Abstract

Rudolf Anzinger
International Conference

“Fair Globalization – Safe Workplace –
24-26 October 2005, Messe- und Kongresszentrum,
Düsseldorf, Germany

25 Oct. 2005; 09.00-09.15

Safe Workplace – National Policies within the
Framework of International Globalization

SPEAKER:
Rudolf Anzinger

FUNCTION:
State Secretary, Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour

ABSTRACT:

National policies are increasingly being determined by extremely rapid globalization processes. Open markets have the potential to create freedom and prosperity for everyone but only if they are structured in a fair manner. The more equality of opportunity there is, the more people will accept globalization and the more possibilities they will have to use it to the best of their advantage.

The social dimension of globalization is a fundamental challenge for politics. International action must be guided by the need to establish and enforce humane working conditions. Many countries still do not provide an adequate degree of occupational safety and health (OSH). Developing countries often mistakenly see calls for minimum OSH provisions as a new form of protectionism. But worldwide minimum standards are not a disadvantage in competition. Although the task of ensuring “decent work” is primarily a national one, global minimum standards are required to create a framework in which social and health protection can be guaranteed for everyone. Such a framework is a prerequisite for fair competition and prevents dumping practices based on inhumane conditions.

Coordinated measures between all the key players are needed in order to organize work properly. The ILO, in particular, has played a major role in this field. Its internationally recognized core labour standards provide a foundation on which to step up the development of humane working conditions.

The world of work is changing at an unprecedented pace. Tough global competition requires a constant increase in product and service quality. As a result, employees and enterprises are under a huge amount of pressure to adapt to the new tasks and time frames. The European Union has recognized these challenges. In the EU’s “Social Policy Agenda”, the member states have set themselves the aim of improving the quality of working conditions so as to create not only more jobs but, above all, better workplaces by the year 2010. New challenges demand new responses and new approaches. To meet this need, the German federal government, federal states, social partners, Berufsgenossenschafts (institutions for statutory accident insurance and prevention), health insurance companies, foundations and enterprises have joined forces in the Initiative Neue Qualität der Arbeit (New Quality of Work Initiative, INQA). Their goal is to develop workable answers to questions concerning the future, to inform the public about existing examples of good problem-solving practice and to implement them in enterprises. The Initiative’s work is based on a political platform that reflects the common interests of all its participants.