
Brief Explanation of the Purpose of the Symposium

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I will serve as the General Chair of the "Symposium on Globalization and the Future of Youth in Asia". I am very pleased to serve the meeting in this capacity.

I would like to explain the purpose of the symposium.

First, this symposium has two themes, "Globalization and the World of Work", and "Globalization and Youth Employment".

Rapid globalization in recent years has created many economic opportunities, and has promoted economic growth all over the world. This trend has brought about high economic growth also in Asia. On the other hand, we have to accept the fact that many countries and people are not sharing in the benefits. When we focus on the dimension of people's "work", it is also true; we cannot say that people share the benefits of globalization sufficiently. Some sectors like the modern manufacturing sector and information technology sector are prospering, and they bring larger income to their workers. On the other hand, it has broadened the economic gap between urban and rural areas, and among regions. Opportunities for decent work remain limited.

Under these circumstances, the ILO established "the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization" in February 2002, and its report was released in February 2004. This report makes a close analysis of the impact of globalization and is an epoch-making accomplishment that analyzes calmly its influence on people, and offers a new viewpoint for realizing fair and human-centered globalization. Moreover, in the International Labour Conference this year, it was proposed that providing Decent Work, or humane work to all should be set as a concrete goal of "fair globalization" based on this report. These points will become the starting point of the discussion on globalization, one of the subjects for discussion of this symposium.

Next theme is "Globalization and Youth Employment." This problem is shared by the entire world now. Youth's unemployment rate has continued increasing for the past ten years. 88 million youths have lost their job all over the world in 2003. Moreover, even when the young

are able to find work, they are under severe conditions -- many young people are obliged to labour for low wages or for long hours. Thus, youth are susceptible to the negative impacts of globalization, as they are in vulnerable position of being new entrants into the labour market. On the other hand, youth possess brilliant creativity and flexibility. The youths are assets that possess great potential to contribute widely to the development of society and the economy, if their capabilities can be fully demonstrated. I would like to invite you to discuss how the government, labour and management, and international organizations, etc., should tackle youth employment problem, especially focusing on improvement in employability from the viewpoint that youths are assets.

On the basis of recognition of these issues, we are to discuss "Globalization and the World of Work" during the sessions on day one, and discussions on the theme of "Globalization and Youth Employment" will take place during the sessions on day two.

The theme on the 1st day is "Globalization and the World of Work". First, Prof. Hans van GINKEL, Rector of UNU, will make a speech entitled "Fair Globalization-Benefiting All". Next, Mr. Juan SOMAVIA, Director-General of ILO will deliver a keynote lecture on the theme "Globalization and the Future of Youth in Asia."

Then, a panel discussion will take place on the theme of " Globalization and the World of Work" with the participation of representatives of labour and management, academic experts, and the member of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization. It is expected that discussions be deepened further based on the lectures by the Rector and the Director-General.

The theme on the 2nd day is "Globalization and Youth Employment".

First, a report presented by Ms. STEWART, ILO Director of the Skills and Employability Department about "The Importance of Youth Employment in a Globalizing World".

Next, there would be presentations of situations and actual results of policies and measures for youth employment and human resources development from three nations in Asia, including Japan. Here, the aim is for the governments, labour and management, international organizations, and all of whom participated in this symposium to share practical knowledge and experience about youth employment issues.

After this session, the Japanese youth will speak about their thoughts on work and people and words that support their efforts in a session entitled "Voices of the Youth". We sometimes have negative images about youth employment problem. But I want us to look at the brilliant young persons who are playing active roles in the frontlines of their workplaces.

Based on the above, Panel Discussion on the theme of "Globalization and Youth Employment"

will be held. I would like to invite you to discuss about the role which the young people themselves, the government, employers and employees, international organizations, etc. should play, and search for direction towards solution of the youth employment problem to create a society where young people can actively work and fulfill their aspirations through raising their employability.

I will release the summary document based on the discussions in this symposium at the conclusion of the second day. I strongly expect that in the course of these two days, active discussions will take place from various angles on the interface of globalization and the future of youth and corresponding policies, and a positive message will be formulated first to the people in Asia and then to the world.

I hope that this symposium will bear fruitful results owing to your cooperation.