



## 15th Asia and the Pacific Regional Meeting

Kyoto, Japan, 4–7 December 2011

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### Report of the 15th Asia and the Pacific Regional Meeting

#### Introduction

1. The 15th Asia and the Pacific Regional Meeting of the International Labour Organization (ILO) was held in Kyoto, Japan from 4 to 7 December 2011.
2. The Meeting adopted its programme, appointed a Credentials Committee in accordance with the *Rules for Regional Meetings*, 2008, and established a Drafting Committee to consider conclusions for submission to the plenary.

#### Opening ceremony

3. The Meeting unanimously elected Ms Yoko Komiyama, Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare of Japan, as its Chairperson and Mr Saqr Ghobash, Minister of Labour of the United Arab Emirates, Mr Kim Young-Vae of the Korea Employers Federation, and Mr Takaaki Sakurada of the Japanese Trade Union Confederation (JTUC–RENGO) as its Vice-Chairpersons.
4. In her opening statement, Ms Komiyama expressed appreciation for her election as the Chairperson of the Meeting. She also expressed deep gratitude for the warm support received from all participating countries following the Great East Japan Earthquake disaster. Holding the Meeting in Kyoto offered hope and encouragement to the people of Japan as they strove for reconstruction.
5. Five years had passed since the last Meeting held in the Republic of Korea. This Meeting offered an opportunity to review progress made in the Decent Work Decade in Asia and to learn about the efforts under way in various countries. The double hardship of the global financial crisis and the earthquake disaster had made her doubly aware of how deeply an unstable labour environment affected individuals and society. The Chairperson invited all participants to attend the Special Session on crisis response in the event of natural disasters, expressing the hope that it would prove useful to other countries in this disaster-prone region.
6. The city of Kyoto offered not only a glorious history and ancient beauty, but also a long tradition of nurturing the skills of ordinary working people to develop technology and to support the nation's industries. Similarly, decent work offered the potential for happiness for individual working people as well as for the growth of the whole country. The Chairperson closed by expressing her hope that the discussions at this Meeting would show the way to achieving decent work for all in the Asia and the Pacific region.

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7. The Chairperson of the Governing Body, Mr Greg Vines, congratulated the Government and people of Japan on their extraordinary work in the amazing progress of recovery from the earthquake and tsunami in March. He noted that the influence and effectiveness of the Asia and the Pacific group had grown in recent years, ensuring that the diverse interests and challenges of the region were taken into account in all ILO decision-making. He noted that the Meeting was being held at a critical time for the region. Against a backdrop of decelerating global growth and a fragile economic situation, the region was facing a number of key challenges. These included uneven productivity growth, rising inequality, limited social protection, persistent vulnerability and informality of employment, and weak representation and voice.
  8. The speaker highlighted concerns with regard to unemployment and working poverty among youth, while also drawing attention to the demographic transition of ageing societies. Job quality in some countries remained poor. The uprising and transition to democracy in the Arab States underscored the importance of social justice, fundamental rights and economic inclusion. Along with the wealth of opportunities, there were two priority needs for the region: promoting robust social dialogue and the establishment of social protection floors (SPFs). In light of this dichotomy of great challenges and equally significant opportunities, the Office must continuously strive for greater efficiency and effectiveness, as called for in the 2008 Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization. The reorganization of the field structure, greater attention to the design and development of Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCPs), emphasis on results-based management and efforts to strengthen partnerships and expand cooperation were all examples of these efforts. In closing, the speaker thanked the Director-General for his magnificent contributions to the region during his term in office.
  9. The Director-General of the ILO, Mr Juan Somavia, thanked Prime Minister Noda of Japan for his presence, noting that the Prime Minister's call for hope and pride, rather than despair and anger in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake and tsunami in Japan was inspiring. He expressed solidarity with the people of Japan, who had regained the admiration of the world for the dignity and humanity they had shown in the wake of the disaster. The Asia and the Pacific region was all too familiar with environmental challenges and natural disasters, but at the same time had great resilience and capacity to learn from past experiences.
  10. Asia's dynamism and growth had brought many benefits and lifted millions from poverty. But growth had been unfair, unbalanced and unsustainable, and decent work deficits could threaten social cohesion and political stability. At the same time, Asia had become more open to external developments, both positive and negative. As dark clouds gathered as a result of the European sovereign debt crisis, low consumer and business confidence, and a fragile labour market in the United States, a new vision of growth was needed for a new era of social justice. The global economic situation was a reflection of the fact that the multilateral governance framework and, in some cases, national political systems were not coping well with the power of global financial operators. Policies were needed to benefit working families and the real economy. Popular uprisings and other expressions of frustration and anger had increased and were linked to decent work deficits. Full employment needed to become a target to be monitored alongside inflation and other macroeconomic variables. In sum, there was a need for more productive investment in the real economy through Global Jobs Pact policies, and by reducing the space for unproductive financial policies and operations.
  11. The Asia and the Pacific region was incredibly diverse and played an increasingly important role in the global economy, leveraging its diversity to showcase new and efficient growth models. He thanked the Asian G20 countries and the Prime Minister of Japan for their support and leadership in the G20.

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- 12.** The Director-General pointed out key challenges facing the region: the need for efficient and equitable growth patterns; the establishment of a SPF; unlocking the potential of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to drive employment growth; green jobs; inclusive and fair labour markets based on international labour standards; effective governance of labour migration; and regional cooperation and integration. Decent employment opportunities for youth and women were a particular challenge.
  - 13.** The current state of workers in the occupied Arab territories was unacceptable. The Director-General expressed his support to the Palestinian people. The ILO would also support the evolution of the Arab world and respond to needs and demands as they arose. It was a rare opportunity to be in a generation that could make a historical difference. Decent work was a vision that was shaping action and it was important to persist.
  - 14.** The Director-General concluded by thanking the region for the friendship and inspiration he had experienced while in office and by noting that his bond with the region would not end with his retirement from the ILO.
  - 15.** His Excellency, Mr Yoshihiko Noda, the Prime Minister of Japan, welcomed all delegates and thanked the governments, workers and employers for the support and encouragement they had offered Japan for its recovery and reconstruction following the Great East Japan Earthquake. He appreciated the efforts of the Director-General and the Regional Directors of the Asia and the Pacific and the Arab States regions, and thanked the social partners from Japan and throughout the region for their cooperation. The theme of the Meeting was to expand decent work in Asia and the Pacific. Global connectivity raised profound questions as to the significance of work. Problems of social justice and economic rationality were intertwined and economic conditions were ever-changing. These concerns were highly relevant to reviving the middle class, an important issue for Japan.
  - 16.** In 1968, when the Asia and the Pacific Regional Meeting was last held in Japan, the country had recovered from post-war devastation and was experiencing high economic and per capita income growth. This was an era of hope and aspirations that hard work would lead to better living standards and all could benefit from growth. The driving factor behind this was the large middle class, supported by a reliable system of social security. Increased purchasing power led to further economic growth. Today, there was a growing crisis of the middle class around the world, and an increasing gap between the rich and the poor, leading to progressive polarization. If left unchecked, the stability of society could be undermined. The key must be to create a social safety net while maintaining social vitality and encouraging competition.
  - 17.** There was a tendency for widening inequality to be blamed on globalization. However, globalization had also led to the rise of Asia–Pacific economies and provided new opportunities for people. The new middle class in emerging economies would drive the creation of new markets and propel the global economy. Therefore, instead of turning away from globalization, it was important to maximize the benefits while also applying policies to address the social problems it caused.
  - 18.** The current global economic situation had badly affected Japan, particularly youth and non-regular workers who had lost jobs and homes. With deeper global integration, a crisis in one country quickly affected workers in other countries, particularly those in vulnerable positions, through links in international finance and supply chains. In this context, it was essential to broaden social safety nets against risks and to support the unemployed through vocational and skills training and subsistence support to jobseekers.

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- 19.** Japan had gradually enhanced its social safety net system and would offer its experience to other countries in the region, in cooperation with the ILO. Indeed, within ten years, Japan would face an ultra-ageing society and with that in mind would strive to build a social security system that was sustainable and that could serve as a model for the entire region.
  - 20.** The Special Session on natural disasters would highlight lessons learned from the Great East Japan Earthquake, which Japan could share with other countries in the region.
  - 21.** In the past, Japan's economic policies had not integrated employment concerns, but since 2009, efforts had been undertaken to build a new philosophy towards policy-making. In June 2010, the "New Growth Strategy" was drawn up. It identified employment creation as a central task. New demand would be created by technology and services that contributed to solving social issues such as environmental problems and the declining birth rate and ageing. This employment strategy would be linked to the promotion of green jobs, support for the health-care sector, regulatory reform and human resources development. Japan aimed to work with the ILO and other international organizations to share knowledge and experience on employment creation.
  - 22.** In conclusion, the speaker noted the value of work in Japan's history, not only as a source of income but also of personal achievement and contribution to society. These principles were fundamentally linked to the current concept of decent work. In the global context, the middle class faced a variety of challenges, and it was essential to protect the quality of employment, broaden social safety nets and value investment in people – in other words, to build the foundations of decent work and to create a society in which opportunities for social participation and the fruits of economic growth were available to all.
  - 23.** The President of the Japanese Trade Union Confederation (JTUC-RENGO), Mr Nobuaki Koga, observed that the common desire of the Government, workers and employers of Japan to host the Meeting in Kyoto was a reflection of tripartite collaboration in the Great East Japan Earthquake and recovery process. He expressed great appreciation for the expressions of sympathy received from around the world, in particular the support from trade unions. Natural disasters were widespread in the region and the speaker expressed sincere condolences to those affected.
  - 24.** At the last Asia and the Pacific Regional Meeting in 2006, key priorities for action were established, and the Kyoto Meeting was an opportunity to assess progress made. However, ratification of core labour standards remained insufficient, and the rate of the ratification was lower in Asia and the Pacific than in other regions. The economic crisis threatened to undermine workers' employment security and wages. While unemployment rates had rebounded, job creation was often concentrated in precarious employment, and social protection systems remained weak. Moreover, youth and women were disproportionately affected.
  - 25.** There was a need to strengthen the values of the Decent Work Agenda, based on social dialogue. The recent G20 Summit in Cannes called for a global strategy for growth and employment, while the L20 and E20 meetings convened in conjunction reaffirmed the importance of social dialogue, employment creation, and fundamental principles and rights at work. Priority was placed on creating a business environment conducive to job creation and strengthening social protection. In this regard, collective bargaining was essential. The speaker strongly hoped that ratification of the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98), would be included as priority areas for action in the conclusions of the Meeting.

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26. In closing, the speaker noted that solidarity among people was the driving force for recovery and reconstruction from natural disasters. Supporting people in need was a social mission of the labour movement and trade union members had worked as volunteers in the disaster-hit areas of Japan. He hoped that the Meeting would contribute to a paradigm shift towards sustainable development based on constructive dialogue.
  27. The Vice-Chairman of Keidanren, Mr Atsutoshi Nishida, expressed gratitude for the warm support from the rest of the world after the Japan earthquake and tsunami. Japan was now rebuilding its production supply chains and economic recovery was under way. But the European debt crisis called on governments and social partners to cooperate to achieve sustainable, balanced economic growth and to push forward the promotion of decent work. He highlighted the importance of the private sector for sustainable job creation in the long term and urged the development of an environment and policies that were supportive of sustainable enterprises development, as confirmed in the conclusions of the eighth ILO/IOE/CAPE Asia-Pacific High-level Employers Summit.
  28. The speaker welcomed the Prime Minister's position on opening up Japan, for instance with regard to the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement, and the potential to secure conditions for fair competition with other countries. At the G20 Summit in Cannes, growth, employment and social security appeared at the top of the final declaration. The ILO had a major role to play. Youth employment was a global issue. Also, in the region, widespread informality was a major challenge to be addressed. Private companies would play an increasingly important role in employment creation.
  29. To achieve sustainable growth, strong political leadership was needed. Also, corporate managers must consider how to strengthen the international competitiveness of their companies. Business success to date had rested on the personal efforts of managers and close cooperation and dialogue with workers. In Japan, labour and management representatives held open discussions and dialogue to guide the direction of companies, to develop a shared understanding of the business situation and reach consensus on working conditions. He expressed the hope that the Meeting would provide an opportunity to share information about the experiences of Japanese workers and employers and that the future ILO policy in the region would be based on mutual understanding among the three parties.

### **Keynote address by HE Mr José Luís Guterres, Deputy Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste**

30. His Excellency Mr José Luís Guterres, Deputy Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, speaking on behalf of the Prime Minister of Timor-Leste, thanked the Director-General for the tremendous solidarity shown by the ILO, which had been critical for the stability of the country.
31. Being among the fragile countries of the world, Timor-Leste faced major challenges on the path to prosperity and progress. The speaker stressed the important role of employers' and workers' organizations, and noted the recent establishment of the Timor-Leste Chamber of Commerce and Industry, which gave a voice to employers and provided important training and other services to industry. Developing the private sector to become the engine of the economy in Timor-Leste was a key priority and the speaker commended the ILO for its technical support in this area.
32. With peace and stability in the country, the economy had grown by 9 per cent last year. With rich natural resources, the country had great potential. The Government hoped to provide clean water, improved infrastructure and better living conditions for the people

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through a national development fund, which currently held US\$10 billion. The goal was to eradicate poverty and to become an upper middle-level income country by 2030.

33. The employment challenges facing the country were great, with 50 per cent of the population under 19 years of age. The Employment Action Plan from 2008 addressed these issues by focusing on employment creation, entrepreneurship, employability and equal opportunity.
34. Timor-Leste had joined with 18 other conflict-affected countries under the G7+ to enable them to speak with one voice on matters of mutual concern. Referring to the heavy financial costs of conflict, the speaker emphasized that providing opportunities for decent work was the key that would make the difference between state failure and national development.
35. As Timor-Leste had experienced near isolation from the world for many years, the speaker reflected on today's global interconnectedness. The European sovereign debt crisis was a result of the interconnected world of today, but that interconnectedness had also made possible the effortless communication among popular movements through social networking during the Arab Spring, which had led to Tahrir Square becoming a symbol of freedom.
36. The Deputy Prime Minister reflected on the Asian century and reiterated Timor-Leste's profound commitment to a people-focused and people-centred approach. The challenge of the Asian century was to ensure that it was part of a world century in which a global labour market, based on international labour standards and principles of equity and the protection of workers, could develop along with global financial markets. Decent work should be promoted in the region and throughout the world. The speaker concluded by reiterating his strong belief in, and firm commitment to, the Decent Work Agenda of the ILO, which could help to ensure the development of safe, secure societies.

## **Keynote address by Dr Ahmed Mohammed Luqman, Director-General of the Arab Labor Organization**

37. The Director-General of the Arab Labor Organization noted the grace and patience of the Japanese people in dealing with the natural disaster which had struck Japan in April of this year and expressed his condolences to those families who had suffered losses.
38. He expressed his satisfaction with the Director-General's Report to the Conference. The Arab world shared the confidence of the Director-General that decent work was the best tool to promote social justice. Emphasizing the importance of the dignity of human beings, he praised the Director-General for his foresight and vision.
39. The international financial crisis had resulted from untamed globalization, which had led to the crumbling of global financial institutions and had resulted in a major employment crisis. The world had not yet found the right solutions to the problems. There was a focus on saving institutions, rather than human beings. Following the Arab Spring, there had been promises of financial assistance from the G8 and from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), but the speaker expressed the fear that these promises might remain unfulfilled in light of the deepening financial crisis in the western world. In the Arab world, the negative effects of the crisis had been felt, but in a different manner. Notwithstanding the decrease in the real value of oil which had had financial implications for many countries, the Arab world had changed since Busan.

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40. With 40 per cent unemployment in the Arab world, it was only natural that youth in many countries had sought social justice through peaceful means and yet social upheavals, demonstrations, and sit-ins had been suppressed in countries such as Egypt, Libya, Syria, Tunisia and Yemen. The Arab Spring had been a new human experience. The use of the Internet and of social networking had enabled people's participation. Although the Arab Spring was promising in terms of human rights, the economic slowdown had led to growing unemployment, closed factories and layoffs. The speaker believed that the economic slowdown could be remedied by the rule of law and popular representation. So far, however, government systems had heeded financial institutions, but had not properly addressed workers' rights and social dialogue. Unemployment remained the biggest risk in the region. The Conference on the Arab Decade for Employment aimed to halve unemployment by 2020 and US\$2 billion had been earmarked for SMEs. The speaker noted with satisfaction that the priorities of the Arab countries, identified in the subsequent Arab Employment Forum, were all reflected in the report for this Meeting.
41. In conclusion, the speaker emphasized that more care and attention should be given to youth and to the promotion of social justice, the right to work, fair wages and social protection, noting that the Arab population had proven fully capable of exerting peaceful pressure. The Arab world was ready to promote and achieve decent work for all, including through regional partnerships and collaboration.

### **Keynote address by Dr Surin Pitsuwan, Secretary-General of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)**

42. Dr Surin Pitsuwan recalled that the ten ASEAN member States represented a population of 600 million people. Within the Asia-Pacific region, ASEAN member States were working together to create a community, in close partnership with Australia, China, India, Japan, the Republic of Korea and New Zealand. The Asian region was the least affected by the global economic downturn. Indeed, the region had become a centre of growth. In order to reduce their dependency on western markets, ASEAN countries were in the process of unleashing accumulated savings and developing their own domestic markets. They understood, however, that unaddressed social issues could impede growth. The Asian region was diverse and suffered from large disparities among and between its population, which resulted in inequalities, social tensions, political disruption, confrontation and violence. These tensions would persist unless an inclusive model of growth was found, one through which the fruits were equitably shared.
43. With a tradition of centralized and authoritarian States, some Asian countries had long been reluctant to accept values and standards imported from the West. The concept of decent work, however, with its focus on the quality of life, employment opportunities, social safety nets and the participation of people, was seen as neutral, free of ideological baggage, practical and adaptable. Asian countries could accept it as an approach to creating more open, equitable and harmonious societies. It came at a time when many countries were faced with growing demands from workers for participation in decision-making processes. The concept of decent work provided a guide for development and competitiveness without instability and social tension.
44. The speaker evoked the many natural disasters faced by the region and the impact on affected populations. He noted that the more organized a society was, the better it was able to deal with the consequences of natural disasters. A society's capacity to manage crisis was related to social inclusion, people's sense of participation and the level of decent work they enjoyed. Although the principles of decent work were common and shared, the quality of life might be different from one country to the other, as each society evolved and

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adapted in its own way. Evidence had shown, however, that decent work was relevant for all societies.

45. Labour migration was a symptom of globalization. Wage differentials and working conditions in different parts of the world pushed people to migrate. This was a key challenge for the Asia–Pacific region. Migrant workers and nationals were not treated equitably and in a manner consistent with decent work. This inequality of treatment could lead to instability and conflicts. The concept of decent work called for the removal of such distinctions and for the fair treatment of all workers, whatever their origin or nationality. ASEAN member States were mainstreaming the decent work concept and although there was still a long way to go, this was the most certain path to achieving more equitable and harmonious societies.

## **Leaders' Forum on Youth Employment**

46. The Government Vice-Chairperson of the Meeting opened the Leaders' Forum on Youth Employment, noting that young people were pioneers and leaders in their countries. He introduced the moderator, Mr Paranjoy Guha Thakurta, a presenter for Lok Sabha TV, India, adding that Mr Paranjoy was a well-known journalist and had previously moderated two ILO forums in Geneva.
47. In his introductory remarks, Mr Paranjoy noted that immediately after the crash on Wall Street, the ILO had predicted that recovery would be slow and difficult. Many people thought that the ILO was being pessimistic, but today it was clear that the ILO was right with the possibility of a double-dip recession. Words such as crisis, bankruptcy and mass layoffs were part of our daily life. Youth at school were uncertain about their chance of finding a job once they finished their education. Unsuccessful young jobseekers felt a sense of injustice and frustration. In the future, youth would have to face the problems created today.
48. Mr Paranjoy introduced a short ILO video that outlined the socio-economic situation across this dynamic region. While GDP growth in many countries had been remarkable, not enough people had benefited, youth in particular.
49. Mr Paranjoy introduced the panellists: Ms Noura Saleh Alturki, a young entrepreneur and consultant, author on employment for women and female entrepreneurs and organizational development manager for Nesma Holding Company, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia; Mr Xiaoshan Huang, a student leader and PhD candidate from Beijing, China, who had become an entrepreneur and Chief Operating Officer of his own company developing brain monitors for medical equipment; Mr Pranav Shagotra, Chairperson of the International Trade Union Confederation, Asia–Pacific Youth Committee, a national of India, who was awarded the title of Best Trade Union Leader in New Delhi; Ms Mun Ching Yap, a journalist, a former special officer to the Minister of International Trade and Industry for the Government of Malaysia and, more recently, the Head of Strategic Planning of Air Asia; and Mr Bader Zamareh, Executive Director of Sharek Youth Forum, and a specialist in dealing with youth employment issues in the occupied Palestinian territories through partnerships with the private sector and in collaboration with the ILO.
50. The moderator noted that 58 per cent of youth and 45 per cent of all unemployed people in the world lived in the Asia and the Pacific region. Young people were three to five times more likely to be unemployed than adults and the greatest annual increases in youth unemployment had occurred during this downturn. Would today's youth be known as the scarred generation? He asked the panellists to speak from their own experience, but also to

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reflect the views of the voiceless underprivileged when commenting on linking young people to jobs by promoting employability and entrepreneurship.

- 51.** Mr Huang replied that the post-80s generation in China faced huge challenges with over 75 per cent of jobseekers under 25. The number of university graduates each year had risen rapidly from 1 million to 7 million annually. Employment was the most pressing need for young people and the biggest challenge was the school-to-work transition. There was a mismatch between the demands of the labour market and what schools were teaching. The career development programme at his university had a system of inviting successful business people to coach students on career development. This coaching bridged the gap between school or university and the job market and also created a special relationship between the coach and student, with the former sometimes supporting the student with his or her own resources. Young people tended to be the driving force for innovation, so it was important to introduce entrepreneurship training as part of the solution to creating employment for youth. The ILO and the All-China Youth Federation had cooperated in developing business training programmes for young people. Entrepreneurship awareness was strengthened through the ILO's Know about Business (KAB) programme. The speaker's personal involvement in KAB had led him to become president of his university's KAB club. More than 850 universities in China had KAB programmes and more than 150 had KAB clubs. While the Government provided financial support and services to facilitate the start-up of companies, the speaker underlined the importance of policies to stimulate youth entrepreneurship.
- 52.** Mr Zamareh commented on high youth unemployment in the Arab world. There were many problems, especially in relation to the occupied Arab territories, where young people could not invest or move around and where some 35,000 young graduates could not find jobs. These problems could not be solved as long as the territories were occupied. The lack of employment opportunities affected the whole Arab world, calling into question the quality of education. With millions of young people unemployed, it was important to think about small enterprise creation. The speaker cited the fruitful collaboration between governments, employers, civil society and the ILO to address the question of education and workplace requirements.
- 53.** Mr Shagotra noted that in light of the 13–14 per cent unemployment rate across the region, young people should play a role in policy-making. Skills were low and the schools did not provide the education or guidance to enable graduates to choose appropriate careers. Some youth were highly qualified, but their skills were inadequate. Gender equality was a problem. Families without financial resources pushed their youngsters into informal work. The trade unions were demanding youth job pacts through the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC). Many key issues had to be addressed to promote youth employment, vocational training and social safety nets. Trade unions had leadership courses for youth to help them better understand what the unions could do. It was important to involve young people at all levels.
- 54.** Ms Alturki, when asked to comment on the obstacles that young women faced in the job market, stated that the issue of women's job searches could not be split from that of men. The underlying theme was that many men and women were not yet employable. While women were more educated than men in Saudi Arabia, this did not mean they were more employable. Many worked in the informal sector, which was often invisible and thus difficult to regulate. Many worked from home – the majority in small and medium enterprises, which faced obstacles and lacked the tools they needed to grow. Most of those behind the Arab Spring were educated but, even so, many did not know how to write a CV. There was overstaffing in government sectors, and increasingly women wanted jobs in the private sector. In 2005, two women were elected to the Chamber of Commerce in Jeddah. This had been a turning point. Employers who hired women found it beneficial and encouraged others to follow suit. It was a very exciting time to be talking about women in

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employment. With 18 million expat workers in Saudi Arabia, there were now incentives to hire Saudi nationals. The programme directed jobseekers to vocational training, helped them find appropriate work and provided financial support during the job hunt.

- 55.** Ms Yap commented on the challenges young people faced in searching for jobs. When she had started in the airline industry it was a sexist and ageist sector. Girls in Malaysia were supposed to be accountants and boys engineers. Regardless of their level of education, young people were unprepared for the world of work and employers complained that they could not find the talent they needed. Vocational training and internships as a part of their course work would prepare students for the world of work. The attitude of the employer was important. Authority should be based on skill, not age or gender. When the speaker started out in the airline business, many people assumed she was a secretary or cabin crew and would not address her. Eventually others realized she had the authority to take decisions because her employer turned to her for advice. If companies wanted to survive the crisis, they must be innovative and that meant employing young people.
- 56.** Ms Alturki added that even if one did not have the right skills, one could impress a potential employer with the right attitude. Internships should be expanded to expose students to working life earlier. Employers should invest in young people who showed potential by providing training. They must learn to recognize resourcefulness, not just skills.
- 57.** Mr Zamareh added that it was important to raise the awareness of jobseekers and their families about potential opportunities and to encourage girls in particular to prepare for the labour market. Vulnerability and informality and the lack of social security made youth feel vulnerable and disillusioned. Social security and sustainable job opportunities were needed.
- 58.** Mr Shagotra remarked that educational policies should promote skills training earlier in schools and colleges. Families should be prevented from forcing their children into the workforce at too young an age.
- 59.** An Employers' delegate from Pakistan asked to hear a few success stories about linking skills development to business and industry. He expressed concern about the attitude changes that were needed particularly with regard to ethics and moral issues.
- 60.** A representative of the International Transport Workers' Federation raised the issue of non-respect for freedom of association at the airline where one of the youth leaders had worked.
- 61.** A Workers' delegate from India asked whether the panellists thought that educational institutions provided them with the education, skills and tools they needed to enter the labour market.
- 62.** A Government delegate from the Islamic Republic of Iran praised the quality of the panel and expressed his confidence in the enthusiasm, will power and ingenuity of youth. Wisdom and experience did not always come with age. Sometime age came alone.
- 63.** A Government delegate of Kiribati noted the recurrent concern with the vulnerability of young people and the disadvantages faced by youth. She asked the panel whether educational systems were doing their job and what they saw as the way forward.
- 64.** Mr Huang said that there was a gap between textbook education and real-life experience. Experience could be gained for example by listening to elders, such as the coaches mentioned earlier. These were not teachers in the classroom. Their knowledge did not come from a textbook, but from life.

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65. Mr Zamareh described his efforts to diagnose the problems facing young people and propose solutions. He conveyed young people's vision and experience to educational institutions and the Ministry of Education, and this had led to changes in the curriculum. Solutions had to be developed in light of each country's specificity.
  66. Mr Shagotra described his trade union's success in getting higher wages for informal workers, which gave them greater security.
  67. Ms Yap observed that many Asian societies needed to teach young people to communicate well in order to prepare for work in the growing service sector. She added that the airline she had worked for provided social benefits, such as a crèche and subsidized cafeteria.
  68. Ms Alturki spoke about social entrepreneurs in Saudi Arabia who worked with passion in the non-profit sector. There was no policy framework to support them. They were looking for a sense of fulfilment through their work, not just a job.
  69. The Employers' delegate from Malaysia recalled his own youth and his decision not to attend university. Instead, he went into the hospitality industry, and built his own hotel company with properties in 11 countries. He understood the concerns of the youth panellists. The problems of today were different from those he had faced. The IT industry was changing the world so young people needed to take advantage of that situation. He recalled an inspiring story of a young Malaysian entrepreneur, who started a small company taking photos of clothes and selling the pictures over the Internet. By the age of 21, he had become a millionaire and now provided employment for ten other people. Young people should not look to big employers for careers, but look within themselves and work forward from there. Seed money might be needed from governments. Employers recognized the skills mismatch and were talking to governments, urging them to adapt education to fit the needs of the economy.
  70. The Workers' delegate from Kuwait urged trade unions to respond independently to the needs of youth. Many laws were issued across the region, but they were not implemented. Fortunately, in Kuwait, labour laws were being implemented and workers' organizations were part of the tripartite structure. Kuwait had amended laws in 2010 to defend the rights of workers. Now was the time to ensure that education was compatible with labour markets and support was provided to the unemployed.
  71. The moderator closed the session by evoking the many issues raised: gender; decent work; skills; innovation; and the attitude of the young and old. Close cooperation was needed between governments, employers and workers. Clearly, the mismatch between education and the skills needed for employability had to be addressed. He called on those present to listen to their children and grandchildren. The voice of youth must be heard. Youth must become participants in framing policies and decisions. Youth should become part of the governance process in order to address social tensions.

## **Tribute to the Director-General of the ILO**

72. The Chairperson of the Meeting reminded the Meeting that the Director-General of the ILO, Mr Juan Somavia, had announced his departure from the International Labour Office with effect from 30 September 2012. The Director-General's most important achievements included establishing the Decent Work Agenda, overseeing the work of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization, promoting the Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization (2008), connecting the ILO with G20 Labour Ministers and Heads of State and, most importantly, tirelessly advocating the values of the

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ILO. He invited the Meeting to join him in paying tribute to a person of truly international stature.

- 73.** The Government spokesperson expressed admiration for the Director-General's intellectual and diplomatic skills that had made the Decent Work Agenda, guided by the Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization (2008), a central feature in national development plans across the region. He had been the first world leader to realize that the global financial crisis would evolve into a major jobs crisis. He had been the driving force behind the Global Jobs Pact, centring recovery efforts on job creation and social protection, securing for the ILO a standing invitation to G20 Summits. He had introduced South-South cooperation as a new development modality. He had further responded to the aspirations and policy development needs of the developing world by establishing the Decent Work Technical Support Teams. He had put forward the SPF as an apt response to demands for social justice, the protection of social stability and stimulation of aggregate demand. The Director-General was not only a visionary, but also had the skills to chart a course of action to convert his dreams of a fair world into a reality.
- 74.** The Employer spokesperson highlighted, among the many significant achievements of the Director-General, the fact that many economies in the region had become better off since the Asian financial crisis of the late 90s and more resilient in the face of the recent global financial crisis. Three programme areas within the Decent Work Agenda had met with particular success across the region: skills development; workplace safety and health; and entrepreneurship development among women and youth. The promotion of the SPF and the work of the Conference Committee on the Promotion of Sustainable Enterprises (2007) were providing invaluable support and guidance towards aligning enterprise growth with sustainable development objectives. Employers in the region expressed their deep appreciation of the Director-General's leadership in making employment creation and rights at work an increasing reality across the region.
- 75.** The Worker spokesperson thanked the Director-General for his dynamism and leadership in striving for equity, social justice and fair globalization. Like Mahatma Gandhi before him, the Director-General had demonstrated the strength to strive for freedom through non-violence, as was borne out in his support for democratic change in Nepal and the active engagement of social partners in the country's development. Thanks to his leadership, the ILO had gained visibility and respect. Employment and job creation had gained pride of place on the agenda of the international financial institutions and the G20, and closer relations had been developed with ASEAN and the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The Director-General had not only won global acceptance for the view that globalization was currently unbalanced and unsustainable, but he had also led the global response by securing the adoption of the Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization (2008) and the Global Jobs Pact (2009), as well as international labour standards on the employment relationship, decent working conditions for seafarers and domestic workers, and the rights of people living with HIV/AIDS. Crucial themes for crisis response were now reappearing on the Conference agenda, such as youth employment, the SPF and respect for fundamental rights at work, at a time when these had come under attack in several countries. His fight against injustice and for the restoration of democracy in Chile had earned him awards and honorary doctorates. Most recently, he had been awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award by the MDG Awards Committee, for his work towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and promoting social development.
- 76.** The Director-General thanked the region for its friendship and for enriching his understanding of the world and its diverse realities. He had come to love the "reach" of the ILO, an organization that could consider issues as diverse as macroeconomic policy and domestic workers' lives; its capacity to let governments, employers and workers find

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solutions together; and its resolute embrace of youth at the heart of its vision for peace and stability in the world.

## Discussion of the Report of the Director-General

77. The ILO Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific and ILO Regional Director for the Arab States introduced the Director-General's Report, *Building a sustainable future with decent work in Asia and the Pacific*. They noted that the 14th Asia and the Pacific Regional Meeting had committed itself to an Asian Decent Work Decade (2006–15) in the course of which impressive economic performance would be underpinned by efforts towards sustainable and balanced development leading to greater social equity. At this halfway point of the Decade, the 15th APRM could point to significant achievements such as the national DWCPs developed on the basis of sound tripartite consultations and solid labour market information. The number of DWCPs had increased from only one in 2006 to 20 today, with a similar number under development. Various regional meetings had addressed decent work challenges from a thematic perspective, such as the Asia–Pacific Regional High-level Meeting on Socially Inclusive Strategies to Extend Social Security Coverage in New Delhi (2008); the Arab Employment Forum in Beirut (2009); the Tripartite High-level Meeting on “Decent Work for Sustainable Development in the Pacific” in Port Vila (2010); and the first Regional Conference on the Arab States in Rabat (2011).
78. While Asia and the Pacific was leading the global recovery, the current global economic climate also presented risks for balanced, sustainable and job-rich growth. The Arab region had seen revolts with socio-economic repercussions. Certain key principles lay the foundation for a sustainable future based on decent work, regardless of the region's diversity: (i) better macroeconomic coordination targeted on employment and a SPF; (ii) promotion of more productive employment and skills, including disaster recovery and green jobs; (iii) rights at work and social dialogue to strengthen labour market governance in line with international labour standards.
79. Across the region, progress was being made in boosting employment at the heart of economic policy, in bolstering labour statistics, and in promoting greater respect for rights at work and international labour standards. Labour laws were being reformed to balance security and flexibility. Workplaces had been made more inclusive for people living with HIV/AIDS and people with disabilities. Gender audits were addressing discrimination. More countries had fiscally sustainable social security systems and occupational safety and health (OSH) systems, despite the region spending less on social protection than other regions. Child labour was waning and, in general, youth had taken centre stage as seen in the recent popular movements. Finally, the region had seen improvements in labour migration governance through bilateral and national measures.
80. Looking forward, a few lessons learned from past experience could help accelerate progress. First, national and regional policies had to be made more coherent and mutually reinforcing across the Decent Work Agenda. Secondly, regional cooperation could be reinforced in areas such as climate change, labour migration and joint research on labour market governance. Thirdly, access to real-time data and statistics could be improved so as to strengthen evidence-based policy-making. Fourthly, tripartism and social dialogue could further the national ownership required to make policies and programmes succeed.
81. The Employer spokesperson stressed that Asia's unmatched economic performance had generated a historically unprecedented growth of the middle class. Asia could now either realize the transition to productive employment and investment-driven growth or fall into a

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“middle-income trap”. Growth was driven by the agility of Asian labour markets, and had to be safeguarded against approaches and policies transplanted from outside. The ILO needed to remain focused on productivity and employment, a supportive environment for businesses large and small, skills development and youth employment. The spokesperson cautioned against advocating redistributive policies, tax reforms and monetary policy which fell outside the ILO’s remit or expertise. Similarly, an artificially inflated growth of wages was not supported, and the inflationary pressures resulting from it were not to be ignored. Some ideas put forward in the Report appeared to stem from an expansive interpretation of the ILO’s macroeconomic and development mandate, but were actually at odds with the Asian commitment to growth and productivity undertaken at the 14th Asia and the Pacific Regional Meeting.

- 82.** The Worker spokesperson felt that globalization had generated substantial advancement in the region, but had failed to deliver decent living standards to all and was leading to unacceptable levels of inequality. In a period of high economic growth (2001–07) real wages had increased but continued to lag far behind labour productivity growth. More effective wage policies were needed to foster living wages and the promotion of collective bargaining. In the wake of the crisis, precarious employment was surging, leaving many workers, particularly women and youth, without social protection, unable to organize and bereft of basic job security. An economic and fiscal environment had to be created to reduce vulnerable employment and build a SPF. Reliance on exports had to be reduced in favour of an income-led and low-carbon growth model boosting internal demand. The region’s nearly 50 million migrants working abroad were entitled to assistance in finding gainful employment and undocumented migrants needed much better rights protection. The *Kafala* (sponsorship) system practiced in the Gulf Cooperation Countries violated international labour standards and had to be abolished, while efforts had to be stepped up to ratify international labour standards protecting migrant workers and domestic workers. Social security remained a basic human right and a key redistributive policy tool. In addition to the adoption of new standards governing a SPF and efforts to apply the Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102), and the Minimum Wage Fixing Convention, 1970 (No. 131), the time was ripe for more progressive systems of taxation. Changes in industrial relations systems had weakened the bargaining power of workers and increased disputes, while investments in labour inspection and labour administration were being reduced. The pace of ratification of fundamental ILO Conventions remained low, particularly in the areas of freedom of association and collective bargaining. Among the violations of trade union rights in the region, the spokesperson highlighted the dismantling of trade unions in Fiji through government decrees, harassment and detention as well as the barring of a trade unionist from travelling to the Meeting; the dismissal of workers and trade union leaders on discriminatory grounds in Bahrain; and the persistent denial of workers’ rights in free trade zones, which was not compatible with the ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy or the Organisation for Economic Development and Co-operation’s (OECD) *Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises*. Denying workers the chance to channel their grievances increased the risk of social uprisings. The speaker noted with regret that the Government Vice-Chairperson of the Meeting represented a country that had not ratified the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87). Serious efforts had to be made to narrow the pay gap, promote women to leadership positions in the workplace, and ratify key international labour standards promoting gender equality, in particular those governing maternity protection, equitable sharing of family responsibilities, equal pay for work of equal value, and equal opportunities and treatment at the workplace.
- 83.** All speakers paid tribute to the Government of Japan for generously hosting the Meeting so soon after the earthquake and tsunami that had tragically struck the nation in March 2011. This was a testament to Japan’s deep commitment to the ILO and its values.

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Speakers conveyed their profound condolences to the Japanese people as well as their sincere respect.

- 84.** Many speakers stressed national efforts made since the 14th Asia and the Pacific Regional Meeting to put employment creation and decent work at the heart of their economic and social policies. Many felt that these efforts had helped their economies recover faster from the global crisis. Many also stressed the interrelated nature of labour market issues and, when considering solutions, the high value they placed on a SPF, social dialogue, greater policy coherence and respect for fundamental rights.
- 85.** The Minister of Employment and Labour of the Republic of Korea highlighted the adoption of a “budget for jobs” including provisions for social insurance, employment-friendly taxes, an inter-ministerial employment policy coordination mechanism as well as a consultative public–private job creation forum. Youth unemployment was being addressed through the promotion of entrepreneurship, offering financial support to those attending training institutes, and youth internships for SMEs. Since 2006, the Republic of Korea had adopted eight ILO Conventions. Following ILO advice, the country had made further progress towards freedom of association and workplace democracy by introducing union pluralism at enterprise level. He also noted that the Republic of Korea had become a donor country keen to share its experience in workforce development and expand its cooperation.
- 86.** The Minister of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs of Viet Nam underlined that sustainable economic growth remained the key priority in the country’s development plans until 2020. Considering growing inequality, the Government had included measures targeting youth and other vulnerable groups. Viet Nam had done well on MDG targets, such as the alleviation of extreme poverty and gender equality, but employment creation remained a challenge. The national development plan had addressed this by focusing on human resources development including in the agricultural sector, increased wages, expanded unemployment insurance coverage and a nationwide SPF by 2015.
- 87.** The Minister of Labour of Thailand noted that the Government was finalizing its first DWCP based on a tripartite process, centred on economic and social issues inspired by the Global Jobs Pact and the SPF report, and was mainstreaming policies promoting equality and basic human rights. Migration policy reform had helped to combat problems associated with trafficking of persons. Challenges associated with the recent floods were met by measures to rescue the economy in the short term, restore it in the medium term and rebuild it in the long term.
- 88.** The Union Minister of Labour and Employment of India stressed that national and international policy coherence and cooperation were crucial to achieving balanced growth. The SPF had to be determined in line with national needs and means instead of becoming a protectionist non-tariff barrier. India had ratified 43 Conventions and recognized the importance of social dialogue, but did not agree to linking trade with respect for international labour standards. ILO member States needed to cooperate better towards the protection of migrant workers.
- 89.** The Minister of Manpower and Transmigration of Indonesia noted that the Report’s proposal of “inclusive growth” had been reflected in the G20’s recent call for the creation of better jobs, developing a SPF, social justice and poverty reduction, and had already found its way into the Indonesian Jobs Pact adopted earlier in 2011. The speaker provided various examples of how Indonesia was strengthening the protection of migrant workers. Reiterating the President’s speech at the ILC, he called for a global coalition on youth employment.
- 90.** The Minister for Labour and Employment and Expatriates’ Welfare and Overseas Employment of Bangladesh highlighted various recent policies to generate productive

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employment opportunities and expand social safety nets. These included a national child labour elimination policy aimed at withdrawing close to 100,000 children from hazardous work by 2012; improving compliance in the ready-made garment sector in consultation with the social partners and international buyers and in cooperation with Better Work; the development of a national skills development policy; and the reconstitution of the Tripartite Consultative Council.

- 91.** The Minister of Human Resources of Malaysia highlighted the Government's Economic Transformation Programme propelling the economy to high-income status by 2020. To reduce dependency on foreign labour and develop a quality domestic workforce, the Programme included strategic measures to modernize labour legislation, strengthen human resources management in SMEs and introduce unemployment insurance.
- 92.** The Minister of Cooperatives, Labour and Social Welfare of the Islamic Republic of Iran felt that the financial policies promoted by the international financial institutions had hampered progress towards decent work, and the belligerent attitude of certain occupying States served to displace millions from their homeland, reduced remittances and subsidies, and created unrest and instability. The Government had recently merged three ministries and refocused efforts on expanding social dialogue and the promotion of skills, sectoral employment, entrepreneurship and support to SMEs.
- 93.** A Government delegate from China noted that China actively promoted decent work and inclusive development. Achieving targets for economic growth and the unemployment rate remained the priority. Social security coverage had been extended with health coverage for 1.26 billion people and universal pension coverage for rural and urban areas by 2012. Workers' rights, labour inspection services and harmonious labour relations were being continuously strengthened. Minimum wages were being increased. Nonetheless, the country still faced challenges, including in employment promotion and social security for all. To achieve the target for the Asian Decent Work Decade, China proposed that the region prioritize human development and youth employment, raise incomes and extend social security based on local conditions, strengthen harmonious labour relations, and expand cooperation among member States.
- 94.** The Minister of Labour and Industrial Relations of Papua New Guinea emphasized the importance of improving labour governance, employment growth, skills development and the sustainability of the enterprises. He highlighted the positive impact on decent work of South-South cooperation such as the recent collaboration with Fiji on OSH. He expressed his Government's commitment to finding the right balance for a sustainable future through collaborative efforts in the Pacific region.
- 95.** The Minister for Environment, Land and Agricultural Development of Kiribati agreed with the previous speaker that climate change was the single biggest threat to development. Kiribati's DWCP focus was on skills development so that its inhabitants were prepared for productive employment in other countries of the region. Kiribati had become the first country to ratify the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, so as to protect its seafarers and safeguard their remittances. Kiribati had ratified all eight fundamental Conventions and more key ratifications were to follow.
- 96.** The Parliamentary Secretary for School, Education and Workplace Relations of Australia stressed that realizing decent work required deliberate and concerted action to ensure that policies were mutually supportive and fully integrated into macroeconomic frameworks. She highlighted the extent to which Australia had focused on the promotion of green jobs and a culture of entrepreneurship in its crisis recovery efforts. Australia was proud to partner with the ILO in its programmes promoting Better Work, green jobs, labour migration management and labour market governance.

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- 97.** A Workers' delegate from China offered a number of suggestions to achieve decent work, including accelerated industrial restructuring towards technological innovation and a green economy, strengthened regional economic cooperation to reduce dependency on foreign trade, the establishment of a SPF, and fostering social harmony based on workers enjoying a fair share of economic growth.
- 98.** A Government delegate from New Zealand explained that in line with the agenda of the Meeting, making full and productive employment a central policy goal, increasing the levels of labour productivity and facilitating the transition from school to work for youth were among the key priorities of his country. New Zealand, like other countries in the region, was prone to natural disasters. Social protection was one of the key tools used after the 2010–11 earthquakes in Christchurch to accelerate recovery and facilitate reconstruction.
- 99.** An Employers' delegate from India pointed out that the Asia–Pacific region had achieved high growth in trade and investment and a significant reduction in poverty levels, but still suffered from uneven productivity growth, widening inequality and lack of social protection. He called for employment to be at the top of the policy agenda, with a focus on flexible policy responses, higher productivity and a balance between flexibility and security in order to ensure sustainable enterprises. Particular attention was needed to skills development, which could provide lifelong employability.
- 100.** A Workers' delegate from Singapore underlined the importance of decent work and cooperation among the social partners for the region's future. Singapore was quick to respond to the global financial crisis through tripartite measures and was one of the first countries to emerge, thanks to applying the Decent Work Agenda and building tripartite consensus. However, as the recovery was a short one, Singapore was already preparing for the next crisis, taking bipartite initiatives to support skills development for workers underutilized following the economic downturn, and extending social protection to provide more and better coverage.
- 101.** The Minister of Labour and Labour Relations from Sri Lanka stated that their National Plan of Action for Decent Work provided comprehensive guidelines for employment creation and quality work. With support from the ILO, his country had made progress on a youth network, migration policy, a roadmap for the elimination of the worst forms of child labour, a reduction of unfair labour practices, and a national policy on HIV and AIDS.
- 102.** The Secretary of Labor and Employment from the Philippines agreed to the need to develop a common regional framework and fundamental principles underpinned by decent work. The Philippine Development Plan presented a policy agenda with decent work and good governance as central goals. Priority reforms included increasing competitiveness, human capital investments, a regular review of the temporary migration system, labour law reform, and regional cooperation.
- 103.** An Employers' delegate from the Islamic Republic of Iran focused on the global economic downturn and financial chaos, and the persisting problem of unemployment. The Asia–Pacific region offered an extraordinary opportunity for growth. However, the widening economic disparity among countries called for efforts to make that growth inclusive and equitable. There was a need for regional cooperation to develop an early warning system to counter global disruption. Investing in youth would increase countries' competitive capacity for the future. The private sector, as the engine of growth, needed to be reinvigorated. The ILO should assess the impact of policy responses and assist with appropriate exit strategies.

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- 104.** An Employers' delegate from China highlighted the need for sustainable, balanced growth conducive to full employment, job creation and development opportunities for workers. He called for greater cooperation on human resources development, employment promotion and skills for youth. He urged the ILO to increase its research on labour issues in the region. The key to social justice was the promotion of enterprises, particularly SMEs. Stronger regional cooperation was needed.
- 105.** The Minister of Labour from Bahrain noted that his Government was working towards promoting the values and principles of international labour standards, supporting business associations and protecting the rights of migrant workers, all of which were incorporated into the country's reform process.
- 106.** An Employers' delegate from the United Arab Emirates highlighted improvements in labour relations in his country, the provision of social protection for workers and the improvement of living conditions of migrant workers. He stressed the gains incurred by countries that exported labour and indicated that while labour market reforms were ongoing, the progress made towards the improvement of migrant workers' protection should be reviewed simultaneously with an analysis of the returns those migrant workers generated for their home countries. He welcomed a discussion with the ILO and all parties.
- 107.** The Minister of Labour from Nepal restated her country's commitment to the promotion of decent employment and equal opportunity for all. While reforming the labour market and extending social security, Nepal had assisted migrant workers, informal sector workers and marginalized groups. As a country emerging from a decade-long conflict, Nepal sought the financial and technical support of development partners.
- 108.** A Workers' delegate from Nepal noted the initiatives of his country's trade unions, including supporting the peace process, and labour legislation and social protection for the informal sector. He called for the Government to ratify the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), and to strengthen protection of migrant workers.
- 109.** An Employers' delegate from Bangladesh indicated that his country was among the first to endorse the concept of decent work. However, implementation was difficult for an export-oriented economy at a time of global crisis when high unemployment, job loss and social inequality were growing. The speaker invited the ILO to provide additional guidance to promote youth employment, stressed the importance of support for migrant workers and highlighted the need to enhance productivity and skills in light of the competitiveness gap between Asia and Europe, in particular. Additional measures to enhance social dialogue were needed to implement an efficient decent work programme, involving both workers' and employers' rights.
- 110.** The Minister of Labour and Social Affairs from Iraq said that the country highly valued achieving decent work. His Government recognized the need for just and sustainable development and prioritized the development of its human resources, taking into account the impact of globalization. A national commission had been created to implement its development plan and reduce poverty.
- 111.** A Government delegate from Qatar expressed concern about the high unemployment levels in the Arab world. His country had created an institution to improve the economic and social conditions of youth. New legislation on human resources had been adopted to promote employment in public and private sector jobs.
- 112.** An Employers' delegate from Jordan drew attention to the importance of youth employment and the need for high-quality training centres to support young people to acquire necessary skills. Employers joined with workers in recognizing that decent work

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was essential for the sustainability of enterprises. The need for a balanced approach to development so that all parties shared the benefits was evident from the global financial crisis and from the unrest created by conditions of inequality.

- 113.** An Employers' delegate from the United Arab Emirates, noting the major role of the private sector in creating decent work opportunities, described the initiatives taken in his country in response to the global financial crisis to create a conducive environment. These included funds to support SMEs and youth, advice to businesses and measures to ensure stability in the banking system.
- 114.** A Workers' delegate from the Islamic Republic of Iran stated that the enforcement of fundamental rights at work, a productive business climate and employer–worker relations based on respect and human dignity were important in order to realize decent work. Noting that employment was key in determining quality of life, he called attention to the issue of youth employment in developing countries. Government policies on this as well as green jobs, skills, gender equality and technology transfer could contribute to achievement of decent work in the region. He called on the ILO to establish a global fund to protect workers in times of crisis.
- 115.** A Government delegate from Afghanistan emphasized that productive employment, sustainable enterprises and skills development were critical to building lasting peace and stability in his country. To this end, it was essential that a robust labour market information and analysis system was developed to support evidenced-based policies related to macroeconomics, employment creation and skills training. He called on the ILO to provide support to develop a labour force survey, with the capacity to measure the dimensions of child labour, in addition to strengthening micro-, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), promoting youth employment, improving labour market governance and social dialogue, and enhancing protection of migrant workers.
- 116.** A Government delegate from Hong Kong, China, shared lessons in promoting youth employment through measures including enhanced employability and job search assistance and placement, which had lowered youth unemployment rates. She shared recent experiences in implementing the statutory minimum wage based on tripartite dialogue and sound statistics, and of a transportation subsidy scheme which supported low-income earners.
- 117.** A Government delegate from Cambodia indicated that the country had actively enforced the implementation of labour laws for increased job creation, upheld the fundamental principles and rights at work, improved working conditions, improved industrial relations, and was extending social protection. His Government expressed its appreciation of ILO technical support for the successful implementation of the next DWCP.
- 118.** A Government delegate from Pakistan referred to the challenges facing the world of work today, including a widening gap between the rich and the poor. A multi-pronged and comprehensive set of social, political and economic policies and measures was needed. Social dialogue through strong and independent workers' and employers' organizations was important, with the State responsible for creating a stable political and civil climate. Social protection for the working class was an important area requiring attention. Pakistan had a system of social insurance comprising a regular system of social benefits as well as cash programmes. Despite meagre resources, the country was committed to mitigating the problems of the people.
- 119.** An Employers' delegate from Bahrain applauded the economic performance observed in Asia and the Pacific during the last decade, which had helped millions rise out of poverty. However, such rapid growth had induced increases in labour market deficits, including discrimination and unemployment. More attention should be geared towards social factors,

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including active measures to combat inequality and social protection to ensure local demand. Bahrain had made significant progress in labour relations and human rights since 2006 and a new law had been adopted against human trafficking. The speaker urged the financial sector to better understand the needs of SMEs as well as their role in economic development.

- 120.** An Employers' delegate from Nepal acknowledged the historic agreements that had been reached with trade unions on minimum wage, social security, flexibility and discipline, although implementation of agreements still presented challenges. While strongly promoting the need for social security, he expressed some doubts as to the feasibility of its extension to the uncovered informal economy and Nepali workers living abroad and the sustainability of a system that would only cover a small share of the population. He also stressed that creation of sustainable jobs and enterprises was essential in order to implement social protection.
- 121.** A Workers' delegate from India decried the approach of some to put work first and decent work only later. All work should ensure decent wages, conditions of employment, job security, social protection, safety and health and gender equality, in the informal as well as the formal economy. Forced and child labour should be combated. Unfortunately, exploitative, low-paid contract work was replacing employment-intensive growth in which workers shared the benefits. In India, workers had been waiting for 62 years for recognition of the concept of a living wage, but were still struggling to obtain even a minimum wage. Tripartism and social dialogue, supported by government action to ratify international labour standards and ensure supportive labour legislation, were crucial for achieving decent work.
- 122.** An Employers' delegate from Australia recognized that the Asia-Pacific region had been under great pressure since the last Meeting. Despite the difficulties, the region had continued to grow and create jobs, lifting millions out of poverty and creating a growing middle class. This success had been built on hard work and also on a flexible approach. The ILO's concern with the social dimension of globalization was not inconsistent with the Asian approach, provided that it was applied flexibly with respect for national and regional situations. The speaker supported the Australia-ILO Partnership Agreement, based on tripartite dialogue, which was supporting institution-building in a number of countries in the region. While there had been important progress on some freedom of association cases, he voiced concern at serious breaches of fundamental rights of association in Fiji.
- 123.** A Workers' delegate from Oman highlighted the importance of social dialogue and collective bargaining for sustainable development and conflict resolution. His country had established a national tripartite structure to develop engagement among all parties, and current priorities had focused on labour law reform, increased productivity and wages, and improved working conditions in the private sector.
- 124.** An Employers' delegate from Pakistan highlighted his country's ongoing challenges related to natural disasters, terrorism and security, and thanked the ILO and the international community for their support in recovery, reconstruction and peace building. He also noted the tremendous efforts of the Pakistani people to work together and overcome these challenges. The country was forging ahead through the DWCP in the areas of skills development, social dialogue and employment promotion.
- 125.** The Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Manpower of Singapore highlighted the tripartite measures implemented during the economic crisis. The tripartite partners would continue to assist low-wage workers by upgrading their skills and enable older workers to work beyond 62 years and to prepare for retirement. His country had signed a Partnership Agreement with the ILO to address workplace issues in ASEAN.

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- 126.** A Workers' delegate from the Republic of Korea stressed the good progress made since the Busan meeting, while pointing to the new stage in the current economic crisis. He referred to people's frustration with high educational costs, to the protests of the Arab Spring, to high unemployment and indebtedness in the United States, and to the "Occupy Wall Street" movement. In the Republic of Korea, several people had taken their own lives as a result of unemployment and weak social protection systems. Inequalities in the Korean labour market, including youth unemployment and long working hours, had made this decade a precarious one, rather than one focused on decent work. He urged his Government to ratify the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98).
- 127.** The Government delegate from France referred to the commitment made by the G20 leaders in Cannes to strengthen the social dimension of globalization by including employment and social issues in the G20 strategy for growth and employment and making them an integral part of the G20 agenda. A task force on employment had been set up to focus on youth employment. Reference had been made to SPFs for the first time as well as to the need to promote and respect fundamental principles and rights at work. International organizations, including the World Trade Organization (WTO), the IMF, the World Bank, the OECD and the ILO were called upon to enhance their dialogue and coordination. For the first time, Business 20 and Labour 20 meetings had been held concurrently with the G20 and the two had adopted a joint statement.
- 128.** A representative of the World Federation of Trade Unions recalled the main challenges faced by the Asia-Pacific region. These included rising income inequalities, growing wage polarization, persistence of a gender gap, limited social protection, informal and vulnerable employment, restrictions on freedom of association and collective bargaining and the impact of natural disasters. He mentioned the negative impact of structural adjustment programmes on social services, employment, sustainability of small enterprises and trade union membership. Labour market flexibility was driving workers to the informal economy. The rising anger and frustration of those left behind by this exploitative system created an urgent need for radical transformation towards a new economic order built on principles of justice and equitable development, people's participation, universal access to essential services, protection and promotion of all human rights. This demanded a reorientation of public investments towards the social sector, the protection of jobs, including those of migrant workers, and a shift of financial, industrial and trade policies towards social usefulness and not just financial profits.

## **The social protection floor for a fair and inclusive globalization**

- 129.** The Meeting served as the venue for the launch in the Asia and the Pacific region of the report, *Social protection floor for a fair and inclusive globalization*, also known as the *Bachelet Report*.
- 130.** Ms Sudha Pillai, member of the Advisory Group of the Social Protection Floor (SPF) Initiative, introduced the report. The objective of the SPF Advisory Group was to enhance global advocacy and provide guidance on the implementation of the SPF worldwide. The SPF was one of nine UN crisis response initiatives and was led by the ILO and the World Health Organization with the aim of supporting countries in the development of national SPFs as part of their comprehensive social protection systems. The SPF was a driver to realize key human rights and social justice as well as an important tool to combat poverty and inequality.

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- 131.** The SPF had three objectives, namely to prevent poverty through guaranteed minimum income security; to meet people's basic needs through guaranteed universal access to essential affordable social services; and to develop individual capabilities to access decent jobs with better income. The SPF was part of the ILO's two-dimensional social security extension strategy. Based on the floor, additional schemes with higher levels of benefits could be developed. It was now a historic moment as many countries were rapidly extending social protection, whether through ensuring health protection, income security for families with children, guaranteed employment, a universal child allowance, a minimum living standard guarantee, or old-age pension. Each country needed to find its own model and path to develop a SPF. Ms Pillai closed by citing the numerous international institutions and policy documents that had endorsed the SPF at the global and regional levels.
- 132.** Mr Assane Diop, ILO Executive Director of the Social Protection Sector, highlighted the link between the *Bachelet Report* and related ILO work, notably the plan of action to follow up on the conclusions of the 100th Session of the International Labour Conference (ILC). The plan of action envisaged five categories of activity: policy development and standards-related activities; knowledge development and sharing; technical advisory services; capacity building; and building and strengthening partnerships with other organizations. The 2012 ILC would discuss a possible Recommendation on the SPF, which if adopted, would provide guidance to member States, social partners and the wider international community on the implementation of national SPFs to reduce poverty and promote sustainable economic and social development. The Office was also promoting the ratification of the Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102).
- 133.** The SPF Initiative had developed analytical tools to support advisory activities and national dialogue on various SPF policy options. These included a procedure for evaluating national SPF policies and identifying gaps in coverage; a tool for calculating costs and a simplified Rapid Assessment Protocol; and a simulation methodology to assess the theoretical impact on poverty. Currently, the ILO was providing assistance to a growing number of countries through social protection working groups consisting of national stakeholders, UN agencies and other development partners. The International Training Centre in Turin also carried out training activities at the national, subregional and interregional levels for civil servants and employees of national social security bodies.

## **Thematic panel 1**

### **Coordinated macroeconomic, employment and social protection policies**

- 134.** Thematic panel 1 focused on coordinated macroeconomic, employment and social protection policies. The panel was composed of the following members: Mr Yadong Wang, Deputy Director-General, Employment Promotion Department, Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, People's Republic of China; Mr Shamsuddin Bardan, Executive Director of the Malaysian Employers Federation; and Mr Guangping Jiang, Director-General, Member of Secretariat, International Department, All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU) and Worker member of the ILO Governing Body. Ms Sudha Pillai, Member Secretary of the Planning Commission of India, served as a resource person and Mr Stephen Pursey, Director of the ILO Policy Integration Department, served as the moderator.
- 135.** The moderator highlighted Asia's impressive economic growth, but noted that not enough decent jobs had been created and poverty remained widespread. As the biggest and most dynamic region in the world, Asia needed to take the lead in developing a new inclusive

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growth model. There were a number of policies and frameworks to build on, especially in light of the global economic context, that required greater policy coordination.

- 136.** The Government panellist noted that employment in China had increased steadily each year, but the vast population meant that millions remained unemployed. He underlined the country's shift from a reliance on exports to development of domestic markets, from high energy consumption to environmental sustainability and from investment-driven to consumption-driven growth. China's 12th Five-year Plan (2011–15) prioritized employment in economic and social development, and employment was also seen as a key concept of governance. The Government at all levels was responsible for measuring employment creation and evaluating the employment impacts of macroeconomic policies. To this end, a coordination mechanism had been established that involved interdepartmental policy-making with the involvement of the social partners.
- 137.** The Employer panellist noted that the Asia–Pacific region was not insulated from global economic developments. However, growing intraregional trade driven by regional demand was helping the region to weather the impact of a global slowdown. With regard to policies, Asia needed to build on its strengths, including innovation and skills enhancement, which could raise competitiveness and create an environment conducive to investment, while supporting regional economic integration. The speaker questioned the need for the region to reorient its growth model given the past success. The ILO needed to focus not on issues related to fiscal and monetary policies, but rather its core mandate. Further, policies should be decided within the national context. The ILO should not prescribe contradictory or one-size-fits-all policies, but assist countries to assess the employment impact of various policies and Conventions.
- 138.** The Worker panellist supported the key findings of the Director-General's Report, including support for youth employment and shifting to a new growth model based on decent jobs. This required strong labour market institutions, effective social dialogue, collective bargaining and sound wage policies. More coherent policies were needed at national, regional and global levels. The speaker called for greater involvement of trade unions in the work of multilateral financial institutions. The SPF was supported by workers as a fundamental human right. However, public spending on social protection was low in the region, often due to inaccurate perceptions of affordability. The ILO should implement measures identified in the Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization. International financial institutions should integrate international labour standards into their conditions for lending. Countries in the region should ratify and implement the eight ILO core Conventions, as well as the Social Policy (Basic Aims and Standards) Convention, 1962 (No. 117), the Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81), the Labour Inspection (Agriculture) Convention, 1969 (No. 129), the Minimum Wage Fixing Convention, 1970 (No. 131), and the Termination of Employment Convention, 1982 (No. 158).
- 139.** The resource person highlighted the need to assess macro policies holistically at national and multilateral levels as there were often contradictions among policies. The ILO needed to play a key role in international policy convergence. The SPF provided a positive example. The speaker noted the work of the Chinese Government in establishing greater policy coordination. In the case of India, despite efforts to promote policy coherence, individual policies were often developed in isolation. The region had strived to reduce labour costs to attract foreign investment, but wages and workers needed to be seen not just as factors of production, but also as drivers of economic growth. Given the fragile global economy, economic, employment and social policies needed to be intertwined.

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140. A Workers' delegate from Bahrain noted the important lesson of China's efforts to change the patterns of growth. In regard to the remarks of the Employer panellist, he recognized the importance of setting country-specific policies, but supported the universal application of international standards in the global economy.
  141. An Employers' delegate from Pakistan noted that more efforts were needed to promote the SPF and its benefits. Incentives were needed to attract businesses and entrepreneurs to provide support. Governments should also participate in the funding of social protection.
  142. A Workers' delegate from Indonesia highlighted the excessive use of subcontracting and precarious work. She proposed that the Meeting should not promote precarious employment, unless those workers were granted the full rights of permanent workers.
  143. A Workers' delegate from India questioned the quality of employment and working conditions in China given that the country was a source of cheap labour and cheap production.
  144. A Workers' delegate from Japan stressed that gender equality should be at the centre of the discussions on social protection and employment. She welcomed the outcome of the discussion on social security held at the 2011 International Labour Conference and noted the feminization of poverty and the challenge of youth employment around the world.
  145. The Employer panellist responded that with rising wages linked to productivity, financing of the SPF would be feasible, as workers and employers could increasingly contribute more. Furthermore, regional integration included the movement of workers, so skills recognition and harmonization across borders were essential. This would require greater policy coherence with wage policies.
  146. The Government panellist described China's interdepartmental coordination mechanism under the State Council and chaired by the Minister of Human Resources and Social Security, and its role in providing guidance to the Prime Minister on employment policy and local investment. With regard to China's low labour costs, he noted that it had been an advantage in the past, but now employment quality had become the priority and labour costs had risen as a consequence. China had recently adopted a Social Insurance Law and reformed its pension schemes with the aim of universal coverage.
  147. The Worker panellist emphasized that precarious employment was bad for workers and their families, as it provided no protection for the future. He called on governments and the ILO to examine the issue further.
  148. The resource person stated that governments had a fiscal and moral responsibility to provide social protection. Employers needed to become more sensitive to workers and workers to be more objective. Governments should pay for social protection schemes and, indeed, many did so.
  149. A Government delegate from Japan stated that in response to the global financial crises and the Great East Japan Earthquake, Japan had initiated an economic policy based on a new growth strategy, including social protection. Inclusive social protection was a challenge, given the country's low birth rate and ageing population. Social safety nets were reinforced by lengthening the period of unemployment benefits and providing vocational training. There was a need to ensure fiscal sustainability of the system.
  150. A Government delegate from Afghanistan questioned how a sound employment policy could be established without basic and reliable labour market information.

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- 151.** A Workers' delegate from Pakistan explained that labour costs were only one component of production costs. There was downward pressure on wages to increase profits. While productivity gains were sometimes paid in the form of bonuses, this required workers to be organized.
  - 152.** The Minister of Labour and Transport Management of Nepal noted that the least developed countries suffered from resource constraints and various crises, including environmental disasters. There was a need to scale up productivity and labour-intensive growth and to better understand macroeconomic management. She welcomed support from other countries in terms of resources and knowledge sharing. The role of the private sector was important, but could not substitute for an effective government and this required greater state capacity. Nepal depended on migrant workers and their remittances and looked to the ILO and others to reshape the macroeconomic framework to be more inclusive.
  - 153.** A Government delegate from the Philippines, using the example of migrant workers, suggested that there was a need for a regional framework of policy coherence.
  - 154.** A representative of the ITUC stressed the need to include migrant workers in social protection schemes and asked what social protection was provided to contract and migrant workers in China.
  - 155.** The Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations, stated that the region's economic performance had been sound, but the outlook was quite grim in the light of the slowdown forecast for the advanced countries. It was not feasible to rely on domestic markets for growth when wages were suppressed. Social protection had diverse forms in the region and a one-size-fits-all approach could not be imposed.
  - 156.** An Employers' delegate from India reminded the Meeting that labour was not a commodity and better terminology than "labour market" should be found.
  - 157.** A Government delegate of Iraq stressed the importance of dialogue and the need to respect the Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization.
  - 158.** The Government panellist referred to ILO models for employment policies as good examples and noted that least developed countries could benefit from ILO technical cooperation, as China had in the past. He stressed the importance of sharing experiences between regions and countries, and identified the Meeting and panel discussion as good examples of this.
  - 159.** The Employer panellist provided the example of Malaysia, where productivity gains were shared with workers irrespective of unionization and questioned whether one standard policy could apply to all countries.
  - 160.** The Worker panellist clarified that unions welcomed investment, but called for sound investment with a social dimension. With respect to migrant workers, there was a need for international cooperation, not only between countries, but also among trade unions. The ILO should pay more attention to this.
  - 161.** The resource person stressed the need to recognize country diversity in defining national policies, but to reflect international standards. She promoted regular and reliable labour market information for policy design and called on the ILO to support this area.

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- 162.** The moderator referred to the wide range of issues that had been discussed. The session had underscored the great confidence in and responsibility of the region to meet its challenges, many of which were a consequence of its successes. This underlined the importance of policy coherence, while respecting the diversity of the region.

## **Thematic panel 2**

### **Productive employment, sustainable enterprises and skills development**

- 163.** Thematic panel 2 focused on productive employment, sustainable enterprises and skills development. The panel was composed of the following members: Mr Yoshio Maki, Senior Vice-Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare of Japan; Mr Anup Chandra Pandey, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Employment of India; Mr Md. Fazlul Hoque, President, Bangladesh Employers' Federation; and Mr Han Thong Seng, Assistant Secretary-General, National Trade Union Congress of Singapore. The moderator was Mr José Manuel Salazar-Xirinachs, Executive Director of the ILO Employment Sector.
- 164.** The moderator introduced the themes of the panel as key elements of strong, sustainable and balanced growth. The 2007 ILC conclusions concerning the promotion of sustainable enterprises, as well as the 2008 ILC conclusions on skills for improved productivity, employment growth and development, together provided a good framework for ILO work in these areas. The strong performance of many Asian economies led economists to call them “economic miracles”, but the tripartite constituents knew better. One could find solid policies and institutions, efficient mixes of state and market and effective national visions forged through social dialogue in countries at every stage of development, as well as less good ones. The enabling environment provided an example of this. Four of the economies were in the top 20 of the Global Competitiveness Index, while six ranked below 100. As for infrastructure, impressive achievements were observed in some countries, but major gaps in others. SMEs provided a major source of employment. Contemporary policies for productive employment creation called for support to SMEs through the improvement of the enabling environment, the promotion of an entrepreneurial culture, the strengthening of business development services and the facilitation of access to credit. As regards skills, the region had some best practices in terms of adapting skills policies to meet the demands of a virtuous cycle of growth and improvement in wages and living standards, as well as in identifying future skills needs. Despite that, many young graduates were unemployed and skills mismatches were persistent in the labour market. Nonetheless, even in countries with high and sustained growth, growth had not had enough traction in labour markets nor was it sufficiently socially inclusive. Yet another challenge was to make investment in the region greener and more sustainable. Clear sectoral policies based on social dialogue were central in any strategy to increase the employment content of growth and to make it more socially and environmentally sustainable.
- 165.** The panellist from the Government of Japan described the new set of challenges his country faced in securing quality employment in the face of rising informality and demographic imbalances and the measures taken to address them. He explained how the increase in atypical work was impacting society. Many sought regular jobs, but an increasing number ended up with irregular ones. Irregular workers tended to postpone marriage due to job insecurity and low wages and this in turn further lowered the birth rate, exacerbating the demographic imbalances and threatening the sustainable financing of the social security system. The second issue was long work hours to which the increasing cases of mental disorder and death could be attributed. The third challenge was how to develop human resources as precarious work increased and investment in training declined. Japan tried to address these problems through cross-sectoral approaches involving reform of the tax and social security systems. To meet the first challenge, the

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Government provided a package of career guidance, skills development and employment referral. Employment service centres facilitated job placement, particularly for youth and those in irregular jobs. To address the issue of long working hours, the Government had devised several measures, including setting a goal to reduce the number of those working dangerously long hours and a medical consultation mechanism under guidelines developed by the Labour Standards Office. As for skills development to improve incomes, the Government played a central role in providing training to displaced workers. The Job Card system had been introduced with all the above elements and the Government was promoting it.

- 166.** The panellist from the Government of India stated that for the growth to be meaningful, it had to be inclusive. It could not leave the bottom billion behind. Hence, the importance of decent work and the need to translate growth into employment. It was important to understand the nature of the labour market to devise effective employment strategies. The large informal economy was the salient feature of the Asian economy and employment. A large percentage of informal economy workers were not covered by wage protection, remained out of reach of trade unions and were not protected from occupational health and safety hazards. Many were self-employed or in seasonal agricultural employment. The massive entry of youth into the labour market could cause demographic catastrophes rather than dividends if not managed properly. Among the strategies the speaker emphasized was the implementation of active labour market policies for the informal economy, which looked at both demand and supply. An example of a demand side measure was the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), which guaranteed 100 days of work per year for each poor rural household. For the supply side, the Government of India had implemented the Skills Development Initiative to provide vocational training for early school leavers and workers in the informal economy. Matching workers with jobs was necessary, as was good quality labour market information. The speaker recommended developing models to promote portable skills and the development of a national qualifications framework. He also recommended alternative financing mechanisms to reach the large rural population through microfinance institutions and the promotion of agro-industries and off-farm enterprises through loans and cooperatives.
- 167.** The Employer panellist discussed the issue of mismatch between labour demand and supply. He emphasized the importance of dialogue, particularly between the government, as the provider of training, and employers, as it was the private sector that provided most jobs. Recalling the discussion during the youth leaders' forum, the speaker observed that some youth with advanced degrees still could not find jobs due to the mismatch with the skills in demand. Guiding young people on the kind of training they should get was therefore critical. He called for the ILO to address the school-to-work transition. The sustainability of enterprises was the most important issue to focus on, as all other questions depended on that. Productivity had to be enhanced, not only through training, but also through the re-engineering of business processes. The benefits of productivity gains should be shared between capital and labour. Green jobs were an important part of the sustainable enterprise agenda along with social and political stability and investments in infrastructure development. He concluded by citing the Report of the Director-General: "Improving business regulations means working closely with the private sector to uncover obstacles to growth and diversification and to determine the necessary interventions while ensuring respect for labour and environmental standards." The challenge was to translate this view into policy action and reform in more countries during the Asian Decent Work Decade.
- 168.** The Worker panellist from Singapore shared the concerns of other panellists with regard to the ageing population, the importance of promoting cooperatives, investment in skills and broader human resource development as well as the critical place that social dialogue occupied. Skills training enabled workers to gain higher wages and better working conditions and enhanced the productivity of firms. To achieve this, freedom of association

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and collective bargaining were key. Yet, many countries and export processing zones (EPZs) did not allow these rights to be exercised. Free skills training should be provided as well as education for all children and continuing education, especially for youth. The ILO Human Resources Development Recommendation, 2004 (No. 195) would, if applied, improve the lives of young people. ILO Conventions and the Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy (MNE Declaration) provided important guidance as well. On the sustainable enterprise agenda, the speaker called for the implementation of the 2007 conclusions concerning the promotion of sustainable enterprises, including the three pillars. The sustainability of enterprises depended not only on competitiveness and productivity, but also on working conditions, OSH, wages and collective bargaining. The informal economy needed to be formalized as per the 2002 Resolution concerning decent work and the informal economy.

- 169.** The Ministers and representatives of governments and of employers' and workers' organizations who participated in the discussion confirmed the importance of the topics.
- 170.** They generally supported the concept of sustainable enterprise and the role of the private sector as the principal job creator and endorsed the ILO's role in promoting the guidance offered by the 2008 conclusions. The representative of Public Services International (PSI) warned of the danger of equating sustainability with competitiveness, due to the risk of driving the service industry to cater to the wealthy segments of society alone. She insisted that the focus should be more on working conditions, and in this context, the public sector's role as an employer should not be de-emphasized.
- 171.** The delegates spent much time discussing specific aspects of skills development, in particular, the mismatch between labour supply and demand. The Employer representative from India supplemented the statement by the Indian Government panellist on the Skills Development Initiative, noting that the private sector participated in the management committee. Both the panellist from the Indian Government and the Employers' delegate from Pakistan highlighted the importance of accreditation and standardized vocational qualifications to enhance the employability of workers and to prepare them for the integration of the labour market, regionally and globally. The Workers' delegate from New Zealand suggested that the risk of investing in certain skills training should be shared between government and business because it remained difficult to predict future demand and the risk was too high to be absorbed by individual workers.
- 172.** The NREGA scheme of India attracted much attention. Sustainability of employment was a common question. The Indian Government panellist explained that much employment under the NREGA complemented seasonal work in agriculture in order to address the problem of underemployment and to provide a degree of income security to rural households. Most jobs contributed to environmental sustainability as well, through water conservation, harvesting and irrigation. The participatory process of identifying local demands made the work respond to local needs. The Worker representative from India pointed to the rise in agricultural wages as a positive impact of the programme, while the Employers' delegate from Bangladesh questioned whether it was wise to spend the government budget in this way, rather than investing in skills training. An Employers' delegate from India observed that the scheme did not foster a culture of productivity and accountability that was needed for private sector work. An Employers' delegate from Iraq indicated that the right skills would create a stable society on the basis of the principles and rights at work and non-discrimination between the sexes. Reflecting the diversity of the region, the Japanese Government panellist, the Employers' delegates from Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, as well as the ILO moderator, all agreed that "one size does not fit all" was the reality of Asia and the Pacific. The moderator concluded by stating that important innovations were coming from the region and that knowledge sharing and mutual learning would be key to realizing the Decent Work Agenda and to developing inclusive growth.

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## Thematic panel 3

### Rights at work and social dialogue

- 173.** Thematic panel 3 discussed rights at work and social dialogue. The panel was composed of the following members: Ms Rosalinda Dimapilis-Baldoz, Secretary of Labour and Employment of the Philippines; Mr Peter Anderson, Chief Executive of the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry; Mr Zahoor Muhammad Awan, Acting General Secretary of the Pakistan Workers' Federation; Ms Jacinta Collins, Parliamentary Secretary for School, Education and Workplace Relations, Australia; and a resource person, Ms Shen Qinqin, Deputy Dean of the China Institute of Industrial Relations. The panel was moderated by Mr Guy Ryder, ILO Executive Director of the Standards and Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work Sector.
- 174.** The moderator recalled that Asia and the Pacific was the locomotive of the global economy. The region had overcome the global crisis with more success than other parts of the world, and many looked forward to an "Asian Century". This raised the question as to whether the model of success embodied in 40 years of impressive economic growth could guarantee another 40 years of success, or whether that model needed to be adjusted. He noted the paradox between the shared commitment to universal respect for rights embodied in the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (1998) and the fact that despite the 2015 target date for universal ratification of the eight fundamental Conventions, two thirds of the "missing" ratifications (a total of 92) would have to come from Asia and the Pacific. Looking beyond the fundamental standards, globally ILO member States had ratified an average of 42 Conventions while the regional average stood at exactly half that figure (21). Many speakers at the Meeting had pointed to the need to rebalance the global economy, to promote inclusive growth and shared benefits for all, and to protect those most vulnerable in society, whereas reality pointed to growing inequalities and wages lagging behind labour productivity gains. The Office received increasing requests for its services in the area of labour law reform, the building of labour market institutions of social dialogue and capacity building for its actors. Clearly there was scope for discussion on the state of social stability and the sustainability of growth.
- 175.** The Government panellist from the Philippines noted that her Government had felt no choice but to opt for a robust social dialogue process. The Philippines had deliberately strengthened its Tripartite Industrial Peace Council (TIPC) making it the apex advisory body to the President and Cabinet Secretaries. The TIPC's work naturally gravitated towards issues of employment and labour market flexibility under pressure from regional integration. It also dealt more broadly with issues surrounding the overall development framework and respect for fundamental rights at work. Authorities responsible for development planning, trade, law enforcement and human resource development were all actively engaged in national and regional TIPCs. Regional tripartite councils had been set up around the country, devolving decision-making on labour issues in key employment-generating industries to the three local labour market actors with first-hand experience. In the banking industry, the tripartite actors recently reached consensus on a voluntary code of good practice on outsourcing and subcontracting, which referred disputes on the code to arbitrators coming from within the industry. The industry actors developed the code over a period of six months, deliberating on matters such as the application of workers' rights to organize in the process. The national TIPC had also actively participated in the design of the macroeconomic policies laid out in the medium-term development plan, thus laying the basis for social stability.
- 176.** The Employer panellist underlined that an overwhelming majority of employers and enterprises realized that long-term business success depended on dialogue with workers and on fair wages and working conditions. While the universality of rights was an important principle, their universal application was more difficult if some preconditions

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were not met. Realization of rights required an enabling environment, which included a strong economy with sustainable and profitable enterprises; a stable political environment; and a stable legal environment where enforcement and compliance were ensured. Social dialogue required minimum levels of capacity of employers and workers. Moreover, universal rights needed to be adapted to sometimes very diverse local circumstances and could not in all contexts produce the same outcome. While wages or working conditions provided a social safety net, so did employment in its own right. Much of the productivity growth in the region had gone into job creation, not just wages and working conditions. The panellist recognized the scope for more ratifications in the region, but cautioned that the linkage between the ratification of instruments and the actual enjoyment of rights was far from automatic.

- 177.** The Worker panellist was disappointed that Asia and the Pacific was still so far away from achieving universal ratification of the fundamental Conventions. Lack of respect of workers' rights to organize and to bargain collectively was illustrated in the low number of ratifications. Workers in countries such as Bangladesh, Fiji, Myanmar and the Philippines had been the direct target of anti-union discrimination and in some cases had been killed. It was the Workers' intention to see this Meeting address the specific situation in Fiji. Public servants were often excluded from collective bargaining. Domestic workers and informal economy workers were often denied trade union rights. Minimum wages were supposed to be living wages for low-skilled workers, but were all too often poverty wages even for skilled workers. Around 5.3 per cent of regional GDP was spent on health care and social security, but coverage was too low to prevent social exclusion. Women accounted for half of the region's workforce, yet they suffered unequal pay and segregation into the temporary and informal jobs. Migrant workers needed a solid multilateral framework to protect them against recruitment agents causing them to fall victim to slavery. Subcontracting had to be reined in. Urgent action was needed to address the many fatal workplace accidents, notably in the mining and construction sector.
- 178.** The Government panellist from Australia noted that the region was home to 73 per cent of the world's working poor. The region needed to match economic performance with social equity. Social dialogue was vital as no one-size-fits-all solution to achieving decent work or realizing international labour standards existed in the region. As a founder member of the ILO, Australia was proudly partnering with the ILO on a range of projects to extend decent work in the region. Australia had committed 15 million Australian dollars (AUD) to improve compliance with international labour standards, while promoting social dialogue – amongst them the Global Jobs Pact Framework for Pacific Labour Governance and Migration. The ILO's Better Work Programme was an example of strengthening workplace productivity and competitiveness by empowering workers. The G20 acknowledgement and commitment to promoting and respecting the fundamental principles and rights at work had been encouraging. The Fair Work Act adopted two years ago had ushered in a new era of cooperative industrial relations and enhanced protection of fundamental principles and rights at work, while also recognizing the needs of enterprises to operate in an efficient, productive and competitive manner.
- 179.** The resource person from China noted that labour relations in China were evolving from an administrative system into a practice responding to labour market pressures. In decades past, abundant labour supply had made capital strong and labour weak. China's population was set to grow until 2015, as was unemployment. At the same time, labour disputes in the non-public sector, and inequality affecting rural migrant workers in particular, were increasing, while the overall wage gap was widening. As workers were becoming more aware of their rights, collective labour disputes also showed an upward trend. The Chinese Government had started to balance economic growth with more attention to decent work, collective bargaining and harmonious labour relations in enterprises. China had adopted new legislation on employment promotion, employment contracts, labour dispute mediation and arbitration, and social insurance. When the crisis hit, it had launched an

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economic stimulus package, which secured 8.7 per cent growth in 2009, created 20 million new jobs and protected 60 million existing jobs. Recently, the All-China Federation of Trade Unions had set itself ambitious targets for organizing workers and carrying out collective bargaining at enterprise level. Chinese tradition valued harmony, and tripartism was considered a vital mechanism for harmony in the world of work.

- 180.** Questions arising from the floor related to the rights of employers (such as when protesting workers burned down factories but were not prosecuted for vandalism), the protection of workers against outsourcing and subcontracting as well as the protection of migrant and domestic workers, the capacity of governments under increasing budget pressures to invest in social dialogue, and the relative importance of ratified international standards versus national laws.
- 181.** The Government panellist from the Philippines observed that dialogue with the ILO could assist in developing out-of-the-box solutions to problems of application following ratification, as a ratifying country did not give up its sovereignty. The Philippines had welcomed the constructive discussions with the ILO's High-level Mission on Convention No. 87 and the subsequent cooperation with the Office to raise awareness of the relevant standards amongst professional groups, such as the judiciary and police. The legislative conclusions drawn from the recommendations of that mission were now going through a process of tripartite consultation and deliberation by Congress.
- 182.** The Worker panellist noted that the right of employers to manage their business freely was protected by other laws apart from labour laws. It was difficult to see what harm ratification of standards could do if these standards were already present in national law. In South Asia, however, workers in EPZs were often excluded from national labour laws resulting in exploitation by multinational enterprises.
- 183.** The moderator drew two questions from the discussion. Was it wrong for the ILO to target universal ratification of the fundamental Conventions by 2015? Was a stable employment relationship part of the enabling environment for the respect of workers' rights?
- 184.** The Employer panellist observed that the sheer age of many standards caused governments to argue against ratification. To remain relevant, the ILO had to recognize a variety of working arrangements that existed in the modern workplace. Direct employment did not render indirect employment or casual work illegitimate or unfair. The Government panellist from Australia agreed that profitable enterprises and robust labour market institutions, while not exactly preconditions for the realization of rights, certainly facilitated their exercise.
- 185.** The resource person felt that China was paying more attention to international labour standards and was committed to creating an enabling environment for its application.
- 186.** The Workers' delegate from Australia articulated the position of his group that realizing the fundamental principles was an obligation under the ILO Constitution regardless of ratification. Fundamental standards were minimum, not optional standards. They did not have to be balanced with economic performance as labour was not a commodity. The employers' argument that fundamental rights and decent work could be opted out of was self-defeating as it condemned the region to a low-wage future.
- 187.** The representative of the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) asked the Government panellist from the Philippines about the Philippine Airline Employees Association's protest against attempts by the national air carrier to outsource their services. The Government panellist from the Philippines declined to comment on a case that was currently pending in court, but added that the Philippines had long recognized the right to freely manage business if done reasonably, humanely and equitably without diminishing

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trade union rights. Fly-by-night outsourcing had been outlawed by requiring that intermediaries be sufficiently capitalized. Because workers' security of tenure was a highly emotional issue, principles governing legitimate subcontracting were developed on a tripartite basis, requiring, for example, that the employer should not resort to outsourcing to circumvent legal provisions protecting safe work, trade union rights or security of tenure, notably the prohibition to terminate employment without just cause or due process. Certain business activities could not be outsourced in the Philippines, and outsourcing was not considered a management prerogative, as it could be subject to collective bargaining or negotiated codes of practice. Outsourcing was monitored on a tripartite basis.

- 188.** The Government delegate from Japan asked how the Government of China assisted enterprises in coping with minimum wage increases. Japan had ratified the Minimum Wage Fixing Convention, 1970 (No. 131), and had decided to raise minimum wages in 2009 following thorough tripartite consultations. It had set up a ¥5 billion fund to help companies absorb the wage increase. The panellist from China responded that China planned to increase minimum wages by 13 per cent annually until 2015, correcting for the fact that low-wage earners had not participated in the gains of economic development for the last three decades. The Government was offering fiscal incentives for job creation, social insurance contributions and skills development. The Government panellist from Australia noted that while Australia's minimum wage-fixing system was different, the Government had offered similar incentives while actively promoting productive workplace practices.
- 189.** The Government delegate from Indonesia wondered if companies could empower workers to engage in social dialogue considering that the government's reach was limited in large developing countries, in particular. The Workers' delegate from Bahrain wondered if fundamental standards were not the instrument rather than the result of good governance. Recent experience in the Arab world and Bahrain demonstrated that ratification makes a difference in countries where democracy and good governance are lacking and workers are dismissed for legitimate union activity. The Employer panellist from Australia responded that existing conditions influenced the way standards were applied. Ratification followed by disappointing application only caused frustration. Employers did play a critical role in empowering workers to have a workplace dialogue, but could only effectively work with trade union representatives if there were stable trade unions.
- 190.** The Government panellist from the Philippines admitted, in response to a question from a Workers' delegate from Bahrain, that the Philippines experience with domestic workers in particular had revealed some loopholes in the laws governing overseas migration, but that the Government was gradually closing these by pursuing bilateral and regional agreements with receiving countries.
- 191.** The moderator concluded that all speakers had agreed that fundamental standards were universal and it was thus a natural objective for the ILO to pursue both their ratification and application. Context and capacity mattered, if not as a precondition then at least as an enabling environment and it was the ILO's role to build that capacity. The discussion had directed itself towards the right to organize and the right to bargain collectively without appearing to question the universality of the other fundamental standards. Subcontracting had been identified as a legitimate business practice in some cases, but an attempt to circumvent the exercise of workers' rights, including fundamental rights, in other cases. The ILO, through the combined effort of its constituents, had an obligation to keep its corpus of standards in line with contemporary circumstances. The discussion had illustrated the function of social dialogue in realizing decent work, but it had also laid bare the investment in time, resources, political will and capacity that authorities needed to make to render it effective.

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## **Discussion of the draft Resolution submitted by the Workers' group on the trade union situation in Fiji**

- 192.** The Workers' spokesperson presented the draft Resolution and summarized the worsening trade union rights situation in Fiji, as described in the introduction document.
- 193.** The Employers' spokesperson, speaking also in his capacity as Employer member of the ILO's Governing Body Committee on Freedom of Association, spoke in support of the draft Resolution. The text provided a clear and precise description of the serious situation in Fiji. He stressed the Employers' support for achieving outcomes consistent with the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98), which were applicable to all workers' and employers' organizations.
- 194.** The Government delegate from New Zealand spoke in support of the draft Resolution, calling for a return to democracy. The Government delegate from Japan supported the draft Resolution and stressed the need for free elections no later than 2014. The Government delegate from France spoke in support of the draft Resolution. The Government delegate from Australia, sharing the concerns previously expressed, supported the draft Resolution.
- 195.** The Meeting adopted the Resolution, which is contained in Appendix I to this report.

## **Consideration and adoption of the Conclusions of the Meeting**

- 196.** The Government Vice-Chairperson of the Meeting noted that the Government of Japan had submitted a document on lessons learned on employment policy towards natural disaster response from the Special Session held on 5 December 2011. The Meeting agreed to include this document as an information annex appended to the report of the Meeting.
- 197.** The Employers' spokesperson endorsed the conclusions of the Meeting, which well reflected the discussion during the Meeting. He expressed satisfaction with the recognition of the importance of enterprises and employment, as well as of the diversity in the region.
- 198.** The Workers' spokesperson similarly endorsed the conclusions, which reflected the compromises reached, but expressed the regret that it had not been possible to agree on a reference to the need to tackle precarious employment.
- 199.** The Government spokesperson reported that the conclusions were unanimously endorsed by Governments.
- 200.** The Minister of Labour and Transport Management from Nepal, while supporting the conclusions, regretted that they did not take more account of the special needs of least developed countries.
- 201.** The conclusions were adopted by the Meeting.

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## Consideration of the report of the Credentials Committee

**202.** The Meeting took note of the report of the Credentials Committee. Thirty-seven member countries and two territories had presented credentials. One Prime Minister and one Deputy Prime Minister as well as 28 Ministers and Vice-Ministers had attended the event. Disappointingly, only 11.6 per cent of the delegates were women. The Committee had received and considered an objection and a communication, and made a number of findings and conclusions reflected in the report of the Credentials Committee.

## Consideration and adoption of the report of the Meeting

**203.** Several delegates submitted amendments which were incorporated into the final version of the report. The report of the Meeting was adopted.

## Closing of the Meeting

**204.** The Employer Vice-Chairperson noted that, although challenges remained, the Asia and the Pacific region was well positioned to make the twenty-first century the Asia and the Pacific century. Millions of people would be lifted out of poverty and the region would consolidate its place in the top league of competitiveness and productivity. There were challenges, namely addressing poverty, building a larger middle class, and strengthening the institutions of governance, but the region should embark on its journey for the Asia–Pacific Decent Work Decade with full confidence and with recognition that the region’s diversity was its strength and reality.

**205.** The Worker Vice-Chairperson noted that, despite fast economic growth, many challenges remained in order to lift millions more from poverty. International labour standards were an important means for countries in the region to promote a more sustainable growth path. He stressed that commitment to ratification and implementation of the ILO core Conventions and promotion of collective bargaining was required. International and regional organizations should support making decent work and full employment an important goal of coherent macroeconomic policies. He concluded by calling for the development of strategies to address precarious work.

**206.** The ILO Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific, speaking as the Deputy Secretary-General of the Meeting, stated that the Meeting confirmed that the quality of growth mattered as much as the growth itself, and decent work and full employment needed to be at the heart of the policy for inclusive growth. Noting that achievements had been made to realize the goals set for the Asia–Pacific Decent Work Decade at the 14th Asia and the Pacific Regional Meeting in Busan, she pointed out the need to monitor and assess progress being made. Common themes of the Meeting had included creating decent work opportunities for young men and women; putting employment creation and decent work at the heart of social policy; promoting sustainable enterprise development, productive employment and skills development; promoting rights at work and social dialogue; and supporting regional cooperation and integration with more policy coherence.

**207.** The Government of Japan, as the host of the Meeting, thanked all participants for their contribution and paid tribute to the hard work of the ILO secretariat.

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**208.** The Government Vice-Chairperson of the Meeting, in his closing remarks, thanked the Government and the people of Japan for their warm welcome and support, and the Office for its hard work. He echoed the sentiments of the Director-General that the ILO was an organization which spread hope for a better life and worked to make that hope a reality. Before declaring the closing of the Meeting, he expressed solidarity with the Government and the people of Japan, and praised the Director-General for his achievements during his term in Office.



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## Appendix I

### Resolution on the trade union situation in Fiji

#### ***Submitted by the Workers' group to the 15th Asia and the Pacific and Arab Regional Meeting***

Noting that the Fijian Government installed by the military in 2006 has jailed trade union leaders and issued executive decrees that together have deprived Fijian workers of their fundamental international labour rights guaranteed by ILO Conventions Nos 87 and 98;

Recalling that the Public Emergency Regulations of 2009 make it illegal to hold union meetings unless authorized by the Government and permission for meetings is not granted or is withdrawn at the last minute;

Further recalling that the regulation permits the police to break up trade union meetings, which it has done several times this year and that on numerous occasions the military has severely assaulted and harassed senior trade union officials in Fiji, leading in some cases to severe physical injury;

Considering that the Government has prevented the National Secretary of the Fiji Trades Union Congress (FTUC) from attending and addressing the International Labour Conference, the General Council Meeting of the ITUC-AP and it has now imposed a travel ban preventing him from attending the 15th Asia and the Pacific Regional Meeting, being held in Kyoto from 4 to 7 December, 2011;

Given that since 2009, the Government has issued several decrees that sharply curtail trade union and labour rights in both the public and private sectors; eliminates the access to judicial review and redress for past, present and future violations; and disallows the right to question the legality of the decrees themselves;

Noting that these were made without any consultation with the trade unions;

Recalling that the Government issued the Essential National Industries Decree which has cancelled union registrations and requires all trade unions in critical corporations (including finance, telecoms, civil aviation, and all foreign banks and public utilities sectors) to be re-registered under the Act. The Decree further prevents trade unions from electing any full-time person into the office and only allows for the establishment of bargaining units with the prior approval by the Prime Minister;

Taking note of the recommendations made by the Committee on Freedom of Association, Case No. 2723, which has denounced these and other labour rights violations;

Regretting that the Government has not accepted calls from the ILO Director-General for social dialogue;

Considering that such breaches will continue to have adverse consequences for investments and employment in Fiji and to its standing in the region and the international community;

In view of these serious concerns the Asia and the Pacific Regional Meeting strongly condemns the actions of the Fiji Government and requests the Governing Body to instruct the Director-General to:

1. Closely monitor the situation in Fiji and to intervene to safeguard the human and labour rights of Fijian workers.
2. Ensure that the recommendations of the ILO Committee on Freedom of Association on Case No. 2723 are fully implemented, in particular by urging *“the Government to accept a direct contacts mission to the country in order to clarify the facts and assist the Government in finding, together with the social partners, appropriate solutions in conformity with freedom of association principles.”*
3. Press for the travel restrictions imposed on Felix Anthony to be removed immediately for him to attend meetings related to trade union activities as espoused in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights which allows for everyone to leave and return to his own country.

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## Appendix II

### **Lessons learned on employment policy towards natural disaster response from the Special Session by the Government of Japan on 5 December 2011, Kyoto, Japan**

Employment policy during the process of recovering and rebuilding from natural disasters is an essential issue in the Asia and the Pacific region where 40 per cent of natural disasters in the world and 82 per cent of the resulting casualties have occurred.

The Japanese Government arranged a Special Session in Kyoto on 5 December 2011 to share experiences and information on employment policy with respect to natural disaster response among countries in the region during the 15th Asia and the Pacific Regional Meeting. In the Session, governments, a trade union, an employers' organization and the ILO, which have rich knowledge of natural disaster response, briefed on their activities and exchanged opinions in line with the theme of "Natural disaster response with a central focus on employment policy".

The Senior Vice-Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare, Japan, reaffirmed that policy for securing employment toward natural disaster response is one of the measures for "decent work" which has been advanced by the ILO and needs linkage to social protection policy and dialogue among tripartite constituents to be carried out effectively. The Senior Vice-Minister expressed his belief that participants shared recognition that the dissemination of the above idea among tripartite constituents in the region had contributed towards realizing "decent work".

The Senior Vice-Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare, Japan, had compiled lessons learned as follows, to share the results of the Session and to ensure smooth implementation of employment policy in the face of future natural disasters:

- (1) The serious effect to employment by natural disasters and the importance of employment policy towards natural disaster response for recovery and restoration should be extensively noted.
- (2) The employment policy towards natural disaster response should be implemented for the purpose of recovering self-sustained livelihoods through midterm living support of victims and securing their employment together with emergency aid for unemployment.
- (3) The employment policy towards natural disaster response should be implemented to promote the employment of victims in collaboration with recovery demands and according to the recovery stage.
- (4) Employment policy towards natural disaster response should be implemented by contributing to the Decent Work Agenda as a part of social protection policy.
- (5) To support the employment of victims, job cultivation and job replacement services, vocational training based on restoring demand and job vacancies should be appropriately provided by public employment security organizations.
- (6) One-stop service centres with facilities to provide income security, to cultivate jobs, to offer job vacancies, to introduce vocational training and to carry out other necessary support for the re-employment of victims who are unemployed because of natural disasters are important for recovering the livelihoods of victims as well as the early securing of administration facilities on employment.
- (7) Employment policy towards natural disaster response should be carried out with consideration for the socially vulnerable since they are more likely to face difficulties.
- (8) Employment policy towards natural disaster response should be formulated based on dialogue with employers, employees, local governments and other relevant bodies.
- (9) It should be recognized that other areas not damaged by natural disaster could face an employment crisis based on slowing economic activities in the damaged area.

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- (10) Employment policy towards natural disaster response should be ready for immediate implementation when it is necessary. It should be taken note that if employment and labour policy and social protection schemes are prepared in times of calm and stability, applying them for emergency response can ease damage.
  - (11) The implementation of recovery efforts through the private sector partners can contribute to enabling smooth and effective recovery processes that create employment. Partnerships between businesses in recovery are also effective mechanisms to promote sustainable recovery both for workers and employers.
  - (12) Appropriate measures for occupational safety and health (OSH) in recovering and restoring the construction field should be carried out. Employed victims in the construction sector should be provided with additional information on OSH.
  - (13) The ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific is expected to collect experience on natural disaster response with a central focus on employment policy in the Asia and the Pacific area commencing with Japan, such as presented at this Special Session and to prepare dissemination to each country towards future natural disasters.
  - (14) In order to realize decent work, the ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific should take action to support the damaged area by providing know-how and carrying out aid there, etc., in coordination and cooperation with the government and relevant bodies when a large-scale disaster strikes in the region.