

**ASEAN Senior Labour Officials Meeting
and Labour Ministers Meeting**

Mataram, Indonesia, 5-9 May 2003

Mission Report

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CONCLUSIONS AND FOLLOW-UP

- (a) *The participation of the ILO representatives in the ASEAN Senior Labour Officials Meeting (SLOM) was very well received, as reflected in the Joint Communiqué of the ASEAN Labour Ministers Meeting (ALMM) (see Attachment 1). There are significant opportunities for ILO to work more closely with ASEAN on programmes and project in order to achieve greater impact in our work in the region.*
- (b) *The main conclusions of the SLOM and ALMM relating to the matters discussed with ILO representatives were as follows:*
- *The **Joint Review Mission and Report** was well received and the ALMM decided that there should be further discussions between the ASEAN Secretariat and the ILO to pursue the activities and cooperation referred to in the report.*
 - *The ILO has been invited to assist ASEAN in the preparation for a **Special ASEAN+3 Senior Labour Officials Meeting to consider the impact of SARS** on labour, employment, human resources and OSH and the role of the social partners in helping to ease the impact on retrenchments, unemployment and workers protection. It will probably be held towards end of June 2003 in Manila. Interest was expressed in a report already initiated by SRO-Bangkok to update information on countries' capacities to respond effectively to sudden job loss, compared to the situation during the Asian financial crisis*
- (c) *Follow-up work to be undertaken by the ILO as a result of the SLOM and ALMM includes:*
- i) *Assistance to the ASEAN Secretariat in the preparation for the Special ASEAN+3 Senior Labour Officials Meeting on the labour and employment implications of SARS. ILO/EASMAT is undertaking work which could provide the basis for ILO assistance.*
 - ii) *Discussions by ILO Jakarta with the ASEAN Secretariat on the matters referred to in preliminary report of the Joint Review Mission, namely skills recognition, social security*

review, the labour implications of trade liberalization (AFTA) and the informal economy, and on possible cooperation between the ILO and ASEAN in relation to various programme activities – in particular, the ILO Declaration Projects and the ASEAN project on industrial relations, and ILO and ASEAN HIV/AIDS programmes.

- iii) Further consideration by the ILO (Regional Office) of matters dealt with in the preliminary report of the Joint Review Mission, including the further steps to be taken to develop the relationship and cooperation between the organizations.*
 - iv) Consideration of developing a programme for the promotion of core Conventions in ASEAN countries.*
 - v) Invitation to the ASEAN Secretariat to attend the Asian regional consultation on migrant workers and other appropriate ILO meetings.*
- (d) Initial follow-up discussions on the above matters can be held between ILO Jakarta (liaison office) and the ASEAN Secretariat. However technical assistance will need to be provided by SRO Bangkok and Manila, and, where appropriate, by Regional Office and Geneva in order to move forward the programme of cooperation.*

REPORT

1. The Second ASEAN Senior Labour Officials Meeting (SLOM) and the Seventeenth ASEAN Labour Ministers Meeting (ALMM) were held in Lombok, Indonesia on 5-6 May and 8-9 May 2003. ASEAN+3 (China, Japan and Republic of Korea) Senior Labour Officials and Labour Ministers meetings were held on 7 and 9 May 2003.
2. ILO representatives were invited to participate in the SLOM in order to address specific agenda items and to attend the opening session of the ALMM. The invitations followed a letter from the ILO Regional Director to the ASEAN Secretary General proposing items for inclusion on the SLOM agenda and offering the ILO's assistance with the consideration of the items.
3. ILO representatives at the SLOM were Ms. Christine Evans-Klock, Director, SRO for East Asia (which covers 7 ASEAN countries – Cambodia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam), Mr. Werner Blenk, Director, SRO for South-East Asia and the Pacific (which covers 2 ASEAN countries – Indonesia and Philippines), and Mr. Alan Boulton, Director of ILO Office in Indonesia (ILO Jakarta is the ILO liaison office for ASEAN). Mr. Yasuyuki Nodera, ILO Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific, together with the other ILO representatives, attended the opening session of the ALMM on 8 May 2003.

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4. The SLOM was attended by senior officials from the Labour and Foreign Affairs Ministries of the 10 ASEAN Member States (attendance list for SLOM and ALMM attached – Attachment 2). The SLOM agenda items in which the ILO representatives were invited to participate were those relating to the Implementation of the IAI Work Plan and the results of the ASEAN-ILO Joint Review Mission, and various matters proposed by Mr Nodera in his letter to the ASEAN Secretary General including follow-up to the 2002 International Labour Conference, with special reference to the general discussion and conclusions on the Informal Economy, and major agenda items for the 2003 International Labour Conference.
5. The invitation was significant as it is the first time the ILO has been invited to participate in such ASEAN meetings. The invitation is an indicator of the success of previous efforts to increase collaboration between ILO and ASEAN, in particular the joint mission held earlier this year in which Mr Boulton, Ms. C. Torres (SEAPAT) and Ms. Chomesri Vichitlekakarn (EASMAT) participated and for which Ms. Mukda Sunkool prepared important background documents.
6. **ASEAN-ILO Joint Review Mission.** Mr. Cho Kah Sin, Director, Functional, ASEAN Secretariat introduced the session on the report of the Joint mission to review ILO initiatives for decent work and ASEAN IAI priorities on labour and employment (Preliminary Report, May 2003), and then invited Mr. Boulton to present and explain the report. The presentation covered:
 - The purpose of the Joint Review to explore potential areas for ASEAN-ILO cooperation;
 - The background to the Joint Review, including the Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI) Work Plan on labour and employment and the ILO's decent work strategy;
 - Recent issues in relations between the ILO and ASEAN including the 1999 ILC resolution on forced labour in Myanmar;
 - The issues discussed with government officials and representatives of employers' and workers' organizations during the Joint Review mission to Vietnam, Lao PDR and Thailand; and
 - The general findings and recommendations of the Joint Review.

A copy of the presentation is attached (Attachment 3).

7. The main recommendations of the Report of the Joint Review are for:
 - Continuing dialogue between ASEAN and ILO, including through SLOM, regular meetings between the ASEAN Secretariat and the ILO, and information-sharing and cooperation between programmes; and
 - Cooperation between ASEAN and ILO on parts of the IAI Work Plan relating to social security, skills training and accreditation, labour implications of the ASEAN Free Trade Area and work in the informal economy.

8. As to the next steps with the report, it was suggested that if there is a positive response from both organizations, there would need to be more detailed discussions on the implementation of the suggested measures. This would, at appropriate stages, need to involve relevant technical experts from ASEAN and ILO.
9. There were several questions and comments from delegates regarding the report (see below).
10. ***ILO Agenda Items.*** The ILO representatives were also invited to address other ILO matters on the agenda, and, in particular, the follow-up to the 2002 ILC discussion on the informal economy, major matters on the agenda for the 2003 ILC and migrant workers.

(a) ***Informal Economy.*** Ms. Evans-Klock explained the background to the ILC discussion on the informal economy and the conclusions of the discussion. She referred to the growth of the informal economy and the challenges in providing improved labour rights, protection and job quality for workers. She summarized the framework for ILO work on the informal economy, including governance (appropriate laws and enforcement); macro economic policy (pro poor and employment generating); representation and voice (empowering informal economy workers through effective representation); productivity and access to markets (literacy, skills upgrading, small enterprise development); and vulnerabilities (social security coverage, OSH improvement, etc). She identified particularly vulnerable groups in the informal economy, including women, ethnic minorities, the young and migrant workers. Programmes of action need to be developed to address these matters. A copy of the presentation was distributed (Attachment 4).

(b) ***2003 ILC matters.*** Mr. Blenk explained the main items on the agenda for the 2003 ILC. These included: the Global Report “*Time for Equality at Work*”; the discussion on Human Resources Training and Development; the general discussion on the Scope of the Employment Relationship and issues as to how to provide protections for workers under new forms of employment relationships; and ILO standards-related activities in the area of occupational safety and health and the ‘integrated approach’ being developed by the ILO to improve the impact and effectiveness of standards.

(c) ***Migrant Workers.*** Ms. Evans-Klock referred to the planned 2004 ILC general discussion about migrant workers and the regional tripartite consultation to be held in Bangkok at end June 2003. The agenda for the consultation includes one-day being devoted to the social partners. Member States have been asked to respond to surveys in preparation for the general discussion.

11. There were several questions and issues raised by senior labour officials in response to the ILO presentations. These included:
 - possible ILO assistance to ASEAN in the consideration of the employment aspects of SARS (Philippines);
 - the new ILO regional structure (Philippines);

- the possible need to prioritize areas for ASEAN/ILO cooperation arising out of the Joint Review Report (Singapore);
 - the development of a wider programme on industrial relations and the extent of ILO resources committed to ASEAN countries (Singapore);
 - the possibility of developing an Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between ASEAN and the ILO as referred to in the Joint Review Report (Chair); and
 - advice sought from the ILO regarding ratifications of major Conventions by ASEAN States and possible support to encourage further ratifications (Philippines).
12. The ILO representatives responded to the matters raised. Further discussions and consideration will be needed in relation to SARS. A copy of a ratification chart for ASEAN countries regarding the fundamental ILO Conventions was distributed to SLOM delegates (Attachment 5). In relation to a possible MOU between ASEAN and the ILO, the ASEAN Secretariat indicated that this might be considered in the future if there is a need to put cooperation on a more formal basis. [The making of any MOU would, on the ILO side, need to await resolution of the forced labour issue in Myanmar.]
13. It is noted that there were no questions or issues raised by SLOM delegates with the ILO representatives regarding Myanmar. Notwithstanding this, the Joint Communique of the ALMM makes a similar call as in last year's Communique for the ILO to consider removing the measures taken against Myanmar (see below).

ASEAN Labour Ministers Meeting (ALMM)

14. The ILO was represented at the Opening Session of the ALMM by Mr. Y. Nodera, Regional Director, Ms. C. Evans-Klock, and Messrs. Blenk, Boulton and O. Pasaribu (ILO Jakarta). The Meeting was opened by Indonesian President, H.E. Megawati Soekarnoputri and the Indonesian Minister for Manpower and Transmigration.
15. The Joint Communique of the ALMM deals with a range of matters including several involving the ILO. On the *ILO-ASEAN Joint Review Mission*, the Communique states

19. ASEAN Labour Ministers expressed appreciation to the ILO for its assistance in undertaking a Joint Review Mission with the ASEAN Secretariat to identify and recommend areas for ASEAN-ILO cooperation. The Ministers agreed that the recommendations could guide ASEAN-ILO collaboration in the short-term, and that ASEAN and the ILO explore the formulation of a possible framework for longer-term collaboration.

This provides a good basis for further discussions between the ILO and ASEAN Secretariat to progress the areas of cooperation identified in the Report. It will also enable further discussions to develop a joint collaboration framework between ILO and ASEAN for the future.

16. On *general cooperation with ILO*, including participation in future ASEAN Senior Labour Officials Meetings, the Communique states:

20. *The Ministers noted that their Senior Labour Officials had a useful and constructive exchange of views with ILO representatives on the role of the ILO regional and country offices in assisting ASEAN countries address issues of common concern, including the promotion of core ILO conventions and the allocation of ILO resources for the region. The Ministers expressed their hope that such developments would further strengthen collaboration between ASEAN and the ILO.*

There was concern expressed by some SLOM delegates about the level of ILO resources directed to the Asian Region.

17. On *ILO involvement in a Special ASEAN+3 SLOM to discuss the impact of SARS* on labour and employment, the Communique says:

12. *The Ministers requested the ILO, which participated in an exchange of views during the 2nd Senior Labour Officials Meeting, to assist the Senior Labour Officials prepare for their special meeting on SARS. Similar requests would also be made to other relevant agencies such as the WHO and the ADB.*

18. On *Myanmar*, the Communique states:

21. *The ASEAN Labour Ministers also acknowledged the efforts made by the Myanmar Government in eradicating the practice of forced labour from the country. In particular, the Ministers noted the Myanmar Government's willingness to co-operate with the ILO by developing a Plan of Action and continue discussions with the ILO Liaison Officer in the efforts to eliminate forced labour. The ASEAN Labour Ministers reaffirmed their support for the Government of Myanmar in their quest to comply with the ILO Core Convention 29 on Forced Labour and called upon the ILO to consider removing the measures taken against Myanmar by the ILO.*

Other Meetings

19. During the mission, we were able to hold formal and informal meetings with country delegations. These opportunities were of particular importance in building relationships and discussing country and regional programmes. We refer to some of the formal meetings held below.

20. Mr. Nodera together with Mr. Boulton and Mr. Pasaribu met with **Mr. Ong Keng Yong, ASEAN Secretary General** and officials of the ASEAN Secretariat. A range of matters were discussed including migrant workers (Mr. Nodera invited the ASEAN Secretariat to attend the Asia Pacific consultation in June 2003), developments in labour/management issues in ASEAN, support for the newer member countries of ASEAN to develop good HR practices, SARS and the involvement of the ILO in the consideration of the labour and employment implications (this was identified as a good opportunity for ASEAN-ILO collaboration) and labour market adjustment policies. The ASEAN Secretary General expressed the view that there are many opportunities for ILO to engage with ASEAN manpower ministers in the

development of more futuristic labour programmes (in the past, ASEAN countries have been much more inward focused). The Secretary General also referred to the need to develop Myanmar's relations with other countries in ASEAN.

21. Mr. Nodera and Ms. Evans-Klock met with the **Chinese Vice-Minister for Labour** to discuss the China Employment Forum and other matters. Mr. Nodera also had a formal meeting with the **Korean Vice-Minister for Labour**.
22. Mr. Boulton and Mr. Pasaribu participated in a meeting of the **Heads of Regional Manpower Offices from 31 Indonesian provinces**. The ILO representatives made presentations on the Indonesia Tripartite Decent Work Programme and discussed with provincial officials how the plan might be adapted and implemented at provincial and district levels throughout Indonesia. Mr. Boulton and Mr. Pasaribu were also involved in discussions with the **Provincial Government of West Nusa Tenggara** and Indonesian Manpower officials regarding ILO assistance with various provincial labour issues including skills needs assessments and overseas employment opportunities.
23. A meeting was held with Mr. Nodera to discuss issues arising from the SLOM and ALMM. In addition, several other issues were discussed including ILO work and responsibilities in East Timor.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to thank especially those in SRO Bangkok and ILO Jakarta who prepared very helpful briefing papers and notes for the SLOM. We also thank Mr. Nodera for his encouragement of participation of representatives of SRO Bangkok and Manila in the ASEAN meetings. We believe the participation of the ILO in the meetings was most worthwhile in developing new ways of promoting the wider decent work agenda in the ASEAN countries and was very much appreciated by the SLOM delegates.