



Tripartite Technical Meeting on Decent Work: Pacific Island Countries

Nadi, Fiji, 26-28 November 2007

Background

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 themselves 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 welcomed the development of decent work country programmes (DWCPs), which are the primary means for setting priorities, harnessing resources and for delivering coordinated support to advance decent work at national level, and requested the Office to assist governments and the social partners in developing these initiatives, with the means available, to consolidate and integrate action.

Compared with most Asian economies, the Pacific islands have experienced poor economic performance over the past two decades. Low rates of economic growth, coupled with fast growing population, have resulted in large-scale unemployment and underemployment, which in turn is contributing to poverty, crime and social instability. How to provide all people in the Pacific with a secure, productive and sustainable livelihood that meets their aspirations is perhaps the greatest challenge. Without a sustained acceleration in growth, the region will be unable to meet this challenge. Higher growth is possible but it requires coherent economic and social policies; investment in human capital; measures to support entrepreneurship and enterprise development, especially in private industries and potential growth sectors; and improved labour market governance and closer regional cooperation.

Given the specific challenges the Pacific Island Countries are facing with, it is proposed to hold this tripartite technical meeting to follow up on the conclusions of the Fourteenth Asian Regional Meeting. The meeting will also provide an opportunity for strengthening tripartism and promoting dialogue within the framework of the Decent Work Agenda and particularly through DWCPs.

Aims and expected outcomes of the Meeting

The purpose of the meeting is to review the priorities of Decent Work Country Programmes, consider their expected outcomes, and identify a framework for a Pacific decent work strategy that reflects the issues and problems common to the Pacific Island Countries in the implementation of DWCPs and the Asian Decent Work Decade.

Establishing clear priorities both at national and sub-regional levels would enable the Office and tripartite constituents to work closely with the United Nations and Bretton Woods institutions, and regional organizations and the donor community to better integrate the objectives of economic growth, full and productive employment, poverty alleviation and decent work in policy dialogue and programming cycles.

The meeting will provide a platform for government technical specialists and the representatives of workers and employers from the Pacific region 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 Pacific region as they strive to meet the UN Millennium Development Goals. The focus will be on policy responses that can promote both employment-rich growth and inclusive development, underpinned by strengthened labour market institutions and governance.
- Recommend priorities for the implementation of DWCPs and consider desired outcomes, exchange experiences and good practices in the priority areas, and identify common issues and cooperation initiatives including knowledge sharing for a Pacific decent work strategy.
- Enhance the knowledge and capacity of tripartite constituents for effective participation in social dialogue and in economic and social policy formulation through key partnership and the development and implementation of DWCPs.

Format and technical themes of the Forum

A number of technical themes will be discussed in plenary sessions, each followed by group discussions to validate the priorities of DWCPs, consider their expected outcomes, and identify common issues for a Pacific decent work strategy. Major themes include:

- Labour market scenarios in the Pacific Island Countries up to 2015.
- Creating an enabling environment for growth and decent work and seizing the opportunities in expanding sectors.
- Promoting inclusive development.
- Building institutions and supporting dialogue.
- Working together: Regional cooperation.

Background documents for the meeting will include a study on “Labour markets scenarios for the Decent Work Decade in the Pacific Island Countries”; an evaluation of recent country programmes and outcomes; draft DWCPs for selected Pacific Island Countries; and a review of donor priorities and programmes supported by international and regional organizations. Plenary sessions and group discussions will be facilitated by knowledgeable experts on the respective topics.

A preliminary programme is attached. A more detailed programme will be sent closer to the dates of the meeting.

Participants

The meeting is designed for technical specialists from the region, including government officials and the representatives of employers’ and workers’ organizations and of key regional and international organizations.

The following nine countries are expected to be represented:

Australia* Fiji Kiribati	Marshall Islands New Zealand * Papua New Guinea	Samoa Solomon Islands Vanuatu
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*At own cost

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

A selected number of resources persons, drawn for example from academia, relevant government agencies, workers’ and employers’ think-thank, regional and international organizations as wells the donor community will also be invited.

Meeting venue and timing

The meeting will take place in Nadi, Fiji, from 26 to 28 November 2007.