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***12<sup>th</sup> NSCI National Conference on Safety, Health & Environment for sustainable Growth: Challenges & Responses***

***Mallikarjun Kharge says Issue of managing the environmental impacts associated with the rapid industrialization is one of the greatest challenges along India's development path***

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Union Minister of Labour & Employment Shri Mallikarjun Kharge has said that Issue of managing the environmental impacts associated with the rapid industrialization is one of the greatest challenges along India's development path . Shri Kharge was addressing 12<sup>th</sup> NSCI National Conference on Safety, Health & Environment for sustainable Growth: Challenges & Responses here in Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi today. The three days National Conference has been organized by the National Safety Council, a registered Society under the Ministry of Labour & Employment Government of India.

Around 600 delegates from industry, government, professional bodies, institutions, trade unions: and students are participating in the Conference. The Three days conference is expected to span over with seven Plenary and nine Concurrent Sessions covering 62 topics dealing with OSH issues.

Shri Kharge said for over two decades, from the early 1990s, India has experienced one of the fastest economic growth rates in the world, averaging over 6 percent and reaching 7-8 percent per year since 2003. This remarkable progress, however, creates significant challenges for managing pressures on natural resources and the environment, necessary for sustaining these accomplishments.

The Minister said sustainability is a topic that continues to gain the attention of safety, health, and environmental professionals also. Sustainable growth strives to balance social, economic, and ecological issues. The social and economic parts of sustainability often focus on the results of projects and may or may not touch on occupational safety. The share of "growth-related" risks manifested by the industrial waste and chemical pollution is increasing. The issue of managing the environmental impacts associated with the rapid industrialization is one of the greatest challenges along India's development path. In this context, the theme of this Conference holds a great significance. He complemented the National Safety Council for scheduling this Conference at such an appropriate time.

He said the Ministry of Labour and Employment has taken several significant steps recently. The National Policy on Safety, Health and Environment at work place has been declared on 20<sup>th</sup> Feb, 2009. The fundamental purpose of the National Policy is not only to eliminate work related injuries, diseases, fatalities, disaster and loss of national assets, but also to enhance the well-being of the employee and society at large. Its objective is also to ensure achievement of high level occupational safety and health through proactive approaches. He expressed the hope that the effective implementation of the National Policy on Safety, Health and Environment at Work Place with the coordinated efforts of the Central and State Governments, and all stakeholders would ensure enhanced Occupational Safety and Health Standards in India.

Shri Kharge also informed of the India and European Union (EU) entering into a Joint Action Plan to have a policy dialogue and cooperation in the fields of employment and social policy for sharing of experience, periodic exchange of views and information on various Labour and employment issues. He said India also participated in the World Congress on Safety and Health at Work held in Istanbul, Turkey, from 11-15 September 2011. Prior to the Congress, a Summit of Ministers for a Preventative Culture involving Ministers of Labour from all over the world was organized by the Government of Turkey. He said 33 Ministers including myself, signed the Istanbul Declaration on Occupational Safety and Health at Work, recalling that the right of workers to a safe and healthy working environment should be recognized as a fundamental human right. The Declaration announces that priority should be given to occupational safety and health in national agendas by building strong and sustained national preventative culture.

The Minister said amendments of the statutes to address the current issues is a need of the hour. He said as a major step in this direction, the government has introduced the Mines Amendment Bill 2011 in the Rajya Sabha in March 2011. The Ministry of Labour & Employment has also initiated a proposal to amend the Factories Act, 1948.

He expressed happiness on the remarkable growth of National Safety Council, was set up by the Ministry in 1966, to a well recognized national body over the years with a spread of its network all over India with 18 State Chapters and over 8000 members from industry, trade unions, professional bodies and individuals. He said NSC enjoys good cooperation with international bodies like ILO, UNEP and also with its counterparts in many Countries. He also welcomed the speakers from ILO, ISSA and some of NSC's counterparts in other countries, viz. China, Korea, Malaysia and UK to share their experience and perspective with participants.

Shri Kharge released "National Safety Chronicle" on the occasion and presented 85 NSCI Safety Awards to winners from manufacturing, construction and MSME sectors. He also inaugurated the HSE Exhibition showcasing the latest trends in protection against industrial injuries.

Earlier welcoming the Minister the Vice President of NSC Shri Mukesh Galav said as per the ILO, 4% of the world's GDP is lost on account of occupational injuries and diseases. Further, new patterns of employment, modern and complex technologies, older population in employment are adding to the problem. ILO's Decent Work Agenda 2001 together with Seoul Declaration 2008 and Istanbul Declaration signed recently in September 2011 have accorded highest priority to improving the global OSH situation. The government of India being party to each of these international covenants is committed for their implementation.

In his Address Shri V.B.Sant Director General NSC said the biggest challenge today is that of informal workers who do not get the benefit of OSH protection. It is also not feasible to extend the statutory coverage to all these workers. In this regard, the NSCI Conference will share the best National and International practices. The International Labour Organisation (ILO), German Social Accident Insurance (DGUV), International Social Security Association (ISSA), Korea Occupational Safety and Health Agency (KOSHA), American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA), Chinese Occupational Safety and Health Association (COSHA), Malaysian Society for Occupational Safety and Health (MSOSH) and Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) UK will share their views. At the national level, apart from the regulatory bodies and research institutions, corporate like ITC, Coal India, Tata Power, ONGC, Reliance Industries Ltd., IOCL, GAIL SAIL, NFL will share their OSH success stories. The construction companies namely Gammon India, Ashoka Buildcon, Tata Housing, Shapoorji Pallonji will also present their good OSH practices. Elin Appliance Pvt. Ltd. from MSME sector will demonstrate OSH as a sound business strategy for the success.

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