

FOREWORD

South Asia has a very large informal sector and, with the exception of Sri Lanka, a low level of unionisation. Wages and working conditions of a mere 3 per cent of the workforce are determined through collective bargaining. Even in countries that have ratified Convention Nos. 87 and 98 there is concern about restrictions on trade union rights. In the 1990s, the opening up of the South Asian economies has resulted in downsizing and casualisation of labour. Efforts to attract investment in export processing zones are often accompanied by either explicit or implicit restrictions on unionisation and collective bargaining. These are not in line either with the provisions of the respective national constitutions, or Convention Nos. 87 and 98 or the ILO Tripartite Declaration concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy. This volume presents brief analyses of the industrial relations and collective bargaining situation in five South Asian countries from a trade union perspective.

The ILO Bureau for Workers' Activities has organised training programmes on industrial relations and collective bargaining in five South Asian countries. This publication serves as a useful companion volume to the training manual which was published separately. These, along with the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and the follow-up thereon, will go a long way in promoting sound labour-management relations and encouraging collective bargaining in the region. The trade union movement in South Asia should view the emerging challenges as opportunities to organise the unorganised and to promote 'Decent Work' along the lines outlined in the Director-General's report to the International Labour Conference, 1999.

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