

Asian Employment Forum: Growth, Employment and Decent Work

Beijing, People's Republic of China: 13-15 August 2007

Background Note

In March 2003 the ILO's Governing Body adopted the Global Employment Agenda the principal aim of which is to make employment central in economic and social policy making in order to create more and better jobs. In subsequent discussions, and in the context of the Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCPs), the Governing Body has highlighted the need to sharpen the focus on the implementation of the Agenda at the national level and the development of employment strategies.

At the Fourteenth Asian Regional Meeting held in Busan, Korea, in August/September 2006, the tripartite delegates launched an Asian Decent Work Decade up to 2015 and committed to the achievement of specific decent work outcomes during this period in accordance with their respective national circumstances and priorities and to cooperate on specific initiatives at the regional level where joint action and sharing of knowledge and expertise will contribute to the realization of decent work.

The conclusions of the Meeting also called for the ILO to "convene a regional event on growth, employment and decent work".

It is proposed to hold this Forum to follow up on these conclusions. It will also be an avenue for reinforcing the application of the Global Employment Agenda at the national level within the framework of the Decent Work Agenda and particularly through DWCPs.

Aims and expected outcomes of the Forum

The Forum will address the broad challenges and opportunities posed by the Asian Decent Work Decade. It will provide a platform for senior policy-makers and high-level representatives of workers and employers from Asia, to:

- Discuss the growth, employment and decent work scenarios up to 2015 and identify key issues that will need to be addressed by member States in the region as they strive to meet the UN Millennium Development Goals. The focus in particular will be on policy responses that can strengthen the link between growth and jobs and the role of jobs in poverty reduction,
- Exchange experiences, identify good practices, and stimulate regional and sub regional initiatives to promote employment-friendly strategies and programmes,
- As a follow-up to the Meeting to make specific commitments to decent work objectives and to review strategies for meeting existing commitments in their national contexts, including in the framework of DWCPs.
- Establish an improved knowledge base for promoting patterns of inclusive growth which generate more and better jobs in the region. A proposed mechanism is an Asian Decent Work Knowledge Network to reinforce the sharing of knowledge and expertise in the region as a significant contribution to advancing the Decent Work Decade. The Network would be at the service of constituents and others in their efforts to implement policy measures for realizing decent work and in the development of development of South-South cooperation initiatives.

Format and technical themes of the Forum

A number of technical themes will be discussed in high-level plenary roundtables and in thematic workshops. Major themes include:

- Visions for the Decent Work Decade: Growth and Jobs to 2015.
- Setting policy directions for job creation and poverty reduction.
- Sustaining productivity and competitiveness for decent work.
- Defining institutions and policies for equitable and efficient labour markets.
- Rolling back informality.

Discussions will be facilitated by knowledgeable experts on the respective topics, and Issues Papers will be prepared on each of the technical themes. Brief information notes will be prepared on existing commitments and measures being taken by countries to implement the Asian Decent Work Decade through DWCPs and other mechanisms. ILO Office Directors will liaise with countries for the preparation of these summaries.

A closing roundtable will focus on if and how to establish an Asian Decent Work Knowledge Network.

The programme will include a field visit to the well known Human Resources Development and Service Center in Tianjin. A more detailed programme is attached.

Participants

The meeting will target very senior policy makers from the region, including ministers, senior representatives of employers' and workers' organizations and of key regional organizations. The following 20 countries are expected to be represented:

Each country will have representatives from the Ministry of Labour (1) and the Ministry of Planning or Finance (1) as well as from workers and employers organizations.

A selected number of other participants, drawn for example from academia, think tanks, local authorities, NGO networks will also be invited.

Meeting venue and timing

The meeting will take place in China, Beijing, from 13 to 15 August 2007.

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