

***Research Conference – Green Jobs for Asia and the Pacific
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Introductory remarks

Raymond Torres

Director, International Institute for Labour Studies

Ladies and gentlemen, good morning to everybody and welcome to the Research Conference on Green Jobs for Asia and the Pacific.

The issue which will occupy our discussions over the next three days is extremely important. The world is starting to acknowledge the implications of climate change for our economies, societies and people's day to day life. There is now heated debate on global warming, environmental degradation, lack of safe water, rising sea levels, and lately intensifying food shortages. This typically leads to discussions about the role of targets in reducing emissions of carbon gas, increased efforts to raise energy efficiency, greater emphasis on renewal sources of energy, etc. In other words, the policy agenda is often one of environment policy exclusivity.

Vital as environment policy is, it is no less crucial to take the social dimensions into account. I believe that are at least there good reasons for this.

First, the world of work is central to addressing climate change. What is needed is a profound change in the structure of our economies. New business opportunities will arise in certain sectors like recycling and renewal energies, while at the same time carbon-intensive sectors like transportation will have to undergo considerable structural change. Workers and enterprises need to be prepared for what is likely to be a source of structural change possibly more profound than population ageing and globalisation –two other exogenous forces shaping economies and society.

Second, addressing climate change will necessitate a significant shift in the price of carbon emissions, with potentially huge social impacts. There are various ways of raising the price of carbon emissions, ranging from carbon taxes to direct support to new sources of energy. The key point here is that it is crucial to take into account the job and distributional impacts of each of these policy options. Indeed, environment-friendly policies, if well designed, may not only improve the environment but also promote Decent Work. A related issue is whether such measures can be adopted by individual countries in isolation. For instance, it is sometimes claimed that raising carbon taxes may reduce competitiveness, and lead to outsourcing of carbon-intensive activities to no-tax countries. This issue needs to be examined carefully with the help of empirical analysis.

Third, there is a development dimension. Developing countries have not been the main emitters of carbon gas, though they face the consequences of environment degradation. In addition, these

countries obviously do not have the resources to embark upon major investments in new technology. All this suggests that developed countries have a primary responsibility in addressing climate change. Yet, developing countries may actually be very well placed to grasp the benefits of a new climate-friendly economy. The advent of new technology to exploit renewal sources of energy, and recycling activities, for instance, may help unlock the development potential.

In short, we need to better understand how the social, climate and economic dimensions of sustainable development interact each other. This is what has motivated the Green Jobs initiative of the ILO Director-General.

Ladies and gentlemen, there is much room for knowledge sharing and policy innovation in this area. This Research Conference should be helpful in this regard. The event is also timely, given the proximity of the G8 Labour Ministerial meeting which offers us the opportunity of conveying some key messages from existing research. The Research Conference should also help identify issues that require further analysis in order to make progress on the achievement of Green Jobs.

Finally, let me thank the Japanese authorities for their hospitality and driving international role in the fight against climate change.

Thank you for your attention.