

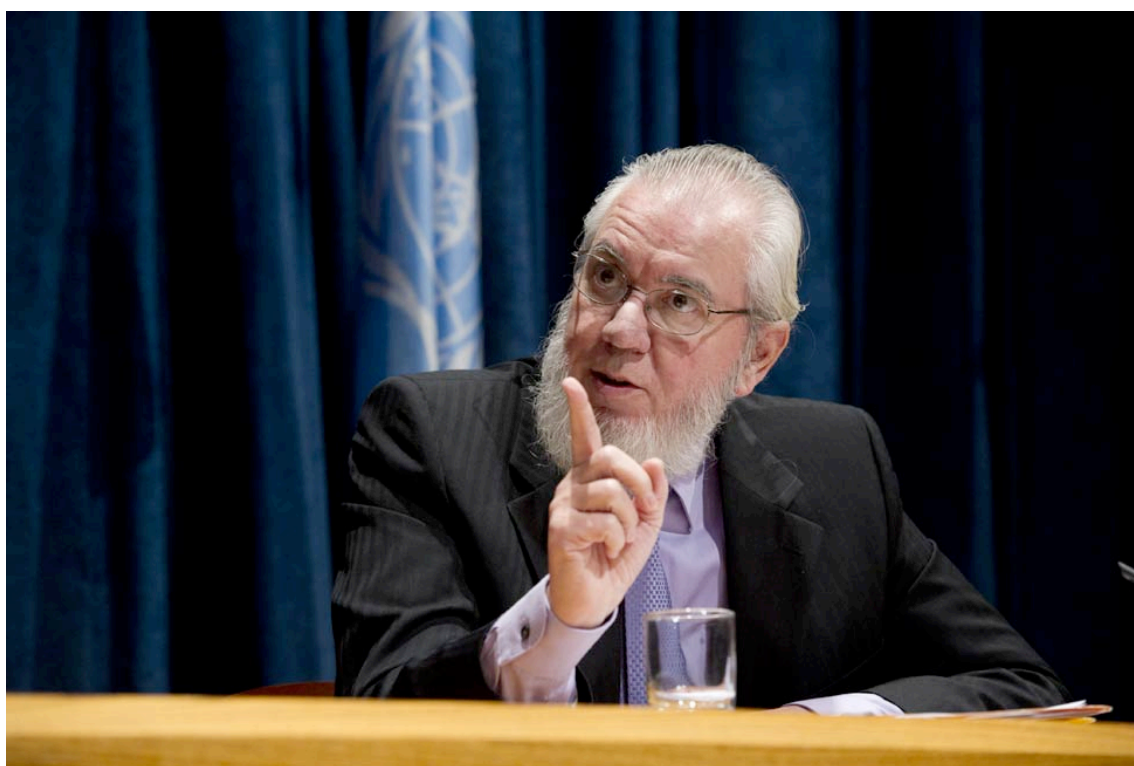


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## **The transition to a green economy must include better safety standards for workers – UN**



Juan Somavia, Director-General of the International Labour Organization (ILO). UN Photo/Evan Schneider

28 April 2012 –

Protecting the safety and health of workers across the world must be part of transitioning into a green economy, the United Nations stressed today, warning that while sustainable jobs may protect the environment and create new employment opportunities, they may also present a number of unforeseen risks for individuals.

“Occupational safety and health is embedded in the goal of decent work and decent work for all is central to the social pillar of sustainable development,” said the Director-General of the International Labour Organization, Juan Somavia, in his message marking the World Day for Safety and Health at Work, which is observed annually on 28 April.

According to ILO, two million people die every year from work-related accidents and diseases, 160 million people suffer from work-related diseases, 270 million fatal and non-fatal work-related accidents occur every year, and four per cent of the world's annual gross domestic product (GDP) is lost as a consequence of occupational diseases and accidents.

Mr. Somavia emphasized that the UN Conference on Sustainable Development ([Rio+20](#)) in June will provide countries an opportunity to focus on the promotion of safer workplaces as part of an inclusive approach to development that takes into account the needs of people as well as the planet.

“Experience has already shown that some substances while being more environmentally friendly could be more hazardous to workers' health. Consequently, renewable energies, waste management and recycling, as well as the greening of traditional industries must be approached from the outset with an eye on the occupational safety and health challenges with the aim of eliminating old hazards and risks and preventing new ones from emerging,” Mr. Somavia said.

To mark the Day, ILO also launched a report that looks at different green industries from an occupational safety and health perspective and stresses that green jobs must be accompanied by appropriate measures to protect all workers.

“Moving towards a green economy implies setting higher standards for environmental protection while, at the same time, incorporating workers' safety and health as an integral part of the strategy,” said the Director of the ILO Programme on Safety and Health at Work and the Environment, Seiji Machida. “Only then will we be contributing to an environmentally sustainable and socially inclusive outcome.”

Meanwhile, UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights obligations related to environmentally sound management and disposal of hazardous substances and waste Cali Georgescu warned that millions of workers around the world are still exposed to disease and injury in their places of work, and called on countries to pay attention to promote and create a safe working environment to reduce the number of work-related deaths each year.

“For millions of workers, safety and protection from disease and injury arising from their employment is not yet a reality,” Mr. Georgescu said. “I am particularly concerned about the exposure to these hazardous substances of children and pregnant women, and call for protection measures to be strictly enforced,” he added.

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