

Tripartite Regional Meeting on Employment in the Tourism Industry for Asia and the Pacific

Bangkok, 15 – 17 September 2003

Conclusions

Introduction

A Tripartite Regional Meeting on Employment in the Tourism Industry for Asia and the Pacific was held in Bangkok, Thailand from 15 to 17 September 2003 and was attended by 16 Government representatives from 13 countries¹, 18 Employers'² and 18 Workers'³ representatives. Five observer representatives and resource persons also attended the Meeting. They represented the International Organization of Employers and the International Hotel and Restaurant Association as well as the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions and the International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations.

The Meeting was convened as a follow-up to the ILO Informal Tripartite Meeting on the Hotel and Tourism Sector (HCT): Social Impact of Events Subsequent to 11 September 2001, held in Geneva from 25 to 26 October 2001, as well as to the ILO Tripartite Meeting on Human Resources Development, Employment and Globalization in the Hotel, Catering and Tourism Sector, held in Geneva from 2 to 6 April 2001.

The Meeting designated Mr. Kalaislevan Seenivasagam (Government, Sri Lanka) as Chairperson and Ms. Mereani Korovavala as Vice-Chairperson (Government, Fiji). Ms. Jane Bergmann-Hanna (Australia) was designated Spokesperson of the Employers' group and Mr. Daniel Edralin (Philippines) as Spokesperson of the Workers' group.

The tourism industry plays a major role in the economies of most of the countries in the region, making a significant contribution to GDP and to foreign exchange earnings.

¹ Cambodia, People's Republic of China, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam

² Employers' representatives came from the following countries: Australia, People's Republic of China, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Nepal, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam

³ Workers' representatives came from the following countries: Cambodia, People's Republic of China, Fiji, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Nepal, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam.

Concerning employment, it is a major contributor to both direct and indirect employment. While some 38.7 million people were estimated to work directly in the industry in the region in 2003, 73.9 million were estimated to have been indirectly employed, making a total of 112.6 million jobs. However, the impact of the financial crisis of 1997-98, the events of September 11, 2001, the Bali and Jakarta bombings, the impact of the SARS epidemic, as well as political instability and the struggle for democracy in some countries have combined to deepen the crisis facing the tourism industry, in particular for the Asia and Pacific region. The data shows that the number of jobs in the industry over the last five years has not increased. From the onset of the global tourism crisis to the end of 2003, it is forecasted that the Asia-Pacific region will lose 12.2 per cent of the jobs it had in 2000, i.e. 5 million out of the 41 million jobs. This meant that one in eight workers employed in 2000 would leave the industry. Most countries in the region suffered adversely from the impact of these events, although some more than others. However, the process of recovery of tourism has started in some countries.

The Meeting reviewed a number of substantive issues of importance to the tourism industry in the region. The recommendations and Conclusions of the two previously-mentioned meetings adopted by the ILO Governing Body are appended to these conclusions.

Crisis management

The Meeting noted the recommendations concerning crisis measures to be undertaken made by the ILO Informal Tripartite Meeting on the Hotel and Tourism Sector in October 2001. It considered that, in addition, a tripartite task force should be set up at an appropriate level to act on behalf of the tourism industry to consider, design and monitor the implementation of measures, which could include:

- determining extent of the impact of the crisis
- improving the image of a country with regard to safety and security, clearly defining, localizing and addressing the safety and security problem, and build confidence and awareness through timely and complete information
- collecting best practices and disseminating them to Governments, Employers' and Workers' organizations
- marketing strategies which promote tourism in selected markets, diversification of markets, products and the development of regional marketing strategies in order to limit the vulnerability of the tourism industry

- the development and promotion of domestic and intra-regional tourism including the facilitation of border control requirements within the Asia-Pacific region
- promotion of domestic opportunities to travel

The Meeting recognized the importance of Government assistance to enterprises to mitigate the impact of crises. These measures should be applicable to large enterprises and to SMEs to ensure they remain viable and grow once the crisis is over.

Measures taken by Governments in the region have included, for example: temporary fiscal relief; an easing of loan conditions; the postponement of payment of bills from public providers (such as energy); the temporary suspension or reduction of levies; liberalization of foreign exchange conditions to stimulate foreign investment; encouraging the use of lean periods for work on improvements to tourist facilities; and the liberalization of air traffic to facilitate tourist arrivals.

Social dialogue⁴ should be on-going to permit timely implementation of crisis-related measures when necessary, especially with a view to preserving enterprises and avoiding layoffs. These measures could include training and multi-skilling, working hours, rotation, leave, or early retirement on a voluntary basis.

The ILO should collect and disseminate information on best practices for dealing with crises affecting the tourism industry, especially in the areas of labour relations, employment and working conditions. The ILO should also be ready to extend technical cooperation assistance to countries in the region for managing the social impact of crises affecting the tourism industry. In particular, the ILO should facilitate cooperation between the tripartite partners on crisis management and assist governments to design and implement appropriate measures before and during crises.

The ILO should monitor the implementation of the recommendations made by the Informal Tripartite Meeting in October 2001 to government and social partners.

Employment creation

The Meeting acknowledged the negative impact on the industry which the events referred to above have had over the last five years in the region, and the fact that these crises were beyond the control of the industry, placing it in a situation of preserving rather than creating jobs. At the same time, it recognized and affirmed

⁴ Social dialogue is defined by the ILO to include all types of negotiation, consultation or simply exchange of information between, or among, representatives of governments, employers and workers, on issues of common interest relating to economic and social policy. The definition and concept of social dialogue varies from country to country and from region to region and it is still evolving.

the importance of the industry for national economies in the region and its significant potential for job creation.

The Meeting considered that better information and communication on employment in the tourism industry is needed, especially in times of crises. A system for sectoral labour statistics should therefore be developed by the ILO in consultation with social partners, taking account of the following:

- the number of jobs in existence or being created
- working conditions measured according to the ILO's decent work indicators
- all types of employment in the HCT sector both direct and indirect, including sub-contracted jobs and jobs in the informal economy
- sectoral coverage desegregated by sub-sectors

Where employment is being created in the HCT sector, priority should be given to full time, regular jobs with a view to sustainability. Tripartite cooperation is necessary to create a social and economic environment favourable to the growth of decent work.

Governments, in consultation with the social partners, should take all necessary measures to integrate the informal economy with the formal economy.

The diversification of the tourism product and markets should be encouraged to make the sector less vulnerable to crises. The development of eco-tourism, rural tourism, hinterland tourism and other seasonal products should be supported in order to create or maintain employment and promote the development of large enterprises as well as small- and medium-sized enterprises. Public-private partnership in this regard would be beneficial.

Working conditions and human resources development

Working conditions

The Meeting noted the recommendations of the ILO Tripartite Sectoral Meeting on the HCT sector of April 2001 concerning working conditions in the sector and, in particular, those relating to franchising, sub-contracting, part-time work and women.

A number of decent-work deficits were identified in the tourism industry as referenced in the report prepared by the ILO for the Tripartite Sectoral Meeting on

the HCT sector of April 2001⁵. The report referred to worker skills, human resource policies, working conditions and workers' rights. These deficits need to be addressed to promote the image of the industry. In this regard, it was important to promote respect for freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining in accordance with the ILO Freedom of Association and the Protection of the Right to Organize Convention, 1948 (No.87) and the Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949, (No.98).

The Meeting noted the low level of ratification of the Working Conditions (Hotels and Restaurants) Convention, 1991 (No. 172). It noted that information on and awareness of the Convention was still lacking. The ILO should review the compatibility between national legislation of countries in the region with the provisions of the Convention to assess whether they presented any obstacles to ratification. The ILO should also assist Governments that may make a request in this regard.

The tripartite partners and the ILO should endeavour to improve the image of the HCT sector in general and, in particular, promote the principles enshrined in the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 2000 (No.182), combat sexual exploitation of young persons in the context of tourism, prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS, as well as ensure that workers with the virus are not discriminated against, in line with the ILO Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS in the Workplace.

Human resources development

Proactive human resources development strategies were considered essential for the sustainable growth of the industry and required tripartite involvement. Training in the HCT sector should be better targeted to the industry and workers' needs. Governments should support training.

All Governments represented at the Meeting have in place training policies in the HCT sector that are based on the concept of competencies and competency certification. National bodies, which determine, in particular, certification standards should include the participation of the social partners.

A regional tripartite framework to create internationally industry-compatible standards for training and certification of competencies should be developed with the assistance of the ILO to enable the international recognition of the qualifications of HCT workers and facilitate their mobility and career development.

The ILO should assist the region in creating an international database on training policies and materials and extend technical cooperation to countries requesting

⁵ International Labour Organization: *Human resources development, employment and globalization in the hotel, catering and tourism sector. Report for discussion at the Tripartite Meeting on Human Resources Development, Employment and Globalization in the Hotel, Catering and Tourism Sector, Geneva, 2001*

assistance on the development of training schemes, including electronic means of distance learning.

Training should be affordable and the syllabus and delivery of training should be subject to quality control to ensure the observance of established standards.

The Meeting noted that the International Labour Conference has on its agenda next year, an item concerning an International Labour Recommendation on Human Resources Development which will provide guidance to Member States and the social partners.

International labour migration

The Meeting noted that the question of international labour migration was on the agenda of next year's International Labour Conference (ILC). In view of the growing shortage of workers in the industry in certain countries, labour migration in the HCT sector could be beneficial to both sending and receiving countries with due regard to the respect for workers' rights. It was, however, important that such migration contribute to the development of sending countries in the region.

International labour migration in the tourism sector should be agreed upon between the countries concerned, with the participation of the social partners, but without prejudice to the right of the individual to freedom of movement. Employers should not be allowed to withhold passports of their employees. To this end, Governments should facilitate visa requirements.

National, bilateral or multilateral agreements concerning labour mobility should take into account the principles of the ILO Declaration on Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy.

Migrant workers should have the right to be informed of and enjoy the same rights and working conditions as nationals in the host country employed in the HCT sector.

Social dialogue

The Meeting re-affirmed the importance of tripartite consultation in accordance with the ILO Tripartite Consultation Convention, 1975 (No. 144) and respect for the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, 1998.

Social dialogue should be encouraged and strengthened at all levels in the HCT sector. A precondition is mutual recognition and respect between workers' and employers' organizations. Social dialogue can be an effective mechanism to find solutions that would ensure the sustainability of the tourism industry and preserve employment, especially in times of crisis, and the creation and expansion of quality jobs when conditions improve.

Considering the diversity of the tourism industry, in particular the large number of SMEs, action should be taken to ensure their participation in dialogue to achieve quality services and promote the sustainable development of the industry.
