

ATUC Meeting with ASEAN Secretary General

1. On 13 January 2004, a delegation from the ASEAN Trade Union Council (ATUC) met with the ASEAN Secretary General, Mr. Ong Keng Yong, at the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta. I was invited by ATUC to join the meeting, accompanied by Mr. Carmelo Noriel (CTA, ILO Declaration Project, Indonesia).
2. The ATUC delegation comprised:
 - o Senator Zainal Rampak (Secretary General of ATUC) – Head of Delegation
 - o Ms. Evelyn Wong (Director, International Affairs Department, NTUC, Singapore)
 - o Ms. S. Venkateswaran (Executive Secretary, ATUC)
 - o Mr. Syukur Sarto (Secretary General, KSPSI, Indonesia)
 - o Mr. Helmy Salim (KSPSI, Indonesia)
3. The ATUC delegation met with the Indonesian Manpower Minister (the current Chairman of the ASEAN Labour Ministers Meeting) on 12 January and obtained his support for the recognition of ATUC by ASEAN and participation in ASEAN activities. Mr. Noriel and I had a prior meeting with the ATUC delegation to discuss strategies for securing ASEAN recognition of ATUC and to explain the developing relations between the ILO and ASEAN, including participation in Senior Labour Officials meetings, and various planned activities and studies.
4. At the meeting with Mr. Ong, the ATUC Secretary General outlined the background to the request by ATUC and the value of ATUC participation in meetings of ASEAN Labour Ministers. He referred to the meeting with the Indonesian Manpower Minister and his support for the recognition of ATUC. Mr. Rampak raised various labour and economic issues on which ATUC might seek to engage with ASEAN Labour Ministers, including migrant workers and safety nets.



5. On behalf of the ILO, both Mr. Noriel and I emphasized the importance of recognition/affiliation of ATUC by ASEAN as a first step towards greater involvement by ATUC in ASEAN activities and meetings. The ASEAN Confederation of Employers has been formally recognized by ASEAN for nearly 20 years. We also emphasized the advantages for ASEAN of consultation with employers and unions about labour and employment issues.
6. Mr. Ong suggested that ATUC write both to the Indonesian Manpower Minister and to him about the recognition issue. Mr. Ong also referred to the processes for ASEAN affiliation; the advantages of greater involvement of ASEAN with civil society, including employers and unions; and ways in which the private sector has been involved in some ASEAN meetings. It is a matter for the Labour Ministers to decide upon the agenda and structure of their meetings. As Labour Ministers' meetings are usually held in early May each year, this might be a convenient time to engage in dialogue with employers and unions about matters to be raised at the International Labour Conference.
7. Generally the meeting was positive and the ASEAN Secretary General welcomed the opportunity to meet with the ATUC representatives. In order to pursue recognition, ATUC will need to:
 - a) Request in writing the Indonesian Manpower Minister to write to his ASEAN counterparts supporting the recognition of ATUC;
 - b) Arrange for affiliated unions to approach Labour Ministers in the various ASEAN countries to support ATUC recognition; and
 - c) Forward a copy of the ATUC (revised) Constitution to ASEAN and meet other requirements for ASEAN recognition/affiliation.

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