

- ILO 90 in Asia and the Pacific
Remarks by Ms Sachiko Yamamoto,
Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific Regional Office

Director-General, honoured delegates, ladies and gentlemen..

Twenty-two countries in Asia and the Pacific marked the ILO 90 events, and they did so in a number of ways. Governments, workers and employers organizations were active in organizing events in all the countries – with themes ranging from improved Occupational Safety and Health, to strengthening Industrial Relation, to striking a better balance between career and family in Singapore.

All the events celebrated the achievements of the ILO's 90 years working towards social justice, but our constituents also used the occasion to hold dialogues about the economic and jobs crises facing the people of their countries and discuss responses. That happened in China, Japan, Mongolia, the Philippines and Sri Lanka. But of course, the crisis was the underlying theme in all the countries.

So it was an auspicious yet very timely occasion, reaffirming the relevance of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda at the time of the crisis. The events attracted a high-level participation across Asia and the Pacific. Heads of State and Government leaders took part in countries such as Lao People's Democratic Republic, the Philippines, Samoa, Sri Lanka and Thailand – as well as their Ministers of Labour.

Her Excellency Gloria Arroyo, President of the Philippines said her country wished to enhance its commitment to pursue the ideals

and principles of the ILO. And she made that statement as part of a Presidential Proclamation declaring 21 April to 1 May “ILO week”.

In Thailand, His Excellency Prime Minister Abhisit stated that the present crisis especially in Asia with its labour-intensive economies – would mean the ILO has a very important role to play as we move forward to meet the challenge.

In the Lebanese Parliament, a high-level tripartite meeting was held in honour of the 90th anniversary with a special focus on the ILO’s Declarations. Meanwhile, in Jordan, the anniversary was marked with an emphasis on the Better Work campaign jointly sponsored by the ILO and the International Finance Corporation.

But the ILO 90 organizers also reached out to other partners – for example the Ministries of Commerce, Industry and Women’s Affairs in Cambodia and ASEAN.

The ILO 90 events in Asia and the Pacific also reached out to the public at large. The media played a large part. In Indonesia, Thailand and Viet Nam radio and television programmes featured the 90th anniversary with compelling features and talk shows on issues that affect the public and their world of work. In China, Sri Lanka and elsewhere newspaper reports and editorials used the ILO 90th as a ‘peg’ to deal with the serious issues facing the world of work.

Reaching out to all is important. The smiling faces of children seen at many of the ILO 90 events in Asia and the Pacific was a reminder to us all of why we work for a better world. And we made the point in Asia and the Pacific that our aim is to make the world of work, work better for the world.

Thank you.