



## **15th Asia and the Pacific Regional Meeting**

Kyoto, Japan, 4–7 December 2011

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### **Conclusions of the 15th Asia and the Pacific Regional Meeting**

#### **Inclusive and sustainable development for Asia and the Pacific through decent work for all**

1. We pay tribute to the courage and resilience of the Japanese people in recovering from the massive human losses of the Great East Japan earthquake and its consequences.
2. We thank the Japanese Government and social partners for their warm welcome and excellent organization of the Meeting so soon after the national tragedy and, by our presence here in Kyoto, express our solidarity to the Japanese people especially in the disaster-affected areas.
3. We appreciate the special session organized by the Government of Japan during the Meeting, which enabled us to draw important lessons on disaster response with a particular focus on employment policy.
4. We also express our gratitude that Prime Minister Noda honoured us by addressing the opening session of our Meeting.
5. We thank the Director-General for his report entitled “Building a sustainable future with decent work in Asia and the Pacific”, and the supplementary report which provides an update of more recent developments in the region and argues for moving towards new, more efficient patterns of growth with social justice.
6. We pay tribute to the ILO’s Director-General, Juan Somavia, who is attending the last Asia and the Pacific Meeting during his tenure, for his unwavering support to the development of the region and his tremendous contribution to the advancement of the Decent Work Agenda worldwide.

#### **I. Taking stock since the 2006 Regional Meeting**

7. It is five years since we launched the programme for an Asia and Pacific Decent Work Decade at our last meeting in Busan in 2006. We have taken stock of progress in following up our Busan commitments and while recognizing important achievements, many challenges both old and new lie ahead in realizing our goal of Decent Work for All.
8. We have moved forward in making decent work a central objective in national development strategies and in improving labour market governance, including strengthening governance frameworks to promote gender equality. Sixty-eight

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Conventions were ratified by Asia–Pacific Members since August 2006, however ratification and implementation of ILO core Conventions remains lower than in other regions. Awareness and action on the rights of migrant workers is greater today, although they remain some of the most vulnerable of our region’s workers. Investment in social protection systems in combating child labour and in providing greater skills to our young women and men has increased. From two Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCPs) in 2007, we now have 20 active DWCPs and another 21 under development, including six in the Pacific. They cover a range of activities including employment policies, vocational training systems, capacity building of the social partners, occupational safety and health, and eliminating child labour.

9. The five years since our Busan Meeting have also witnessed many large-scale natural disasters in the region – floods, earthquakes, tsunamis, cyclones and typhoons. As Japan has recently confirmed, employment and social policies are an important part of the planning for disaster prevention and response and are an increasingly important issue for ILO cooperation in the region.

### ***Dynamic region facing huge challenges***

10. Asia and the Pacific is the world’s most dynamic region. Fast growth in a number of countries has lifted family incomes and enabled hundreds of millions of people to escape severe poverty.
11. Yet even in the periods of fastest growth, we have not generated enough decent work to reduce our large numbers of working poor and huge informal economies.
12. Within a generation, Asia and the Pacific has made dramatic economic progress. The region is increasingly integrated into the global economy, with all the opportunities and challenges that competing on the international market brings.
13. In the aftermath of the global economic and jobs crisis, the region quickly rebounded. But now, renewed financial turmoil in other parts of the world again threatens our economic and social development.
14. Even before the crisis, fast growth was unevenly spread and inequalities in income and wealth widened in many economies. Many hundreds of millions have risen above the lowest threshold of poverty, yet the region still accounts for 73 per cent of the world’s working poor. Many remain vulnerable to natural and human-made shocks and disasters. Social protection systems do not yet cover effectively many of our people, despite recent important progress.
15. We are an extremely diverse region and cooperation for development, taking this into account, is vital to our future.

### ***Meeting the demand for decent work***

16. Our region is the world’s most populous and has a fast-growing labour force, whose enormous productive potential we must enlarge and utilize to eradicate poverty by progressively diminishing the scale of informal economies and encouraging the creation of decent jobs.
17. Gender discrimination, especially unequal treatment and opportunities for women in the world of work, remains a major concern in our societies and must be addressed as a priority in order to reap the social and economic benefits of gender equality.

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18. Migrant workers, both those moving from rural to urban areas within countries and those crossing borders, are helping to build our region's prosperity but are among the most vulnerable to exploitation and discriminatory treatment.
  19. Asia and the Pacific has the highest number of workers engaged in domestic work. Despite their crucial role in the economic functioning of societies, domestic workers, especially migrants, are particularly vulnerable to poor working conditions and human rights abuses.
  20. Too many among our huge population of young women and men cannot find a decent job that is so vital to their chances of a decent life. But paradoxically, millions of boys and girls in the region who should be in school are working.
  21. Some countries in the region face the problem of an ageing population and a smaller working-age population.
  22. We are also increasingly aware of the impact economic development is having on our often fragile natural environment. Efforts across the region to address the effects of climate change and the greening of our economies hold great potential for increased opportunities for decent work.
  23. The decent work opportunities our region needs will be created if businesses are able to operate in, and together with workers, take advantage of a sustainable economic and social environment.

### ***Dialogue and cooperation for reform and continued progress***

24. Recent developments in some Arab States underline the consequences of social exclusion, lack of decent jobs and the denial of fundamental rights. Widespread demands for social justice, dignity, decent jobs, respect for fundamental rights and an end to economic exclusion have highlighted the importance of the Decent Work Agenda.
25. International labour standards are important for helping countries and their citizens to become more inclusive socially, economically and politically. Social dialogue is important both to settle disputes and also to cooperate on agreed ways forward to grow sustainable enterprises, enlarge decent work opportunities, build social protection systems and establish employment arrangements that protect workers' rights.
26. We will intensify our promotion of ratification and implementation of core labour standards as well as respect for fundamental principles and rights at work.
27. Social dialogue and cooperation are the watchwords for our renewed drive to meet the needs of ILO constituents and fulfil the goals of the Asia and Pacific Decent Work Decade through national, regional and global action. DWCPs should adequately reflect tripartite constituents' priority setting, engagement and ownership. We commit to accelerate the expansion and implementation of DWCPs across the region through a series of concrete and practical measures specified to varying national conditions, based on and around the four pillars of the Decent Work Agenda.
28. Governments, Employers and Workers of the Asia-Pacific region reaffirm their commitment to the Asia and the Pacific Decent Work Decade, initiated at the 14th Asian Regional Meeting.

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29. Taking into account developments since constituents last convened, these conclusions address the further implementation of the Asia and the Pacific Decent Work Decade through to 2015.

## **II. National policy priorities for the Asia and the Pacific Decent Work Decade**

30. Building on the 2006 Asia and the Pacific Decent Work Decade, the following policy priorities for the period up to 2015 are shared by the diverse countries of our region. Their application may vary according to national circumstances. Social dialogue is key to ensuring the quality and effectiveness of policy design and implementation. Promoting gender equality across these policy fields is also essential.

### ***Economic, employment and social policies***

31. Working to ensure that decent work and full employment are at the heart of policies for strong, sustainable and balanced growth and inclusive development.
32. Designing policy packages, based on the ILO's Global Jobs Pact, to promote an equitable jobs-rich strategy.
33. Promoting increased productivity across the economy as a foundation for increasing decent work opportunities, raising incomes and improving living and working conditions.
34. Promoting collective bargaining and the development of minimum wage systems based on ILO standards.
35. Reducing poverty and wide inequalities in income and wealth.
36. Building effective social protection floors, in line with national circumstances.
37. Supporting the participation of ILO's tripartite constituents in national high-level discussions on economic, employment and social policy design and implementation, recognizing the need for policy coherence.
38. Encouraging relevant global and regional institutions to support making decent work and full employment an important goal of internationally and regionally coordinated macroeconomic policies.

### ***Sustainable enterprises, productive employment and skills development***

39. Improving the enabling environment for sustainable enterprises is important to creating the decent work opportunities our region needs.
40. Promoting a well-designed transparent, accountable and well-communicated regulatory environment for business, including regulations that uphold labour and environmental standards.
41. Promoting the use of the ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy.
42. Promoting entrepreneurship, including for young women and men.

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43. Promoting quality public services and the social economy, including cooperatives.
  44. Boosting rural and agricultural development consistent with decent work.
  45. Building the capacity to produce, collect, analyse and disseminate labour market statistics, including sex-disaggregated information, to inform evidence-based policy-making.
  46. Strengthening employment services systems.
  47. Strengthening employment-intensive investment, where necessary, for example through public employment guarantee schemes that are consistent with the creation of decent work.
  48. Implementing measures to address the challenge of creating opportunities for young women and men to enter into sustainable employment and decent work.
  49. Equipping the workforce, particularly young people, with the skills required for decent work and productive employment.
  50. Continuing to focus on integrated strategies to facilitate the transition of informal economy workers and enterprises into the mainstream economy and the improvement of incomes and working conditions.
  51. Promoting greener growth and green jobs, consistent with maintaining economic and social sustainability.
  52. Improving occupational safety and health.
  53. Improving disaster preparedness and response capacity with a particular focus on the employment and social dimensions of relief and reconstruction.

### ***Rights at work and social dialogue***

54. Intensifying efforts to ratify and implement core labour standards as well as ILO governance Conventions.<sup>1</sup>
55. Strengthening respect for freedom of association and collective bargaining as enabling mechanisms to productive social dialogue.
56. Supporting and, where necessary, building up social dialogue institutions and procedures for preventing and resolving disputes.
57. Enhancing the capacity of workers' and employers' organizations to engage in social dialogue and collective bargaining.
58. Making full use of social dialogue to anticipate and address labour market changes, including those that will come with the transition to low-carbon economies.
59. Supporting labour inspection as a crucial tool for ensuring enforcement of laws including those regarding occupational safety and health, minimum wages and other working conditions.

<sup>1</sup> Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81), Employment Policy Convention, 1964 (No. 122), Labour Inspection (Agriculture) Convention, 1969 (No. 129), Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144).

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60. Expanding technical assistance and cooperation on labour migration, including dialogue and bilateral agreements between origin and destination countries to improve recruitment practices and protect migrants' rights, and promoting ILO instruments on migration and the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189), and the accompanying Domestic Workers Recommendation, 2011 (No. 201).
  61. Intensifying efforts to address the needs of vulnerable workers, including those with disabilities, girls and boys in child labour, victims of trafficking and forced labour, those affected by HIV and AIDS, indigenous peoples and workers in workplaces where their fundamental rights are denied.

### **III. ILO action**

62. In the light of the Meeting's identification of the policy priorities for the remainder of the Decade, the Office will:
  - (a) review its work programmes in support of constituents;
  - (b) intensify collaboration with regional and international organizations including the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the United Nations in Asia and the Pacific with the full involvement of the social partners to promote full and productive employment and decent work for all;
  - (c) develop collaborative efforts with the relevant national and regional organizations to promote policy coherence and undertake joint research to promote action on the priorities identified above;
  - (d) monitor, advise and report on progress in implementing the above priorities and initiatives and those decided at the 14th Asian Regional Meeting; and
  - (e) evaluate the effectiveness of the above priorities and initiatives in delivering decent work to inform deliberations at the 16th Asia and the Pacific Regional Meeting.
63. Furthermore, we call upon the Governing Body of the ILO to instruct the Office to assist, as appropriate and upon request, efforts of the tripartite constituents in the Asia and the Pacific Decent Work Decade.