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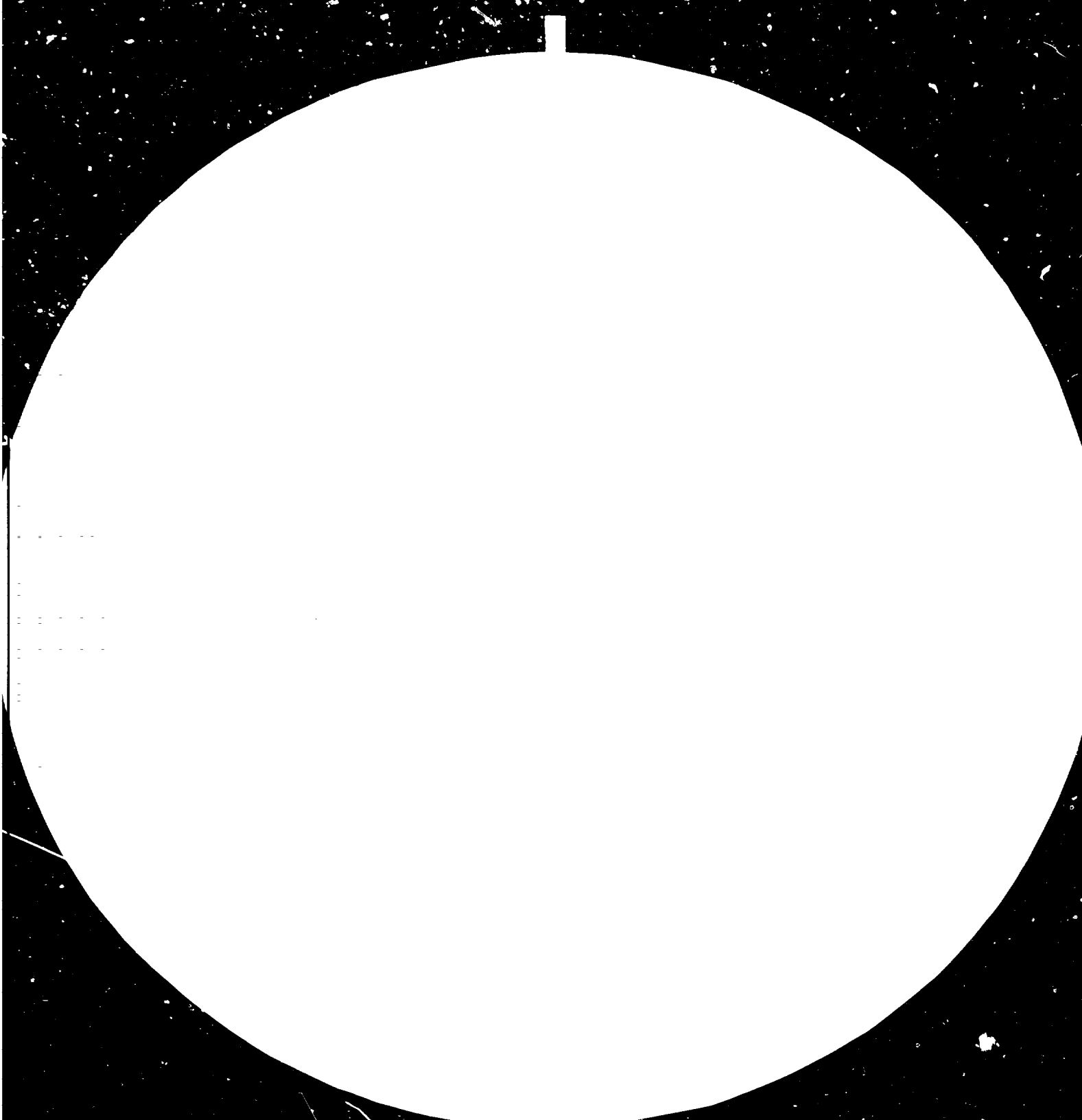
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Sixth Session of the Leather and
Leather Products Industry Panel

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OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH
IN THE LEATHER AND LEATHER
PRODUCTS INDUSTRY *

Introductory Note prepared by
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In December 1979 the Second Tripartite Technical Meeting for the Leather and Footwear Industry of the ILO took place within the framework of the Programme of Industrial Activities of the Organisation. Twenty-six countries from all regions were represented. On the basis of reports prepared by the Office ^{1/} government, employers' and workers' delegates reviewed the major developments in the social and labour field in the past ten years and made recommendations on how to cope with the persisting structural crisis of the sector at the national and international levels and how to improve working conditions and the working environment. These recommendations were endorsed by the ILO Governing Body at its May 1980 Session and thus constitute a mandate for the work of the Office in this field.

Since the UNIDO Leather and Leather Products Industry Panel intends to propose action to promote occupational health and safety it should be fully apprised of the wide consensus reached on this subject in the ILO Tripartite Technical Meeting and of the technical information assembled by the ILO and contained in the report "The effect of technological progress on working conditions and working environment in the leather and footwear industry". The chapters of the latter report dealing with physical and chemical hazards and the organisation of safety and health services (Chapter V-VII) remain valid and are of current concern. The report is, therefore, made available to members of the Panel.

The Tripartite Technical Meeting had a comprehensive discussion on working conditions and the working environment. It arrived at specific guidelines for action at the national and international levels, particularly within the framework of PIACT, i.e., the ILO International Programme for the Improvement of Working Conditions and Environment which was launched in 1976. The relevant conclusions of the Meeting are annexed (Annex II) and its paragraphs 11 to 31 will no doubt facilitate the work of the Panel and avoid unnecessary duplication of effort. They reflect clearly and concisely the pre-occupations of those working in the industry.

^{1/} ILO: General Report, Report I; The employment implications of technological choice and of changes in international trade in the leather and footwear industry.

Report II; The effect of technological progress on working conditions and working environment in the leather and footwear industry.

Report III; Second Tripartite Technical Meeting for the Leather and Footwear Industry, Geneva 1979.

The instruments adopted by the International Labour Conference forming part of the International Labour Code which might have a bearing on the deliberations of the Panel, as they concern occupational health and safety standards for industry in general, are the following:

The Prevention of Industrial Accidents Recommendation, 1929 (No. 31).

The Occupational Health Services Recommendations, 1959 (No. 112).

The Guarding of Machinery Convention, 1963 (No. 119).

The Benzene Convention, 1971, (No. 136).

The Occupational Cancer Convention, 1974 (No. 139).

The Working Environment (Air Pollution, Noise and Vibration) Convention, 1977 (No. 148).

The Occupational Safety and Health and the Working Environment Convention, 1981 (No. 155).

Another useful guide might be the ILO Model Code of Safety Regulations for Industrial Establishments, for the Guidance of Governments and Industry, 1949. These documents are also made available to Panel members for easy reference.

The ILO and its offspring, the International Occupational Safety and Health Information Centre (CIS) continue to follow closely new developments that might occur in that sector. In order to enable the Panel to assess the information available from this service, a bibliography has been compiled for Panel members.

The UNIDO Leather and Leather Products Industry Panel, as well as UNIDO Consultation on the sector might well be instrumental in promoting sound principles of occupational health and safety, particularly in countries where these industries are set up or modernised. Considering the high accident rates and notorious occupational health problems in the leather and leather products industry it would, indeed, be highly opportune for the Leather Panel to join in a programme of action for the application of existing international and national occupational safety standards which would make the plants of this industry a better place to work in.

