

**7th GLOBAL MEETING OF WHO COLLABORATING
CENTRES FOR OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH
STRESA, ITALY, 8-9 JUNE 2006**

The 7th Meeting of the Global Network of the WHO Collaborating Centres for Occupational Health was held in Stresa, Italy, on 8-9 June 2006. Representatives of 45 collaborating centres from 32 countries participated in it, including a representative of the Interfaculty Institute of Maritime and Tropical Medicine of the Medical University of Gdańsk, which is the Inter-Regional WHO Centre in Maritime Occupational Health.

The Global Network of the Collaborating Centres consists of about seventy Institutes and organizations spread across the five continents. They support WHO in implementing the WHO Global Strategy on Occupational Health for All through the WHO Occupational Health Programme.

The first meeting of the Network was held in Moscow in September 1992, with meetings held approximately every two years thereafter: in Beijing in 1994, Bogota in 1997, Helsinki in 1999, in Chiangmai in Thailand in 2001, and Iguassu Falls, Brazil, in February 2003.

In 2001, a Work Plan 2001-2005 was prepared, and the Centres implemented over 300 projects in the 15 priority areas, including 3 projects implemented by the Institute of Maritime and Tropical Medicine in Gdynia (see the paper of Marilyn Fingerhut and Evelyn Kortum published in this issue of the IMH journal).

The main purpose of the meeting was to share the achievements of the 2001-2006 Workplan, and to work together on the projects in the 2006-2010 Workplan.

WHO endorsed in 1996 the Global strategy on Occupational Health for All and urged Member States to devise national programmes to provide occupational health services for all workers and particularly for the high risk sectors, vulnerable groups and underserved populations.

International seafarers and fishermen are the underserved populations of workers, and the activities of the WHO Centre in Gdynia have been focused on their health protection and promotion, in collaboration with other specialized Centres in Hamburg, Germany, and Esbjerg, Denmark. There are about 1.5 million seafarers employed on ships in the international traffic, and from 15 to 25 million fishermen in the world.

The target population for worker health intervention consists of ½ of the world's population. 2,9 billion are employed in unhealthy and unsafe working conditions. This results in significant burden of disease and premature death. Worldwide, each year there are 160 million of new cases of work-related illness, and 1.9 million deaths of occupational diseases and work accidents.

In Stresa, a draft 2006-2010 Workplan developed previously was discussed, and Collaborating Centres have contributed projects in six Activity Areas:

- Global situation analysis
- Evidence for action and national policies and action plans
- Practical approaches to identify and reduce occupational risks
- Education, training and technical materials
- Development and expansion of occupational health services
- Communication and networking

The Centre in Gdynia contributed two projects to be implemented in 2006-2010.

The Chairman of the meeting in Stresa was Prof. Marco Maroni, Director of the International Centre for Pesticide Safety and Health Risk Prevention in Milan, Italy.

Over 18 themes were presented and discussed in plenary sessions and group meetings.

The meeting was perfectly organised. Stresa was an ideal place for such an event, with beautiful scenery and all the facilities available.

(Contributed by S.Tomaszunas)