

# Media Update

12 June 2018

## ILO STATEMENT

By ILO Director-General Guy Ryder

### World Day against Child Labour

12 June 2018

#### **Towards the urgent elimination of hazardous child labour**

*“Children are more vulnerable to risk than adults. Urgent action is needed to ensure no child under the age of 18 is in hazardous child labour,”* says ILO Director-General Guy Ryder on the occasion of World Day against Child Labour.

On World Day Against Child Labour 2018, the spotlight is on ending hazardous child labour. It is a priority in the wider ILO campaigns against child labour and for safe and healthy work for youth of legal working age – “Generation Safe & Healthy .”

About 73 million children are in hazardous work – almost half of the 152 million children aged 5 to 17 still in child labour. These children are toiling in mines and fields, factories and homes, exposed to pesticides and other toxic substances, carrying heavy loads or working long hours. Many suffer lifelong physical and psychological consequences. Their very lives can be at risk.

No child under the age of 18 should perform hazardous work as stipulated in the ILO’s Conventions on child labour, namely the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) . They require governments, in consultation with the social partners, to establish and enforce a national list of hazardous work prohibited for children. Ratification of these Conventions by 171 and 181 ILO member States



respectively - close to universal ratification – reflects a commitment to end child labour in all its forms. It is time to step up action.

A new ILO report, Towards the Urgent Elimination of Hazardous Child Labour , finds that certain occupational hazards, including exposure to psychological stress and to commonly-used chemicals, are even more serious for children than previously thought.

Another key finding is that adolescence, as a period of physical maturation, may start earlier and last into the mid-twenties. Within this extended period of growth, children (and young adults), face a range of vulnerabilities that require responses in law and practice.

The report outlines the crucial and mutual link between education and health: lack of education increases the risk of negative health outcomes from work and conversely, quality education has positive and protective effects on health.

Although the overall number of children in hazardous work has decreased over the past years, progress has been limited to older children in hazardous work. Between 2012 and 2016, there was almost no reduction in the number of children aged 5 to 11 in child labour, and the number of these most vulnerable, youngest children in hazardous work actually increased. This is unacceptable.

The 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda reaffirms the urgency of eliminating the worst forms of child labour, which includes hazardous work, the need to promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, and sets the target of ending all forms of child labour by 2025. If we are to keep the solemn promises we have made to the world's children, we must, once and for all, “turn off the tap” and stop children from entering child labour in the first place many of whom, especially in agriculture, commonly start when they are six, seven or eight years old.

Join us on this World Day in committing to urgent action to combat hazardous child labour and to accelerate progress towards ending all child labour by 2025!

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