Occupational health and safety recognized as a fundamental principle and right at work by the International Labour Organization (ILO)

During its recent International Labour Conference, the ILO’s 187 member states, together with employer and worker organizations, agreed on the right to a safe and healthy work environment being included in the ILO’s framework of Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. This is a significant step which emphasizes the importance of protecting workers from work-related injuries and ill health.

This gives occupational health and safety (OH&S) parity with other fundamental rights in relation to employment, such as the right of freedom of association, collective bargaining, elimination of forced labour, abolition of child labour, and elimination of discrimination.

ISO TC/283 welcomes this development and the powerful signal that it sends regarding the importance of effective OH&S management. We hope that it will encourage all organizations to give attention and focus to their OH&S performance, and to challenge themselves to improve that performance wherever possible, in order that workers at all levels are protected from both physical and psychological harm.

We hope that voluntary standards such as ISO 45001, ISO 45003, and those currently under development within ISO/TC 283, will play a significant part in helping organizations rise to this important challenge. As always, we welcome user feedback and input to help us improve our documents and to understand where we can usefully provide further guidance.

Martin Cottam Chairperson ISO TC283