

2. Initial visit

The initial visit lasted four half-days, divided up as follows:

Two half-days for familiarization with the site, during which the management provided information on the factory as a whole. The inspectors visited the facilities and collected information on the workshops and on the processes for manufacturing the products in question;

Two half-days for exchanges of view between the team of inspectors, the ad hoc national authority, the representatives of the manufacturer and the observers. These exchanges made it possible to spell out the main points of the specific facility agreement.

The initial visit constitutes a first contact of vital importance, for it enables the inspectors to familiarize themselves with the facilities subject to verification and thereby, in agreement with the national authority and the manufacturer, to determine the nature and the limits of the information needed for the performance of their task. For example, on the occasion of the visit to the factory's laboratory the inspectors were able to assess the types of analysis they would be able to carry out there.

In addition, a survey of the raw material stores showed that, in the absence of specific metering instruments which provided clear identification of the uses of raw materials for the manufacture of the products in question, as distinct from their other uses on the site, the inspectors would need access to certain accounting documents and materials records concerning products not subject to inspection.

Among the conclusions drawn on the occasion of the initial visit, mention should be made of the following:

The value of the international organization's drawing up terms of reference for the initial visit, based, perhaps, on pre-established guidelines, so as to define more clearly the rights and obligations of each of the parties;

The decisive role of the use of accounting documents both in the preparations for and in the conduct of the inspection. In this respect, the participants expressed doubts about the meaningfulness of a routine inspection conducted without access to accounting documents; in cases of double book-keeping; or where some or all of these documents are not presented.

They wondered whether it would be worth while including in the convention a provision whereby States parties would oblige companies manufacturing products subject to verification to adopt a standardized materials and utility management system.