendation (No. 171) concerning occupational health services, adopted in June 1985, provide for the establishment of occupational health services which should progressively be developed for all workers in all branches of economic activities. These instruments cover, in particular, the functions, organization and conditions of operation of such services.
- The Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention No. 187 and its accompanying Recommendation No 197 adopted in 2006 are based on two key aims: the development of a preventative safety and health culture and the application of a systems approach to managing OSH at the national level. The Convention incorporates these basic principles into the three foundational concepts of the instrument: (i) a national policy; (ii) a national system; and (iii) a national programme on OSH.

The preventative safety and health culture promoted by the ILO refers to a culture in which the right to a safe and healthy working environment is respected at all levels, where government, employers and workers actively participate in securing a safe and healthy working environment through a system of defined rights, responsibilities and duties, and where the principle of prevention is accorded the highest priority.

These instruments are particularly relevant to the topics of this symposium.

Globally, more than 20 million workers are monitored for their occupational exposure to radiation. According to the UNSCEAR report 2000, excluding uranium mining, more than 80% of the world-wide annual collective dose from occupational exposure are due to natural radiation. Radiological protection for workers from NORM requires a multidisciplinary approach. In this connection, inter-sectoral cooperative activities are particularly useful to avoid duplication of efforts and to efficiently use resources. Furthermore, the participation of all relevant parties, such as radiological protection authorities, ministries of mines, natural gas and oil industry, health, labour, environment and education, research institutions, professional bodies, employers' and workers' and other non-governmental organizations in the entire process of radiation protection are vital to the success of any protection programmes for workers against exposure to radiation from NORM.

Despite the fact that international standards applicable to NORM, such as the BSS and the Safety Guide on occupational radiation protection (GSG-7) jointly developed by the IAEA and the ILO, the ILO code of practice on radiation protection of workers, and supporting documentation by governments and regulatory bodies continue to grow, there is an increased concern on the use by NORM industries of these standards and supporting documents.

At the global level, we attach importance to cooperation with IAEA, WHO and other sister international organizations and professional bodies on setting up international guidelines and standards on radiation safety and protection and on the promotion and application of these guidelines and standards. We believe that such a cooperation will not only facilitate the implementation of the ILO Convention No. 115 on radiation protection by our constituents but also

increase, at the national level, the synergy impacts of the relevant international policies on radiation safety and protection formulated by other sister organizations. In recent years, the IAEA and ILO have jointly organized regional workshops to promote the BSS and the safety guide on occupational radiation protection in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America. The Two sister organizations also jointly organized a regional workshop for African countries on radiation protection in mining industry in 2017 in Madagascar.

Our task is to promote practical approaches and to assist countries in their efforts to extend occupational safety and health to all workers, women and men including workers exposed to NORM.

The Commission on the Future of Work established by the ILO has produced an independent report on how to achieve a future of work that provides decent and sustainable work opportunities for all. This report has been launched in Geneva on January 22nd and will later be submitted to the Centenary session of the International Labour Conference in June 2019. The commission calls for establishing a Universal Labour Guarantee. All workers, regardless of their contractual arrangement or employment status, should enjoy fundamental workers' rights, an "adequate living wage" (ILO Constitution, 1919), maximum limits on working hours and protection of safety and health at work. Collective agreements or laws and regulations can raise this protection floor. This proposal also allows for safety and health at work to be recognized as a fundamental principle and right at work.

In response to the challenges in the world of work due to transformative change, driven by technological innovations, demographic shifts, climate change and globalization and to mark 100 years since the ILO's founding, a Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work was adopted in 2019 at the 108th session of the International Labour Conference. It declares that safe and healthy working conditions are fundamental to decent work.

We, in the ILO, expect the enterprises and workplaces to follow proper occupational safety and health rules and regulations including radiation safety and protection rules and regulations on NORM so as to avoid accidents, diseases and other problems at work.

Having a safe and healthy workplace is a basic human right. Respecting this human right is an obligation – as well as a condition -- for sustainable economic development. The ILO will continue to support its tripartite constituents in their efforts to achieve a safe and healthy working and living environment for all workers and the public.

In the five days of the symposium, there will be presentations and discussions, which will provide useful insights on how we could better the protection of workers occupationally exposed to radiation from NORM. Practical measures should be developed and carefully implemented to solve workplace occupational safety and health problems including radiation protection in contrast to imparting technical knowledge of academic value. I hope that the symposium will give a fresh impetus to the global actions to improve and strengthen the protection of workers against all hazards including radiation from NORM at the workplace.

I wish you every success for fruitful deliberations and thank you.