



► ILO Brief

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Main features of national social dialogue institutions in Asia and the Pacific

Key points

- National social dialogue institutions are widespread across Asia and the Pacific and take diverse forms, reflecting the principle that there is no one-size-fits-all model for effective social dialogue.
- The key challenge is to ensure that these institutions enable meaningful and effective social dialogue, supported by representative social partners, adequate capacities, regular consultation and an enabling legal and institutional environment.

Introduction

Asia and the Pacific is a dynamic and rapidly developing region, with strong economic growth and an expanding population. While these trends reinforce its global importance, they also create challenges for ensuring social justice and equitable development.

Effective and inclusive national social dialogue institutions (NSDIs) can help address these challenges by fostering cooperation among governments, employers and workers and contributing to policies that promote decent work, social justice and sustainable development¹.

However, comprehensive and reliable information on the basic features of NSDIs in the region remains limited. Better understanding of these institutions is essential to assess the social dialogue landscape and provide targeted

technical assistance to strengthen tripartism and social dialogue.

Drawing on an ILO survey conducted in 2024–2025, this Technical Brief reviews the institutional arrangements of NSDIs in 36 countries across Asia and the Pacific, highlighting their key features, roles and achievements and their contribution to social dialogue and governance in the world of work.

In this research, the authors employed both quantitative and qualitative methods. Desk studies drew upon publicly available resources, including public websites and published comments from ILO supervisory bodies, in addition to gathering information through field colleagues in the subregion covered by the relevant ILO offices, particularly ILO Bangkok, ILO Delhi and ILO Beijing. The brief, however, is not a static document; it reflects the current situation as of October 2025 and will require

periodic updates as institutions evolve and adapt to new challenges.

With the forthcoming 50-year anniversary of the ILO Convention No. 144¹, this Brief is part of a series of publications aimed at reflecting on the development of national social dialogue institutions in different regions and assessing the influence of Convention No. 144 on this process.

The Brief aims to spark discussion on the current role, set-up and impact of NSDIs and explore opportunities for strengthening the social dialogue process. The Brief deliberately focuses on national social dialogue institutions (NSDIs), reflecting its objective of mapping national institutional arrangements across the region. This focus should not be interpreted as suggesting that national-level social dialogue is inherently more important or effective than dialogue conducted at sectoral, enterprise or local levels. Rather, these different levels of social dialogue are complementary, and their relative importance depends on national circumstances.

Following this introduction, Section 2 summarizes the basic features of these institutions, including their legal basis, composition, internal structure, overview of ratifications of Conventions No. 87, No. 98 and No. 144 in the region. Section 3 highlights some of the major achievements of NSDIs in selected countries over the past several years. Finally, Section 4 offers conclusions and perspectives for the way forward.

The results of the research provide an important foundation for deepening ILO's collaboration with NSDIs. They also complement other sources of information, such as those provided by the international network AICESIS (box 1).

► Box 1. AICESIS—the international network of NSDIs

The International Association of Economic and Social Councils or Similar Institutions (AICESIS) is a global network of NSDIs and similar institutions around the world. It was established in July 1999 in Port Louis, Mauritius and is today headquartered in Brussels, Belgium

According to its website, AICESIS has member institutions from 72 countries on four continents - Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America and the Caribbean - as well as several regional institutions. Its mission is to promote dialogue as well as to share experience and best practices among its members. More specifically, it aims to encourage dialogue among economic and social partners worldwide; support the development of their advisory role; enhance social dialogue and civil dialogue; and strengthen participative democracy and the role of social partners and other components of civil society in the world - as core factors of a genuine sustainable democratization and effective governance of modern societies.¹

In March 2025, the ILO and AICESIS renewed their cooperation agreement that covers the promotion of the Decent Work Agenda, the Sustainable Development Goals (the 2030 Agenda), the social dimension of globalization, the future of work and the strengthening of participatory democracy in general.²

Out of 36 countries in the Asia and Pacific region, only three institutions covered by this Brief are members of AICESIS - those in China, Lao PDR and Republic of Korea. The ILO encourages NSDIs to join AICESIS as it can give more impetus to collaboration with and among NSDIs.

1. [Missions-aicesis.](https://www.aicesis.org/)

2. [The ILO renews its cooperation agreement with the Association Internationale des Conseils économiques et sociaux et institutions similaires | International Labour Organization](https://www.ilo.org/public/eng/mediacentre/pressreleases/2025/03/250325ILOAICESIS.htm)

¹ C144 - Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144), adopted at the International Labour Conference on 2nd June 1976.

Overview of NSDIs

National SDIs in the region

The Asia and the Pacific region, as it is shaped in the ILO context, covers 36 countries. The survey reveals that 32 out of these countries have formally established tripartite national social dialogue institutions (NSDIs). The diversity in the forms of these institutions clearly illustrates one of the fundamental principles regarding social dialogue, namely that there is no one-size-fits-all model or approach to Social Dialogue. In this region, NSDIs take very

different forms and names: most countries have established a Council (15 countries, see details in the table

below) while others created a Committee (7 countries), a Board (4 countries), a Forum (2 countries) or an Institution (1 country), whereas two countries hold their principal social dialogue in a national labour conference. However, more important than the name is the effectiveness of the institution. In view of this it is noted that the level of activity varies considerably among these institutions - Information about their activities is at times difficult to obtain but can typically be found on the official website of the respective government or the ministry responsible for labour issues (see Table 1).

► **Table 1 National SDIs in the region**

Country	Name of NSDI and website for related information	AICESIS Membership
Afghanistan	Labour High Council - https://molisa.gov.af/	
Australia	National Workplace Relations Consultative Council - https://www.directory.gov.au/	
Bangladesh	National Tripartite Consultative Council - https://mole.gov.bd/	
Brunei Darussalam	-	
Cambodia	Labour Advisory Committee - Employment and Labor – The Council for the Development of Cambodia (CDC)	
China	China Economic and Social Council - http://www.cesc.gov.cn/	yes
Cook Islands	National Tripartite Labour Advisory Council - https://www.intaff.gov.ck/	
Fiji	Employment Relations Advisory Board - https://www.employment.gov.fj/	
India	Indian Labour Conference - https://labour.gov.in/ ²	
Indonesia	National Tripartite Cooperation Institution (LKS Tripnas)	
IR Iran	Supreme Labour Conference - https://www.mcls.gov.ir/	
Japan	Labour Policy Council (CLP) https://www.mhlw.go.jp/english	
Kiribati	Decent Work Advisory Board - http://www.mehrr.gov.ki/	
Lao PDR	National Tripartite Committee - http://www.molsw.gov.la/	
Malaysia	National Labour Advisory Council - https://www.mohr.gov.my/	
Maldives	Tripartite Labour Advisory Board	
Marshall Islands	-	
Mongolia	National Tripartite Committee on Labour and Social Consensus - https://www.mlsp.gov.mn/	
Myanmar	National Tripartite Dialogue Forum - https://www.mol.gov.mm/my/	
Nepal	Central Labour Advisory Council - https://moless.gov.np/	
New Zealand	Social dialogue is done at the sectoral level ³	
Pakistan	Federal Tripartite Consultative Committee - https://www.ophrd.gov.pk/	
Palau	-	

² While the Indian Labour Conference has not met in recent years, the Federal Government invites to ad-hoc tripartite meetings, mainly to inform about Governments' future plans. In addition, it is also important to note that tripartite social dialogue in India is often held at the level of States which is not captured in this regional Brief.

³ In New Zealand, social dialogue is primarily conducted through sector-specific mechanisms rather than a centralized national institution. This approach involves collaboration among government agencies, employer organizations, and worker representatives to address labour market challenges and promote fair employment practices in specific industrial sectors.

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Papua New Guinea	National Tripartite Consultative Council - http://www.dlir.gov.pg/	
Philippines	National Tripartite Industrial Peace Council - https://dole.gov.ph/	
Republic of Korea	Economic Social and Labour Council - https://english.eslc.go.kr/index.do	yes
Samoa	Samoa National Tripartite Forum	
Singapore	Multiple specialised NSDIs ⁴ - https://www.mom.gov.sg/	
Solomon Islands	Tripartite Labour Advisory Board	
Sri Lanka	National Labour Advisory Council - http://www.labour.gov.lk/	
Thailand	National Labour Development Advisory Council - https://www.mol.go.th/en/	
Timor-Leste	National Labour Council - http://www.sefope.gov.tl/	
Tonga	Tripartite Labour Advisory Committee - https://www.mia.gov.to/	

Legal basis and date of creation

Based on the available information, 19 NSDIs in the subregion have been established under primary legislation, such as a Labour Act or an Industrial Relations Act. In four countries, the NSDI was created by a government decision (PM decree or executive order) or through a decision of a political consultative conference (China). Information on the legal basis is currently unavailable for five NSDIs. The diversity of legal foundations - from primary legislation to executive decrees and political consultative decisions - has

important repercussions for the stability, authority and permanence of these institutions, with bodies anchored in legislation generally enjoying stronger mandates and higher institutional resilience than those established through lower-level legal instruments or agreements.

About half of these institutions were established in the 21st century, reflecting the evolving institutional landscape on social dialogue in these countries.

► Table 2 Legal basis and date of creation

Country ⁵	Legal basis ¹	Date of creation
Afghanistan	Labour Law of Afghanistan	2007
Australia	National Workplace Relations Consultative Council Act 2002	1977
Bangladesh	Bangladesh Labour Act 2006 ⁶	1980
Cambodia	Labour Law of Cambodia	1997
China	Established by the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference	2001
Cook Islands	NI	2015
Fiji	Employment Relations Promulgation 2007	2007
Indonesia	Manpower Act No. 13 of 2003	2005
IR Iran	Labour Law of the Islamic Republic of Iran	1990
Japan	Act for Establishment of the MHLW (Article 6, Paragraph 1).	2001
Kiribati	NI	2010
Lao PDR	Prime Minister's Decree from 20.09.21	2021
Malaysia	Industrial Relations Act 1967	1983
Maldives	Industrial Relations Act	2024
Mongolia	Labour Law of Mongolia	1999

⁴ In Singapore, tripartism—a collaborative partnership among the government, employers, and workers—serves as a cornerstone for shaping labour policies and fostering harmonious industrial relations. While the city-state boasts several well-established tripartite institutions, these are specialized in focus and do not function as a comprehensive "umbrella" institution.

⁵ Countries that do not have a permanent, or one overarching umbrella National Social Dialogue Institution could not further be described in detail in this comparative Brief and have consequently been taken out of the following tables. Other countries, where no information was available, have also been taken out.

⁶ The NTCC in Bangladesh is established by the Law : BLA section 348A./ The TORs gazetted in 2017 set its core functions.

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Myanmar	NI	2014
Nepal	Labour Act 2017 ⁷	1992
Pakistan	Notification letter of the Ministry of Oversea Pakistani and Human Resource Development (MoOP&HRD) No. 6-5/2014-ILO-I	2014
Papua New Guinea	Industrial Relations Act	1962
Philippines	Executive Order No. 49, series of 1998.	1990
Republic of Korea	Economic and Social Development Commission Act.	1998
Samoa	Labour Employment and Relation Act 2013	2013
Singapore	Due to a multitude of tripartite bodies, there is a variety of legal instruments, such as IRA and others	Different dates
Solomon Islands	NI	2012
Sri Lanka	Constitution of the National Labour Advisory Council	1994
Thailand	Labour Relations Act	1977
Timor-Leste	Established as per Art 100 of Law No. 4/2012	2012
Vanuatu	NI	2011
Viet Nam	Established under the - PM Decision No. 68/2007/QĐ-TTg dated 17 May 2007, later strengthened by PM decision no 1413/QĐ-TTg dated 18 August 2021	2007

1. NI= Information is not available.

Type of NSDIs and composition

According to our findings, the vast majority of countries in the region have established pure tripartite institutions, adhering to the traditional ILO model (representatives of government, employers and workers). Notably, there are no bipartite or bipartite-plus institutions⁸, which can occasionally be found in other parts of the world. Only four institutions in the region are classified as tripartite-plus (i.e. the NSDIs in China, the Republic of Korea, Japan and Thailand).

The institutions in this region tend to be relatively small, with most having fewer than 30 members. Only four out of the 29 institutions are moderately large, with memberships ranging between 31 and 60 members (Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines). The China Economic and Social Council stands out as the largest institution in the region.

► Table 3 Type of NSDIs and composition

Country	Type ¹	Number of members	Breakdown by groups ²
Afghanistan	trip	9	3G + 3E + 3W
Australia	trip	15	Chair=G + 7E + 7W
Bangladesh	trip	60	20G + 20E + 20W
Cambodia	trip	24	8G + 8E + 8W
China	trip+	214	comprising experts, scholars, and executives from economic and social sectors
Cook Islands	trip	NI	NI
Fiji	trip	15	5G + 5E + 5W
Indonesia	trip	45	15G + 15E + 15W
IR Iran	trip	NI	NI
Japan	trip+	30	10E + 10W + 10experts representing public interests

⁷ CLAC was originally established in 1992 and is currently constituted and operating under the Labour Act, 2017

⁸ Bipartite institutions are those composed exclusively of representatives of employers and workers, which are also called “the social partners” of the government. Bipartite-plus institutions consist of representatives of employers, workers, and other groups, which are not representatives of the government, e.g. academia, independent experts, representatives of the informal economy, etc.

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Kiribati	trip	NI	NI
Lao PDR	trip	18	8G + 5E + 5W
Malaysia	trip	48	16G + 16E + 16W
Maldives	trip	8	Chair + 3G + 2E + 2W
Mongolia	trip	NI	NI
Myanmar	trip	28	Chair + 9G + 9E + 9W
Nepal	trip	21	11G + 5E + 5W
Pakistan	trip	8	6G + 1E + 1W
Papua New Guinea	trip	16	4 Ministers + 6E + 6W
Philippines	trip	36	12G + 12E + 12W
Republic of Korea	trip+	17	Chair + 2G + 5E + 5W + 4 publ. interests
Samoa	trip	12	4G + 4E + 4W
Singapore	trip	varying	It differs according to the tripartite institution
Solomon Islands	trip	NI	NI
Sri Lanka	trip	NI	NI
Thailand	Trip+	20	5G + 5E + 5W + 5 external, nominated by G
Timor-Leste	trip	8	Chair + 3G + 2E + 2W
Vanuatu	trip	3	1G + 1E + 1W
Viet Nam	trip	9	Chair + 2G + 3E + 3W

1. trip = tripartite representatives come from G, E organizations and W organisations exclusively; trip+ = where not only representatives of G, E and W, but also representatives of other groups, often civil society, youth or women; NI= Information is not available. 2. G = government; E = employers; W = workers. 3. As agreed between the government and the social partners and depending on the discussion topic, the composition can vary depending on the needs of a meeting.

Structure, Competency, Mandate, and inclusion of Convention No.144 issues⁹

National social dialogue institutions (NSDIs) in Asia-Pacific display significant diversity in both their structural arrangements and their mandates, although some common trends can be identified. Most of the NSDIs have established sub-committees for specific topics, in addition to the plenary. For instance, the Philippines combines and coordinates national, industry, regional, and local tripartite councils, while the Republic of Korea and Japan have established a wide range of specialized committees addressing agenda-specific, industry-specific, and even social-group-specific issues. By contrast, Sri Lanka has no formal institutional structure but operates rather ad-hoc.

In terms of competencies, nearly all NSDIs operate as consultative and advisory bodies rather than taking binding decisions - Samoa being an exception where the institution has decision-making powers on some matters, reflecting a stronger role in influencing and implementing

policy. While NSDIs are broadly institutionalized across the region, their influence remains heavily dependent on political will and follow-up by governments and social partners.

The mandates of the institutions show great variation, from a narrow mandate focussing primarily on labour matters (e.g. Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan) to a broad mandate. For instance, China (the largest institutions in the region) addresses economic, social, environmental, educational, scientific, cultural, and even foreign affairs. The Republic of Korea, Japan and Samoa also cover wide-ranging policy areas, from employment and industrial relations to welfare and broader socio-economic development. Nepal's NSDI puts matters on labour legislation, vocational training, skills development, productivity growth as well as dispute resolution on the

⁹ Convention No. 144 provides a framework for regular tripartite consultations between governments and the most representative organizations of employers and workers on matters relating to international labour standards. While Convention No. 144 is widely ratified, the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR) has noted persistent challenges in its

implementation. According to NORMLEX, these challenges are reported in several countries, mainly concerning Article 5 and 2 of the C144, and to a lesser extent Articles 3, 4, 6 and 1. For further details and country-specific observations, readers should consult [NORMLEX](#).

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agenda. The Philippines similarly discusses broader social and employment policy.

Finally, in most countries that have ratified Convention No. 144, the primary NSDIs also holds tripartite consultations

on matters relating to this Convention. While this is not an automatic link, it does show the close correlation that exists between ratifying this Governance Convention and the practice of social dialogue on other policy matters.

► Table 4 Structure, Competency, Mandate, and inclusion of Convention No.144 issues

Country	Structure	Competency	Mandate	Tripartite consultations related to Convention 144 held in the principal NSDI
Bangladesh	Plenary; Support Unit under MoLE.	Consultative / Advisory	<i>Advising and consulting on domestic labour matters (legislation and policies), promoting industrial relations, and reviewing compliance with international labour standards</i>	yes
China	Plenary, Secretariat, Board of directors, several committees.	Consultative / Advisory	Economic, social environmental, educational, scientific, cultural, as well as foreign affairs	NI
Indonesia	Plenary and sub-committee	Consultative / Advisory	Only labour issues	yes
Japan	Plenary, specialised committees	Consultative / Advisory	Broad mandate, related to social and labour sphere	no
Malaysia	<i>Plenary, Technical Committees</i>	Consultative / Advisory	Labour issues and human resources	yes
Nepal ¹⁰	Sub-committees may be established as needed	Consultative / Advisory	Broad mandate	yes
Pakistan ¹¹	NI	Consultative / Advisory	Broad mandate	yes
Philippines	Plenary, Tripartite Executive Committee, and several specific sub-committees	Consultative / Advisory	covers all labour, employment, and social policies issues	yes
Republic of Korea	Plenary Committee; several sub-committees; Secretariat	Consultative / Advisory	Employment; labour, industrial, economic, welfare and social policies; development of labour-management relationship, etc.	yes
Samoa	Plenary	Consult/ Advis and decision-making	Broad mandate	yes
Sri Lanka,	No formal structure ¹²	Consultative / Advisory	matters relating to social and labour policies and international labour standards	yes
Thailand	NI	Consultative / Advisory	NI	NI
Viet Nam	Plenary, Technical Department and Assistance Departments	Consultative / Advisory	mechanisms, policies and solutions to build and develop harmonious, stable and progressive industrial relations	yes

¹⁰ Labour Act, 2017 explicitly provides that, among the five representatives from each social partner group, at least two members must be women. This highlights the inclusiveness of the CLAC.

¹¹ In Pakistan, the Federal Tripartite Consultative Committee (FTCC) invites representatives from provincial tripartite bodies to participate in its meetings, facilitating information-sharing and mutual learning between federal and provincial levels.

¹² Meetings take place in plenary, or if needed, specifically established working groups.

Chairperson, Secretariat and recent activity

The analysis of the findings reveals that the large majority of NSDIs in the region are chaired by a Labour Minister or a government official. Notable exceptions are found in China, where the chairperson is elected by peers, and in Japan and the Republic of Korea, where independent individuals serve as chairpersons.

All NSDIs in the region have a secretariat, which is typically integrated within the Ministry of Labour, the duties often being carried out in addition to the other official duties of a labour officer. The NSDIs in China and the Republic of Korea stand out as they maintain a secretariat, independent from the relevant ministry.

Detailed information on the activities of social dialogue institutions remains limited and challenging to obtain. Outcomes of NSDI meetings are usually not made public in the Asia-Pacific region. However, our research indicates that approximately half of the NSDIs in the region held meetings in 2023–2025, demonstrating that these bodies are operational, to different extents. This does not, however, answer the question of effectiveness. This question is complex, political, to some extent subjective and can better be answered on a country-by-country basis - it may therefore be best addressed at the national level.

► **Table 5 Chairperson, Secretariat and recent activity**

Country	Secretariat ¹	Chairperson	Meetings in 2023-2024
Afghanistan	NI	NI	NI
Australia	yes-G	Minister	NI
Bangladesh	yes-G	Minister	Yes
Cambodia	yes-G	Minister	NI
China	yes	Elected by peers	Yes
Cook Islands	yes-G	Other government official	NI
Fiji	yes-G	Other government official	Yes
Indonesia	yes-G	Minister	Yes
IR Iran	yes-G	Other government official	NI
Japan	yes-G	Independent	NI
Kiribati	yes-G	Other government official	NI
Lao PDR	yes-G	Minister of Labour	NI
Malaysia	yes-G	Minister	Yes
Maldives	yes-G	Other government official	Newly established
Mongolia	yes-G	Minister	Yes
Myanmar	yes-G	Minister	NI
Nepal	yes-G	Minister	Yes
Pakistan	yes-G	Minister	Yes
Papua New Guinea	NI	Minister	Yes
Philippines	yes-G	Minister	Yes
Republic of Korea	yes	Independent	Yes
Samoa	yes-G	Other government official	Yes
Singapore	yes-G	Minister	Yes
Solomon Islands	yes-G	Other government official	NI
Sri Lanka	yes-G	Minister	Yes
Thailand	yes-G	Selected by the members	Yes
Timor-Leste	yes-G	Other government official	Yes
Vanuatu	yes-G	Minister	NI
Viet Nam	yes-G	Minister	NI

1. yes-G = secretariat of the NSDI is part of a ministry or other government agency, yes= the NSDI has an independent secretariat of its own, NI = Information is not available.

Overview of ratifications of main social dialogue conventions

Convention No. 144 is among the most universally ratified ILO conventions, with 159 ratifications globally (ca 85% of all ILO member States), underscoring its critical role in implementing the Decent Work Agenda and promoting effective social dialogue. In the Asia-Pacific region, two-thirds of countries (24 out of 36) have ratified this governance convention, of which five ratifications came in the last ten years, thus providing a conducive framework for fostering consultations and meaningful national tripartite social dialogue. However, 12 countries have not yet ratified the convention, many of which are small island developing states (SIDS).

Convention No. 87¹³ has been ratified by 158 countries worldwide and by 19 countries in the region: **Australia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Fiji, Indonesia, Japan, Kiribati, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste, and Vanuatu.** Out of 168 ratifications worldwide, 23 countries in the region have ratified **Convention No. 98**¹⁴, which promotes the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining. These two conventions have only seen one and two ratifications respectively in the last ten years¹⁵. See further details in the box below.

The latter two conventions (No. 87 and No. 98) are **fundamental conventions** in the ILO system of

► Table 5 Overview of ratifications of main social dialogue conventions

Country	C 144 - Status and year of ratification	C 87 - Status and year of ratification	C 98 - Status and year of ratification
Afghanistan	yes, 2010	-	-
Australia	yes, 1979	yes, 1973	yes, 1973
Bangladesh	yes, 1979	yes, 1972	yes, 1972
Brunei Darussalam	-	-	-
Cambodia	-	yes, 1999	yes, 1999
China	yes, 1990	-	-
Cook Islands	yes, 2018	-	-
Fiji	yes, 1998	yes, 2002	yes, 1974
India	yes, 1978	-	-
Indonesia	yes, 1990	yes, 1998	yes, 1957

international labour standards, and their implementation is considered to be a necessary precondition for effective social dialogue. Convention No. 144 is a governance convention that requires Governments to consult (more than just inform) with the most representative organizations of workers and employers on all measures taken by the Government in relation to ILS and the activities of the ILO; The Convention leaves the nature and form of the procedures to be determined in each country in accordance with national practice. When consultations are undertaken through bodies, such structure can be equally useful to hold social dialogue on other topics like labour policy, employment policy and/or economic matters. 13 countries in the region have ratified all three above-mentioned ILO conventions. Interestingly, no country in the Asia-Pacific region has ratified Convention No. 154¹⁶, which aims at the promotion of collective bargaining.

The ILO continues to provide technical assistance to member States, supporting their efforts to ratify and implement these conventions, inter alia by strengthening the institutional frameworks and ensuring the effective application of their principles in their labour relations policies and practices¹⁷.

¹³ C087 - Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87)

¹⁴ C098 - Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98)

¹⁵ Accordingly, 17 countries in the region have not yet ratified Convention No. 87 and 13 countries have not yet ratified Convention No. 98 (status as of June 2026).

¹⁶ Collective Bargaining Convention, 1981 (No. 154)

¹⁷ For further information on the application of ratified Conventions, including observations by the ILO supervisory bodies, see [NORMLEX](#)

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IR Iran	-	-	-
Japan	yes, 2002	yes, 1965	yes, 1953
Kiribati	yes, 2019	yes, 2000	yes, 2000
Lao PDR	yes, 2010	-	-
Malaysia	yes, 2002	-	yes, 1961
Maldives	-	yes, 2013	yes, 2013
Marshall Islands	-	-	-
Mongolia	yes, 1998	yes, 1969	yes, 1969
Myanmar	-	yes, 1955	-
Nepal	yes, 1995	-	yes, 1996
New Zealand	yes, 1987	-	yes, 2003
Pakistan	yes, 1994	yes, 1951	yes, 1952
Palau	-	-	-
Papua New Guinea	yes, 2023	yes, 2000	yes, 1976
Philippines	yes, 1991	yes, 1953	yes, 1953
Republic of Korea	yes, 1999	yes, 2021	yes, 2021
Samoa	yes, 2018	yes, 2008	yes, 2008
Singapore	yes, 2010	-	yes, 1965
Solomon Islands	-	yes, 2012	yes, 2012
Sri Lanka	yes, 1994	yes, 1995	yes, 1972
Thailand	yes, 2024	-	-
Timor-Leste	-	yes, 2009	yes, 2009
Tonga	-	-	-
Tuvalu	-	-	-
Vanuatu	-	yes, 2006	yes, 2006
Viet Nam	yes, 2008	-	yes, 2019
TOTAL as of July 2026	24 countries	19 countries	23 countries

Achievements and selected country results¹⁸

Countries with a strong social dialogue culture are generally better equipped to address both crises and longer-term economic and social transformations. By promoting cooperation, predictability and consensus-building, social dialogue helps governments, employers and workers respond to emerging challenges while supporting stable and inclusive economic development. The COVID-19 pandemic provided a clear illustration of this role. In a number of countries, peak-level tripartite social dialogue led to measures supporting employment, incomes, wages as well as relief measures for businesses (for example in Singapore, Japan, Korea, New Zealand,

Australia). In a number of South and Southeast Asian countries, too, social dialogue played an important role in dealing with disruptions caused by Covid, by addressing issues related to adjustments in wages and allowances, working time flexibilities, tele-work in certain sectors, extension of paid leave, downsizing & severance pay issues, as well as a safe Return to Work (OSH measures) (for example in the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh).

Post-Covid recovery and growth challenges are equally being addressed through social dialogue mechanisms, both at national and sectoral level, e.g. improvements in OSH measures, social protection and skills development

¹⁸ These achievements do not necessarily imply effective implementation of Conventions Nos. 87 and 98. This brief focuses on NSDI institutional

arrangements rather than compliance; for information on compliance, please consult the supervisory body comments available on [NORMLEX](#)

programmes (for example in the Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Vietnam).

ILO members States generally recognise the importance of social dialogue in labour policy making and in regulating labour relations, however, the arrangements and practices of social dialogue differ widely. The country's approach to Freedom of Association (FoA) is a determining factor in this regard. In many countries in Asia-Pacific, FoA tends to be seen more as a social stability or a law-and-order issue, rather than a labour market matter or a pre-condition for the promotion of decent work. Consequently, this can directly affect labour relations and limit the potential of the institutions and mechanisms of social dialogue.

Tripartism is being practiced but it has weakened in recent years. The response to the Covid pandemic exposed (in many countries) the inadequacies of the tripartite social dialogue arrangements, especially in terms of representation issues where voices of frontline workers, women and informal economy workers did not find adequate place in social dialogue mechanisms.

History has shown that meaningful social dialogue relies on several preconditions to operate effectively and achieve policy outcomes:

- An enabling legal framework, including respect for freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining. The legal framework is the basis for translating and implementing these rights into reality.
- Strong, independent and representative employers' and workers' organizations with organizational and technical capacities to conclude and deliver on agreements.
- Political will and commitment to engage in effective social dialogue by all parties.
- Appropriate institutional support, including administrative arrangements to hold social dialogue in practical terms; and
- Dialogue that takes place in good faith, with mutual respect, based on facts & data and with genuine follow-up, thus creating a basis for (mutual) trust.

Social dialogue, facilitated by the work of NSDIs, has demonstrated progress in many countries of the region. Reflecting on recent years, the following achievements are particularly noteworthy.

The **National Tripartite Consultative Council (NTCC) in Bangladesh** has been instrumental in facilitating various amendments to the Bangladesh Labour Act (BLA), 2006, including the latest amended BLA ordinance adopted in November 2025. The tripartite and consultative processes aim at ensuring the legislation evolves to address recurring and emerging labour issues, in alignment with the ILS, such as a reshaping of the labour dispute resolution function within a semi-independent authority with a tripartite governing body. The amendment of Nov 2025, as consulted and agreed during NTCC discussions has also introduced a new National Social Dialogue Forum, which mandate, structure and functions will be clarified by the Rules. This new addition reconfirms the commitment of the tripartite constituents in anchoring the social dialogue culture and practice as a conductor of labour reforms and broader consultations. Additionally, the NTCC provides a consultative platform on further alignment of the BLA's provisions with the observations and recommendations of the ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR) as well as on ratified Conventions and Conventions planned for ratification in the next few years. The NTCC also plays a key role in discussing the decisions on the ratification of international labour standards. On 20 November, ILO Conventions Nos 155, 187 and 190 were ratified after being discussed at the NTCC.

The **Labour Advisory Committee (LAC) in Cambodia** plays a key role in discussing and recommending minimum wage increases in the garment sector to the government. The minimum wage was originally introduced in 1997 and has been adjusted seven times since then, with notable input from the LAC. The consultative process has helped balance the needs of workers and employers by considering social and economic factors, including labour market conditions and the capacity of enterprises, when formulating recommendations on minimum wage adjustments.

In Indonesia, the LKS Tripnas is the key consultative tripartite body at the national level. It functions as a forum for communication, consultation and deliberations that has enabled the Government to make labour policies and labour reforms based on advice and recommendations of the social partners. For example, during the Covid pandemic, the Ministry of Manpower held on-line dialogue on the impact of COVID-19 on enterprises and workers; Problems related to wages, layoffs and THR benefit

(religious holiday allowance) for dismissed workers were discussed and supportive decisions were taken.

More generally, industrial relations policy is said to be influenced by Pancasila principles which emphasize harmony, cooperation and partnership between workers, employers, and the government and seek to balance the rights, responsibilities and obligations of the parties in labour relations. Social dialogue is one of the means to implement this philosophy.

More recently, Indonesia's accession process to the OECD¹⁹ has provided a further opportunity to strengthen social dialogue on labour market and broader economic reforms. As the country continues aligning its legislation and policies with international standards and best practices, social dialogue can contribute to building consensus on reforms affecting the world of work²⁰.

Tripartite social dialogue in Japan has promoted a system of collaboration and consensus-building, contributing to stable labour relations and economic development. This approach has enabled Japan to address labour market challenges and promote sustainable growth, as evidenced by its strong labour-management relations.

In **Lao PDR**, formal tripartite social dialogue mechanisms exist at national and provincial levels and operate with varying degrees of effectiveness, covering areas such as industrial relations, social security, OSH, skills development, etc. The **National Tripartite Committee** at apex level was established in 2021 and agreed on a number of measures addressing the COVID-pandemic, such as those limiting the outbreak, relating to safety and health at the worksite, and job protection of workers. Other areas of successful collaboration through tripartite social dialogue have been the revision of minimum wages and new legislative initiatives (e.g. the PM's Decree on labour disputes resolution; consensus on the list of hazardous works as well as other OSH matters; amendments in social security laws and trade union laws).

In **Malaysia**, the **National Labour Advisory Council (NLAC)** and the National Wages Consultative Council (NWCC) are two key advisory bodies at national level. For example, consultations in the NLAC have facilitated consensus on the minimum retirement age and led to a labour law reforms process. The NWCC has revised the Minimum Wages every two years since the minimum wage system started in 2013; it was also instrumental in the ratification of the Minimum Wage Fixing Convention (C131) in 2016.

In the **Maldives**, a **Tripartite Labour Advisory Board (TLAB)** has recently been established (2024), providing a formal platform for dialogue among government, employers, and workers. The new body is mandated to promote effective social dialogue, oversee collective bargaining processes, and support the prevention and resolution of labour disputes.

The **Central Labour Advisory Council (CLAC)**²¹ of **Nepal** has contributed significantly to advancements in labour policy and workforce development in recent years: It facilitated the approval and oversight of the National Action Plan on Formalization, aiming at transitioning workers and enterprises from the informal to the formal economy; It established a tripartite committee to monitor its progress and ensure accountability and conducted a review of the National Action Plan on Formalization and revised it accordingly.

The Council also gave valued input to an Action Plan to enhance the labour administration system, including some processes for improved services for workers and employers alike. It influenced the National Vocational Skills Training Policies as well as the National Vocational and Skills Development Training Centre Directive 2023, both aiming to support workforce upskilling and increasing employability. Finally, the CLAC was also instrumental in Government's new plans to ratify nine ILO standards by 2027, including fundamental and governance conventions.

¹⁹ A comparable OECD accession process is also underway in Thailand, providing further opportunities for social dialogue on labour market and broader economic reforms.

²⁰ https://www.oecd.org/en/about/news/press-releases/2025/06/indonesia-reaches-key-milestones-in-oecd-accession-process.html?utm_source

²¹ As Nepal transitions to a federal system, social dialogue is evolving from a centralized model towards a multi-level framework, with the Central

Labour Advisory Council (CLAC) remaining the principal national tripartite body and Provincial Labour Advisory Councils supporting consultation at the sub-national level. This arrangement reflects the devolution of labour administration and helps ensure that provincial implementation challenges and labour market realities inform national policy discussions.

The **Federal Tripartite Consultative Committee (FTCC) of Pakistan** has been actively involved in advancing labour policy development and implementation. Among its key achievements is the facilitation of the Decent Work Country Programme IV 2023 – 2027, which outlines priorities for promoting decent work in Pakistan; as well as the facilitation of the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the Better Work Programme which aims at enhancing compliance with national laws and principles of labour standards, particularly in export-oriented sectors, including on labour-management relations, thereby supporting economic growth and promoting ethical labour practices. FTCC take the decisions on the ratification of international labour standards. Convention No.160, Protocol to the Convention No.29 and the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 were ratified on 14 March 2025 after intensive tripartite consultations.

Pakistan has also strong social dialogue at the provincial level, where Provincial Tripartite Consultation Committees (PTCC) are regularly engaged in discussing and approving (draft) labour laws and other acts affecting labour relations at the provincial level, e.g. the new labour codes in Sindh and Punjab (2024, 2025).

In **the Philippines**, there are four major categories of tripartite bodies: consultative/advisory bodies (national and local levels), policy-making bodies, quasi-judicial bodies and quasi-legislative bodies. The **National Tripartite Industrial Peace Council (NTIPC)** is the umbrella body coordinating the various tripartite committees in the Philippines. It has facilitated the formulation of many national policies and Department Orders (DOs), implementing rules and regulations (IRR) for labour laws, updating of issuances, and also recommendations for ratification of international labour standards. National and regional Tripartite Industrial Peace Councils (TIPCs) as well as Industry Tripartite Councils (ITC) coordinate their work under the Department of Labour and Employment.

The NTIPC has made notable strides in advancing labour standards, fostering social dialogue, and shaping long-term employment policies. Among the key achievements is the issuance of Department Order No. 238-23 (from 2023), which outlines the Rules on the Administration and

Enforcement of Labour Standards, providing clear guidelines for the enforcement of labour standards and ensuring workplace safety and compliance with labour laws across various industries. In addition, the NTIPC was instrumental in the formulation and adoption of the Philippine Labor and Employment Plan (PLEP) 2023-2028 which sets out a comprehensive roadmap to promote decent work, expand employment opportunities, and strengthen labour governance over the next five years. Further highlighting its dedication to tripartite collaboration, the NTIPC is discussing a Roadmap on the promotion of Freedom of Association (FoA) in the Philippines.

In the **Republic of Korea**, the **Economic, Social and Labour Council (ESLC)** has facilitated the adoption of several significant agreements and recommendations²² that address critical labour issues and promote social dialogue. Some of the recent tripartite agreements include the Agreement on Sustainable Development of Public Organizations; the Tripartite Agreement to Realize People-centric Smart Factories; the Tripartite Agreement of the Bus Transport Industry Committee for Sustainable Development of the Bus Industry; and the Tripartite Agreement to Improve Workers' Representative System.

Another agreement is the adoption of a Resolution on the Permit of Exemption from Working Hours for Teachers and Education Workers in Korea²³. This Resolution regulates the exemption from working hours for full-time teachers and education workers to engage in union-related activities and represent its members in discussions, negotiations, and decision-making processes. It establishes clear guidelines based on union size and teacher categories, ranging from part-time exemptions for smaller unions to full-time exemptions for larger unions.

The **Samoa National Tripartite Forum (SNTF)** has contributed to policy making and reforms in several areas, such as the elaboration of the National Employment Policy (2022-2026), the establishment of a Child Labour Taskforce, the revision of minimum wages, the review of the labour mobility policies under PACER Plus; and influenced key amendments to the Labour and Employment Relations Act 2013, which passed Parliament in February 2023. The tripartite partners are now actively

²² [Economic, Social and Labor Council | Archives | Major Agreements | list](#)

²³ [Economic, Social and Labor Council | Publications | Publications | Social Dialogue Brief | view](#)

working on finalizing draft regulations to implement the new provisions.

The city state of **Singapore** has developed a unique but strong system of social dialogue and tripartism since its independence in 1964 through a great number of initiatives and separate tripartite bodies. It moved the industrial relations from confrontation to cooperation to collaboration and partnership, addressing state and enterprise policies whilst actively promoting good practices, supported by Government and the social partners alike.

For instance, the tripartite National Wages Council issues annual guidelines on wages and employment-related issues. The Tripartite Alliance for Fair and Progressive Employment develops tools, resource materials and assistance for employers and helps implementing such workplace practices where employees are respected and valued, such as the Tripartite Advisory on Flexible Work Arrangements, or the regular organisation of Award events to recognise exemplary organisations in several categories. Further tripartite bodies have elaborated guidelines to supplement or complement the existing legislation or to publish standards for voluntary and actionable good practice that employers may wish to adopt. During the Covid-19 pandemic, multiple guidelines and advisories, new sets of rules, illustrative FAQ, and non-legislated positions were negotiated and agreed under pressing timelines by the Ministry of Manpower and the social partners.

The constant dialogue at multiple levels, combined with a reciprocity of concessions and shared gains among all partners has strengthened and finetuned the tripartite collaboration in Singapore over the decades for the benefit of economic and social progress and resilience of Singapore.

The **National Labour Advisory Council in Sri Lanka** was recently reactivated, including to be involved in consultations on the development of consolidated labour legislation. Labour law reform is underway.

The **National Labour Council (Conselho Nacional Tripartido/CNT) in Timor-Leste** has been successful in reaching a new minimum wage agreements and revisions

as required in labour code (Law No. 4/ 2012), which are currently before the Government. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the National Labour Council had discussed issues regarding business difficulties and fall outs on working hours, wage payments, layoffs, OSH and social protection and put forward recommendations to the Government.

The **National Industrial Relations Council (NIRC) of Viet Nam** contributes to enhanced labour relations. A key achievement includes the preparation of the Draft National Industrial Relations Report 2022, which provides a detailed analysis of the state of industrial relations in the country and serves as a guide for policy development. Additionally, the NIRC has put forward critical recommendations with regard to the prevention of sexual harassment, aiming to create safer and more respectful workplaces.

Conclusions and way forward

Social dialogue institutions exist in 33 out of 36 countries²⁴, each at varying stages of development. Consequently, the level of active participation and effective involvement of social partners in shaping economic and social policies varies significantly. While some countries have made substantial progress in establishing and implementing social dialogue frameworks, others remain in the early stages of development. The diverse sizes and the different legal and administrative structures of tripartite commissions highlight the range of approaches that countries adopt to facilitate social dialogue.

Based on the formal and informal responses received we can draw the following conclusions:

- The diversity in the structure and forms of NSDIs across the region underscores the adaptability of social dialogue frameworks to national contexts, reflecting ILO's principle that there is **no universal model** for effective social dialogue.
- There is a predominance of **traditional tripartite institutions** in the region, with tripartite-plus models being rare exceptions. There is also a tendency towards smaller membership sizes. While this is not necessarily

²⁴ These 33 countries include New Zealand, which does not have an overarching "umbrella" NSDI, but maintains effective social dialogue institutions at the sectoral level, see Table 1 above.

a problem, sufficient representation of social partners should be guaranteed, and resources and capacities of the institution should reflect the aspirations and expectations of the tripartite body's work.

- The **NSDI members** representing employers' and workers' organizations are at times selected by the Minister and not identified by the groups themselves which raises doubts on their representativity.
- Practically all NSDIs have a supporting **secretariat**, predominantly housed in government ministries, with only a few exceptions where the NSDI has a dedicated secretariat with an independent structure. In many countries, however, **meetings** are not convened regularly, invitations come at (too) short notice, or may not include the agenda or any relevant background material to allow members to prepare for a meaningful and constructive dialogue. This can lead to rather formal and uninspired discussions where social partners' solid perspectives are left out. In other countries, social partners have no input in setting the agenda.
- Only some NSDIs have **subcommittees** or specialised committees where topical issues can be discussed more frequently and more thoroughly, leading to well-reflected and balanced recommendations and decision-making.
- Members need to have the **technical capacity** to contribute to the - sometimes complex - topics on the agenda. Meaningful social dialogue also requires timely access to reliable labour market data and other relevant evidence to support informed discussions and decision-making. Adequate information-sharing and capacity-building on these topics is often lacking - and it includes capacities like soft skills for negotiations, consensus-building and creative forms of consultation.
- Leadership models vary, with most institutions being **chaired** by a government official, whereas a few countries, such as China, Japan, and the Republic of Korea, have adopted an alternative model where the chair is not elected from among the committee's members.
- Despite limited accessibility to detailed activity records, evidence shows that about half of the NSDIs in the region were **operational** in 2023–2025, reflecting ongoing engagement in social dialogue, at least to

some degree, however without an assessment of their efficiency²⁵. Future updates to this analysis may address this and incorporate additional information.

- Two-third (24 out of 36 countries) in the Asia-Pacific region have **ratified the Convention** on Tripartite Consultations, 1976 (No. 144) which emphasizes its global significance as a governance framework in fostering social dialogue and tripartite consultations. Its effective implementation, however, often faces obstacles as seen above.
- Ratification across Asia-Pacific remains uneven: 12 countries have yet to ratify Convention No. 144, 13 Convention No. 98 and 17 Convention No. 87. The Republic of Korea most recently ratified Conventions Nos. 87 and 98 in 2021, while Thailand ratified Convention No. 144 in 2024. While these differences may reflect varying legal, institutional and policy contexts, freedom of association and collective bargaining remain essential to effective social dialogue, and well-functioning NSDIs can support tripartite discussion of reforms, identify gaps and strengthen the enabling environment.

In summary, the region demonstrates progress in the establishment of NSDIs, though there remains significant potential for further enhancement and empowerment to achieve more effective and meaningful social dialogue. In the context of the UN reform, greater awareness is needed among all constituents as well as UN agencies about the value and importance of tripartism and social dialogue in developing national policies. There is a need to look at social dialogue not just as an expression of industrial democracy but also as a tool for creating conditions for growth with decent work and reduced inequality. This includes ensuring the involvement of social partners in national discussions on development priorities, in coordination with the UN, where relevant.

The findings of this Brief will also serve as a basis for further strengthening the ILO's collaboration with national social dialogue institutions and supporting evidence-based technical assistance in the region.

The ILO, through its Decent Work Technical Support Teams and Country Offices in Asia and the Pacific, and relevant headquarters services, is prepared to provide

²⁵ For the purposes of this Brief, the assessment of efficiency goes beyond the regularity of meetings and includes the ability of NSDIs to facilitate meaningful consultations, contribute to consensus-building, influence

policy outcomes, and support the follow-up and implementation of agreed recommendations.

technical advice and capacity-building support to governments, social dialogue institutions and its tripartite constituents. The ILO offers practical tools, such as the comprehensive guide for national tripartite social dialogue and [the Self-Assessment Method for Social Dialogue Institutions \(SAM-SDI\)](#), to assist constituents in this area. Upon request, the ILO can also support efforts to strengthen the institutional framework for social dialogue.

As national social dialogue institutions continue to evolve, the ILO will periodically update this Brief and the accompanying global NSDI database. Readers are

encouraged to share relevant corrections, updates or additional information by contacting NSDI@ilo.org.

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