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Social Protection as a Solid Basis for Safety and Health at Work in a
Globalized World

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ABSTRACT:
If competition in a globalized world economy is to be fair, employees in different countries must enjoy comparable levels of social protection. Enterprises throughout the world have an obligation to assure safety and health at the workplace, not least for humanitarian reasons. There are however also economic reasons for this obligation: different standards in social protection create an imbalance in the conditions for global competition. It also goes without saying that a company cannot be successful in the longer term without paying attention to the health of its employees. Efficient employees are the greatest asset of any company or national economy. Effective protection of employees against the hazards of accidents and disease is therefore not only in employees' interests, but is also a key factor for the sustained success of a company on the market. The observance of certain minimum standards by all players in a global market is a requirement recognized as much by enterprises operating on a sustainable basis as by employees and their representative bodies - not least in the interests of competitiveness.

As experience in Germany has shown, sustained and effective protection of employees can best be achieved in a system which is under the joint administration and guidance of employers and employees. In such systems, the interests of both sides, which certainly differ with regard to specific issues, must be reconciled fairly. The grass-roots nature of such a model of control prevents measures for social protection becoming a bureaucratic obstacle to business activity. At the same time, it ensures continued acceptance on the part of both employees and entrepreneurs for the arrangements.