



ILO Fourteenth Asian Regional Meeting
Busan, Republic of Korea
29 August – 1 September 2006

OPINION ARTICLE

ASIA ADOPTS NEW PROGRESS BENCHMARK
10 years to make decent work a reality

By Mr. Ng Gek Boo, ILO Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific

BUSAN, Republic of Korea – The 14th Asian Regional Meeting of the International Labour Organization (ILO) has concluded its work here with a commitment to an “Asian Decent Work Decade” aimed at progressively realizing the aim of decent work in this diverse region.

This is a significant step forward for every worker in Asia, the Pacific and Arab member States of the ILO. Female or male, young or old, skilled or ill-educated, realizing decent work can help them, and their children, get a fairer share of the fruits of this region’s stunning economic growth. And this is not just good for them and their societies but, in the longer run, for us all, because an unfair distribution of the benefits of globalization fosters an unstable globe.

In just a few short years decent work has moved from its original vision at the ILO to a reality in national policy debates and agendas. Now, the UN’s World Summit in New York and its Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) have brought the idea of decent work to highest political level. All levels of society have now recognized that decent work is an idea whose time has come.

Still, many may ask how such a decent work decade can be achieved. In this case the details are already being put in place, with a growing list of national decent work country programmes designed according to each country’s priorities and implemented by them, with help from the ILO if they so require.

In particular these will focus on:

- Promoting sustainable productivity growth, competitive economies and job creation;
- Promoting ratification of core labour standards;
- Promoting access to education for all, to ensure appropriate skills to enhance on-going employability;
- Promoting decent work opportunities and access to entrepreneurship for young women and men, especially through facilitating the school-to-work transition and the sharing of good practice;
- Eliminating the worst forms of child labour;
- Improving dialogue and the management of labour migration so as to benefit both sending and receiving countries and better protect the rights and equal treatment of migrant workers;
- Improving effective labour market governance by adopting, implementing and reviewing labour laws and social policies against the objectives of full and productive work sought by the Decent Work Agenda;
- Developing labour management cooperation and bipartite partnership mechanisms and other appropriate institutions and regulations, including frameworks for social dialogue, as important elements for the effective and fair functioning of labour markets;
- Extending the effectiveness and coverage of social protection for all, including workers in the informal economy;



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This new agreement now provides the political commitment needed to launch policies that can improve the lives of ordinary people.

In recent years Asia has led the world in economic growth and development. Now its countries can set an example in another area – by showing that social policy can go hand in hand with economic performance as a means of providing people with a better life.

Can this be achieved? The statement by the tripartite representatives – workers, employers and governments - this week speaks for itself.

“We are convinced that the ILO’s Decent Work Agenda can contribute to a sustainable route out of poverty, assist in assessing the growing economic inequalities both within and between countries in the region, and thus, makes an important contribution to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals,” the statement said.

“We resolve to ensure that Asia continues to provide global policy leadership in making decent work for all a central objective of our relevant national and international policies as well as our national development strategies.”

(598 words)