



# ► GHS and the World of Work

At the heart of a right to a safe and healthy working environment

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## The International Labour Organization (ILO) and its role in shaping global safety and health policy

Founded in 1919, the ILO is the first and oldest specialized agency of the United Nations

- ▶ **Tripartite governance structure** including governments (187 member states), workers' and employers' organizations.
- ▶ **Mission:** promote rights at work, encourage decent employment opportunities, enhance social protection and strengthen dialogue on work-related issues.
- ▶ **International Labour Standards:** Legally-binding conventions ratified by member states, protocols and recommendations (linked to conventions).



## ▶ 1970s/1980s: Labour issues at the heart of GHS development

- ▶ Series of major industrial accidents in the 1970s and 1980s
- ▶ The ILO's International Labour Conference **adopted a Resolution in 1989 on the harmonization of classification and labelling systems for chemicals at work**
- ▶ Many Ministries of Labour stressed the need for an international harmonization system for classification and labelling to protect the lives of workers
- ▶ ILO tripartite constituents came together in the spirit of social dialogue and developed foundations for an international harmonized system
- ▶ These discussions led to the development of **ILO Chemicals Convention No. 170 and Chemicals Recommendation No. 177**



## ▶ 1990: Chemicals Convention, 1990 (No. 170) – Main Provisions

### Part III. Classification and Related Measures

- ▶ **ARTICLE 6: Classification systems** - for chemicals according to the type and degree of their intrinsic health and physical hazards (**Article 6,1**) (**competent authority**)
- ▶ **ARTICLE 7: Labelling and marking** - of all chemicals, in a way easily understandable to workers, providing essential information regarding their classification, the hazards they present and safety precautions to be observed (**Article 7**)
- ▶ **ARTICLE 8: Chemical Safety and Data Sheets** - Provision of **safety data sheets** for workers on all hazardous chemicals used in the workplace (**Article 8**)
- ▶ **ARTICLE 9: Responsibility of suppliers** - Suppliers should ensure that chemicals have been **classified**, marked to **indicate their identity**, **labelled** (for hazardous chemicals) and have **chemical safety data sheets** (for hazardous chemicals) (**Article 9**)

## ▶ Chemicals Convention, 1990 (No. 170) – Main Provisions (continued)

### Part IV. Responsibilities of Employers

- ▶ Employers shall **ensure that chemicals are labelled or marked and that chemical safety data sheets are provided** as required (**Article 10**)
- ▶ When chemicals are transferred into other containers or equipment, the **contents should be indicated** in a manner which will make their identity, hazards and any applicable safety precautions known to workers (**Article 11**)
- ▶ Employers shall ensure that workers are **not exposed to chemicals to an extent exceeding exposure limits** (**Article 12**)
- ▶ Chemicals should be **handled or disposed of in a manner which eliminates or minimizes risk to safety and health and to the environment** (**Article 14**)
- ▶ Employers should **inform workers of the hazards associated with chemicals, provide information about safety data sheets and train workers** on procedures to be followed (**Article 15**)

## ▶ Chemicals Convention, 1990 (No. 170) – Main Provisions (continued)

### Part VI. Rights of Workers and their Representatives

- ▶ Workers shall have the **right to remove themselves from danger resulting from the use of chemicals** when they have reasonable justification to believe there is an imminent and serious risk to their safety or health, and they shall be **protected from undue consequences (Article 18)**
- ▶ Workers have the **right to information** on the **identity of chemicals used at work, their properties, chemical safety data sheets, education and training (Article 18, 3)**

### Part VII. Responsibility of Exporting States

- ▶ Exporting states should **communicate any uses of hazardous chemicals that are prohibited** for reasons of safety and health at work to any importing country **(Article 19)**

## ▶ Additional international labour standards related to chemicals

- ▶ The Prevention of Major Industrial Accidents Convention, 1993 (No. 174)
- ▶ Asbestos Convention, 1986 (No. 162)
- ▶ Working Environment (Air Pollution, Noise and Vibration) Convention, 1977 (No. 148)
- ▶ Benzene Recommendation, 1971 (No. 144)
- ▶ Occupational Cancer Convention, 1974 (No. 139)
- ▶ Labour Inspection (Agriculture) Convention, 1969 (No. 129)
- ▶ Safety and Health in Agriculture Convention, 2001 (No. 184)
- ▶ Safety and Health in Construction Convention, 1988 (No. 167)
- ▶ Safety and Health in Mines Convention, 1995 (No. 176)
- ▶ ILO List of Occupational Diseases, Recommendation (No. 194)



**VISIT [NORMLEX](#) TO SEE RATIFICATION STATUS FOR YOUR COUNTRY**

## ▶ The need for normative standards on classification and labelling

The GHS has clear interlinkages with over 25 ILO conventions, recommendations and codes of practice:

- ▶ **Chemicals Convention, 1990 (No. 170):** includes obligations for ratifying states that cover components of the GHS such as classification, labelling and provision of SDS.
- ▶ **Convention on Major Industrial Accidents (No. 174):** includes provisions on requiring hazard identification and training.
- ▶ The GHS is fundamental for the objectives of ILS for specific hazardous substances and sectors including **asbestos** (Convention No. 162), **carcinogens** (Convention No. 139), **agriculture** (Convention No. 184), **mining** (Convention No. 176) and **construction** (Convention No. 167).

**By implementing the GHS, States work toward fulfilling obligations in ILS, at the same time by ratifying and implementing many ILS, States work toward fulfilling obligations of the GHS.**



GHS07 Harmful



GHS08 Health Hazard



GHS09 Environmental Hazard



# Synergies between the GHS and ILS

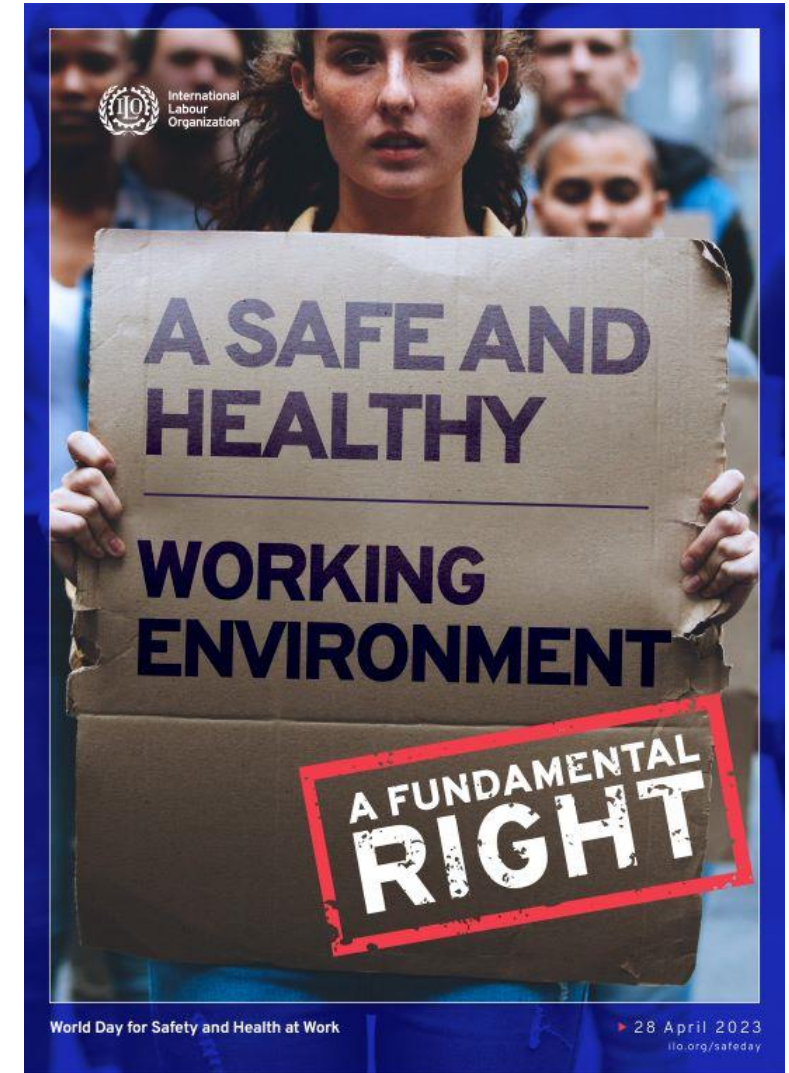
ILO instrument	GHS element			
	Classification	Labelling	Safety Data Sheets	Training
<i>Conventions</i>				
C170 – Chemicals	X	X	X	X
C174 – Major industrial accidents	X	X		X
C187 – Promotional framework for OSH	X	X		X
C155 – Occupational Safety and Health	X	X	X	X
C139 – Occupational cancer	X	X	X	X
C148 – Working environment	X	X	X	X
C162 - Asbestos		X	X	X
C136 - Benzene		X	X	X
C184 – Safety and health in agriculture	X	X	X	X
C176 – Safety and health in mines	X	X	X	X

- Clear legislative overlap between a number of ILO Standards and the GHS
- **Mutually re-inforcing**
- **Powerful argument for implementation**

## 2022: A safe and healthy working environment is a fundamental principle and right at work

- ▶ In 2022, the International Labour Conference (ILC) included **“a safe and healthy working environment”** in the ILO’s framework of fundamental principles and rights at work
- ▶ Fundamental conventions: Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (**No. 155**) and Promotional Framework for OSH Convention, 2006 (**No. 187**)
- ▶ All Member States have **an obligation** to promote and realize the right to a safe and healthy working environment, **whether or not they have ratified ILO Conventions.**

**PARADIGM SHIFT TO A RIGHTS BASED APPROACH**



# Synergies between the GHS and ILS

ILO instrument	GHS element			
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<i>Conventions</i>				
C170 – Chemicals	X	X	X	X
C174 – Major industrial accidents	X	X		X
C187 – Promotional framework for OSH	X	X		X
C155 – Occupational Safety and Health	X	X	X	X
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- The right to a « safe and healthy working environment » decided to be a Fundamental Principle and Right at work
- All 187 member states of the ILO have an obligation to uphold the provisions of the Fundamental Conventions – No. 155 and No. 187
- **Inherent obligation to the provisions of the GHS**

## 2024: A human rights based approach to GHS

The ILO and its Fundamental Conventions can elevate the status and urgency of GHS implementation globally

Critical workers' rights when it comes to safety and health and chemicals management:

1. The right of workers **to be informed** about hazards and risks;
2. The right **to be involved** in measures to address these risks and hazards;
3. The right **to remove** themselves from dangerous situations without without undue consequences.



## ▶ Going forward: Addressing challenges for implementation



## Excessive heat



Every year, at least

**2.41 billion**  
workers exposed

**22 million**  
occupational  
non-fatal injuries

**2.09 million**  
disability-adjusted  
life years (DALYs)

**18,970**  
work-related deaths

## Agrochemicals

Every year,

**873 million**  
workers at risk of  
exposure

Over

**300,000**  
deaths

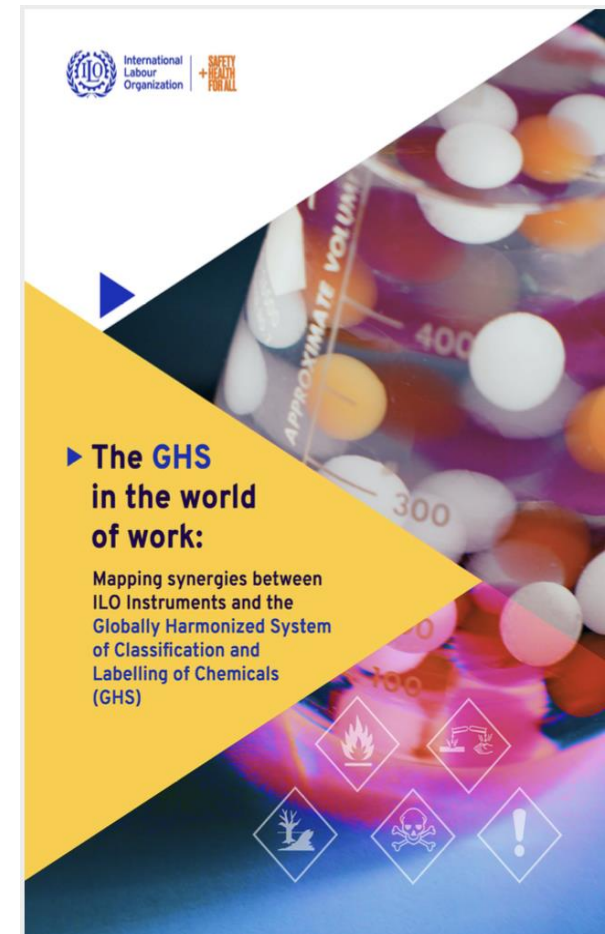


**Ensuring safety  
and health at work  
in a changing climate**

► World Day for Safety and Health at Work 2024

# Key ILO resources

- ▶ [The GHS in the world of work: Mapping synergies between ILO Instruments and the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals \(GHS\).](#)
- ▶ [Exposure to hazardous chemicals at work and resulting health impacts: A global review \(2021\).](#)
- ▶ [ILO Instruments on Chemical Safety – Analysis and synergies with other international frameworks on the sound management of chemicals \(2020\).](#)
- ▶ [The Sound Management of Chemicals and Waste in the World of Work \(2019\).](#)
- ▶ [All You Need to Know: Convention No. 170.](#)
- ▶ [Guidelines on occupational safety and health management systems \(2001\).](#)
- ▶ [Major hazard control: A practical manual \(1993\).](#)
- ▶ [Safety in the use of chemicals at work: code of practice \(1991\).](#)
- ▶ [Prevention of major industrial accidents: code of practice \(1991\).](#)
- ▶ [ILO indicators of progress in implementing SAICM \(2021\).](#)



▶ **Thank you!**

**Let's work together : Halshka GRACZYK / [graczyk@ilo.org](mailto:graczyk@ilo.org)**

