

Moncelon Bernard
Chairman of the Section

Madame Commissioner of the European Union
Minister,
Chairmen, Ladies and Gentlemen, Colleagues,

Following the opening session, and before giving the floor to those taking part in the international scientific and technical symposium, I would like to thank the Greek authorities for enabling this event to take place and our colleagues from ELINYAE for having organised it.

Let me in particular congratulate Professor Vassilios Makropoulos, whose enthusiasm made such an impression on the bureau of the ISSA International Research Section – in Toulouse, in fact, in June of 2001, during a symposium organised by the Section. This was where the idea was born of an event to be held in Greece during the country's presidency of the European Union, that could focus on how to satisfy the requirements of occupational medicine.

This enthusiasm became unbending determination once the decision was taken, and I wish to take this opportunity, Professor, to pay tribute to you and express our deepest gratitude for the way you have devoted your expertise and experience to our common cause; all the credit for this success goes to you, though doubtless you wish to share it with all those around you who have provided their support and assistance, and whom I could not fail to mention, as they have been as efficient as they have been friendly and hospitable.

The ISSA President Mr. Johan Verstraeten has just made a presentation on the International Social Security Association (ISSA) and its global outreach. In particular he stressed the importance given by the Association to the prevention of occupational risks and the protection of health at the workplace.

I speak here today in my capacity as Chairman of the Research Section, one of the eleven International Sections set up by the ISSA Special Commission on Prevention chaired by Mr Jean-Luc Marié, Director General of France's National Research and Safety Institute INRS.

For the past thirty years, our Research Section has been working to:

- promote international co-operation and exchange between research workers in the field of occupational health and safety and improvement of working conditions;
- provide validation in practice of results obtained;
- ensure better transfer of knowledge derived from research towards health and safety practitioners but also decision-makers in the area of occupational health and safety;
- bring forward new research actions addressing the concerns of those at the workplace.

This event organised today by ELINYAE is an excellent example of our Section's determination to communicate, in line with the objectives it has set and continuing on from the seven previous international symposia and meetings it has already held.

As always, our ambition has been to provide a platform, and a forum for exchange – on a currently relevant topic – between research workers and occupational health and safety practitioners.

The currently relevant topic is a presentation of the tools for the application of European Directives on health at the workplace.

It is true that tools already exist, but faced with the obligation to comply with national regulations stemming from European Directives on occupational risk prevention, business and industry often find it hard to identify risks and assess exposure. This symposium will thus give us the opportunity to review the problems encountered at the workplace, and also to offer guidance for future research if existing tools prove inadequate and report on solutions that have shown themselves effective.

Once again it will be important that research work be not just reactive and validated, but that it seeks to anticipate issues in the future as much as possible. It is also vital that those in charge of occupational health and safety, and in particular occupational physicians, who do so much that is practical and useful in the workplace environment, feel they are being understood and supported, and find ideas for implementation in the results produced by research.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you for attention and declare open the eighth international symposium of the ISSA Research Section.