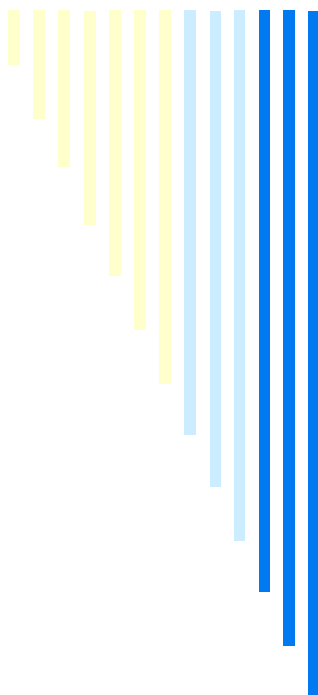




# **ILO/Korea First Planning Meeting of Lead Institutions in the Regional Skills Network**

## **FINAL REPORT**

Amari Watergate Hotel  
Bangkok, Thailand  
August 29-31, 2005

**ILO/Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific  
Skills and Employability Department (SKILLS), ILO Geneva  
Regional Skills and Employability Programme (SKILLS-AP), ILO Bangkok**

## ***Foreword***

This *First Planning Meeting of Lead Institutions in the Regional Skills Network*, held in Bangkok in August 2005, brought together leading training institutions from a group of countries in the region, including those institutions operated by workers and employers organizations, to discuss the development of an effective skills network. Many countries in Asia and the Pacific are struggling to respond to the skills needs of their workforce in a time of increasing globalization, new technology and changing patterns of work. The reform and revitalization of the ILO Regional Skills Network in Asia and the Pacific is a first step in assisting countries in the region to access information and share expertise and knowledge through networking, technical cooperation and joint programmes.

It is in this context, and to assist member States improve the knowledge and skills of their workforces, that the ILO has developed its *Strategic Framework for Skills and Employability in Asia and the Pacific*. This Framework is designed to serve as a common platform for better cooperation and services to ILO member States on skills issues. A new *Regional Skills and Employability Programme (SKILLS-AP)*, which builds on the earlier work of APSDEP, generously supported by the Government of Japan for many years, will facilitate this process and implement its activities through the Network.

The meeting examined some of the key issues and challenges for skills development in the region, and discussed the experience gained and lessons learnt on networking and technical cooperation. The meeting also agreed upon the key elements of a draft Cooperation Framework for the Network. This planning meeting will be followed by the *First Technical Meeting of the Regional Skills Network Partner Institutions*, in November, 2005, hosted by Korea. The meeting will involve national skills development partner institutions in all ILO member States in the region. The strong support of the Government of the Republic of Korea for these meetings, and to skills development in the region, is greatly appreciated.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to Mr Mpenga Kabundi, Director, Skills and Employability Department (SKILLS), ILO Geneva, for his support for this activity. I would particularly like to thank Mr Trevor Riordan, Manager, Training Policies, SKILLS, ILO Geneva, who planned and organized this meeting with support of colleagues in the region. Special thanks also to Ms Carmela I. Torres, Deputy Director and Senior Training Specialist, SRO Manila, who prepared this report with the assistance of Ms Junko Nakayama, SRO Manila, and Ms Anne Richmond SRO Bangkok, who provided useful comments on the draft. Thanks also to Mr Alex Gorham, ILO Turin Centre and Mr S. Ian Cummings, former Senior Training Specialist SRO Bangkok, for their excellent contributions to the meeting. Finally I would like to thank Ms Wipusara Rugworakijkul and Ms Anyamanee Tabtimsri who provided the secretariat support to the meeting.

Shinichi Hasegawa  
ILO Regional Director  
Asia and the Pacific

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# **ILO/Korea First Planning Meeting of Lead Institutions In the Regional Skills Network (Bangkok, Thailand 29-31 August, 2005)**

## **Report of the Meeting**

### **1. Introduction**

The main purpose of the meeting was: to discuss the key features of the Regional Skills Network and current approaches to networking and technical cooperation of the participating countries; to explore options for improving support to other countries in the region; and to facilitate the development of new alliances and forms of cooperation. To assist the discussion of options, the ILO had prepared a draft framework for cooperation, a new website and an internet-based networking and information sharing tool. The intended outcome of the meeting was to reach agreement on a cooperation framework and the development and operation of the Network.

The meeting was held at the Amari Watergate Hotel in Bangkok from 28-31 August, 2005 and was jointly organized by ILO Regional Office and the HQ Skills and Employability Department. The meeting was hosted by the Ministry of Labour, Department of Skills Development, Thailand. Fourteen delegates representing government, employers' and workers' organizations from Asia and the Pacific participated in the meeting, along with participants from UNESCO Bangkok, World Bank and KOICA. ILO staff participating in the meeting were Mr. Trevor Riordan (HQ, Skills and Employability Department), Mr. Alex Gorham (ILO International Training Centre, Turin) and Ms. Carmela I. Torres (Sub-regional Office for Southeast Asia and the Pacific). Mr. Sam Ian Cummings (former Senior Vocational Training Specialist in Sub-regional Office for East Asia) participated as a resource person and consultant. Ms. Junko Nakayama (ILO Sub-regional Office for Southeast Asia and the Pacific), Ms. Wipusara Rugworakijkul and Ms. Anyamanee Tabtimsri constituted the Secretariat.

### **2. Inaugural session**

The meeting was opened by Mr. Shinichi Hasegawa, ILO Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific. Mr. Hasegawa noted that economies in the region needed workforces with the appropriate skills and the ability to adapt to new technologies and work practices in order to grow and maintain a competitive edge in a globalizing world. He mentioned that ILO Director-General Juan Somavia's address to the ILO in 2004 had stressed that education and training are central to the Decent Work Agenda. He noted that to improve the delivery of services on skills development in the region, the ILO is developing a Strategic Framework for Skills and Employability in Asia and the Pacific. This framework creates a coherent platform for ILO programmes and activities in the region. A new Regional Skills and Employability Programme (SKILLS-AP) will coordinate this work, building on the earlier work of the Asia and Pacific Skills Development Programme (APSDP) generously supported by Japan for many years. The present planning meeting would help participants and the ILO identify ways to assist countries in the region to respond to critical skills development issues through networking and sharing of information and expertise.

Mr. T. Riordan, Senior Adviser, SKILLS-AP, stated that the new Strategic Framework will help ILO offices to work in one coherent framework. SKILLS-AP builds on APSDEP's work and will evolve into a more integrated framework. He added that the ILO looked forward to continuing its excellent cooperation with the Japanese government. Mr. Riordan explained that the meeting would discuss the networking and technical cooperation programmes of participating countries and how these practices can more effectively assist other countries. The key features of the proposed Regional Skills Network, the participation of the social partners and links with existing networks in APEC and ASEAN would be discussed, along with the proposed new website and internet-based networking tool. A key output of the meeting would be a draft Framework for Cooperation for the operation of the Regional Skills Network. The meeting would use an interactive approach, and it was hoped that participants would benefit from sharing their experiences. This meeting is the first of a series of meetings on regional networking which will be followed by a larger technical meeting in Korea. The meeting in Korea will bring together all 28 Member States in the region to discuss skills issues. Finally, Mr. Riordan invited participants to use this meeting as a good opportunity for networking.

Ms. Areeya Rojvithee, representing the Deputy Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Labour, emphasized the importance of skills development in a globalizing world. She noted that there is need to keep abreast of changes in knowledge and skills and work practices through cooperation and sharing of responsibility and information at the national and regional levels. The Department of Skills Development (DSD) itself has examined ways in maintaining its knowledge and information based on skills development. Thailand now provides assistance to its neighbours and actively supports regional and international bodies like ASEAN, APEC HRD Working Group and ASEM Lifelong Learning for Employability Programme and has developed strategies and ways of working together with social partners. Ms. Rojvithee stated that a Regional Skills Network in Asia and the Pacific is an important step in sharing information and knowledge in skills development and that Thailand fully endorsed the ILO's initiative of establishing a Strategic Framework for Skills and Employability in Asia and the Pacific.

### **3. Technical Session 1: Knowledge and skills development in Asia and the Pacific—Issues and Challenges**

The first technical session was chaired by Ms. Kathryn Rankin (Australia, Employer participant). Ms. Rankin noted that the technical session would focus on national and regional experiences.

Mr. Trevor Riordan introduced the topic by presenting the major sections of the ILO HRD Recommendation (No. 195). This Recommendation was adopted in 2004, is policy-oriented, and addresses the need to increase the knowledge and skills of the whole workforce to improve competitiveness and productivity and achieve decent work. It also addresses education, training and lifelong learning, calling for them to be incorporated in policies to promote sustained economic and social development. This Recommendation defines responsibilities of Governments, social partners and individuals for investment in education and training, noting the critical role social partners play in defining needs and programmes for human resource development. The Recommendation also specifically calls for international collaboration, technical cooperation and the exchange of good practices on all aspects of human resources development.

Ms. Anneliese Parkin (New Zealand, Government participant) presented the challenges facing New Zealand, including the skills shortage persisting over the past 30 years, the need to up-skill the working age population, and the need to improve labour productivity and pay rates. She stressed that improving labour productivity required investment in skills, encouraging innovation and technology and building on leadership and management capability. Investment in education, workplace learning, and vocational education and training has improved the quality of the workforce. She noted, however, that investment in training is particularly challenging for the SME sector. She also pointed out that training may not be accessible to workers who are highly mobile and there continue to be gaps in adult literacy and numeracy. At the regional level, New Zealand observes there are issues of poor economic growth and high unemployment, low levels of IT infrastructure, lack of a skills framework for enterprises and gaps in universal basic education. In conclusion, Ms. Parkin stressed that there is a need to better share knowledge in the region and that New Zealand supports the concept of a revitalized regional skills programme to assist all member states in the region, including the Arab States.

In his presentation, Mr. Kok Hoong Yip of the Singapore Workforce Development Agency (WDA) (Government participant), noted that economic recovery and economic growth were creating fewer jobs, and those jobs being created required higher skills and qualifications. Among existing jobs, wages were falling, benefits were reduced and job insecurity increasing as jobs moved out of Singapore, a process which affected particular groups of workers disproportionately: mature workers (those above 40 years of age); and those with lower educational qualifications (secondary school and below). Singapore's focus in human resource development included a number of elements: including occupations at all levels; establishing skills sets and frameworks applicable to different industrial sectors; recognition of prior learning; modular skills curricula; adult learning standards and curricula; a qualification system covering both public and private training; adaptation and customization of skills and curriculum for specific enterprises; and maintaining a strong industry involvement at all levels. Mr. Yip stressed that the role of the social partners is fundamental and that workers and employers need to be involved in all aspects of skills development.

Mr. Wan Seman Wan Ahmad (Malaysia, Government participant) provided some key economic data on Malaysia and described the development of "key workers", particularly in the manufacturing and construction sectors. Malaysia has been facing shortages of competent people and finds that training provided by institutions does not match the needs of employers - institutions do not meet industry standards and trainers are not up to date. In addition, many skilled workers have moved to China and Thailand. He said that there is a need to come up with incentives to encourage more industry-based training among the approximately 500,000 companies in Malaysia, and especially for small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). The government provides facilities, curricula and e-learning, promotes industry-based training, and encourages worker participation in training. The Ministry of Manpower accredits training centres, both public and private, sets skills standards and provides skills certification at various levels encourages young workers to pursue training and promotes lifelong learning. The government is working to strengthen labour market information and develop a national skills recognition system. New skill areas such as social skills, behavior and ethics are becoming important and wider involvement in life long learning is being encouraged. Finally, Mr. Wan Seman emphasized that it is important to develop strategic alliances and partnerships in skills development, including consultations with workers and employers.

Ms. Kah-Wei Kok (Singapore, Worker participant) noted that while a globalizing economy could encourage worker mobility, in Singapore lower skilled workers over the age of 40 are being displaced and may have few alternatives to retirement, unless more attention was paid to access to continuing education and training and skills recognition. In her view the labour movement had been effective in training workers at a faster pace. She called for government to balance the rigorousness of its system with practicality, and to emphasize the development of a training network in Singapore to improve the standards and qualifications of training providers. Other factors for the improved quality and effectiveness of training, leading to employment, were training duration, delivery methods, coherency of curriculum, accessibility for older workers seeking re-training and for small and medium sized enterprises. She said that while training of workers is an employers' responsibility there is also a role for the individual worker. A continuing concern is that workers who have been trained may not find work due to low pay and poor conditions, which should be addressed through programmes to increase job worth through job redesign, professionalization and better wage structures.

Mr. Jin-Soo Park (Korea, Employer participant) described his assessment of weaknesses in Korea's training system. Although local tripartite councils exist, they have limited impact because: they may not be legally specified; labour unions and employers associations have weak representation; there is distrust between labour unions and management; and participation is voluntary. To address these issues, government had worked to organize networks based on specific industrial clusters e.g. Daejun and Chungchong province for electronics and bioengineering; Jeolla and Cheju province for automotive parts and machinery industries; and Ulsan and Kyungbuk for automobile and electronic industries. The Auto Valley Project had been developed to improve the efficiency and quality of the Korean automotive parts industry. However, the effectiveness of the local strategic policy is limited because the trade unions are excluded. Mr. Jin-Soo emphasized that for best results, labour unions should actively participate.

## **Open Discussion**

During the open discussions, a number of questions, clarifications and comments were raised by the participants. In response to a question from the Thai government representative concerning funding for tertiary education, the New Zealand representative stated that student loans had been introduced as the previous universal allowance was unsustainable; however, there was ongoing debate about this approach. One consequence had been that New Zealand graduates were migrating out of New Zealand to find jobs in order to pay back the loans. In response to further questions on skills shortages and high performance sectors, she responded that New Zealand addresses shortages through a mix of training and immigration, with a high proportion of skilled workers migrating from the UK. High performance sectors included primary industries such as timber but value-added areas like the film industry and IT are becoming increasingly important. The representative of the government of Korea asked Singapore about cooperation between the public and private sectors on skills development. The participant from the Singapore Workforce Development Agency (WDA) replied that the agency plays a facilitator role between public and private training providers. In response to a further question he elaborated that the Industry Skills and Training Councils (ISTC), is a voluntary committee which has its own skills recognition system. The Singapore government provides assistance but not provide funds for its operation. The representative of the Singapore trade unions said that trade unions leaders conduct advocacy programmes on the importance of training and improving employability of workers. In response to questions about older workers,

the Singapore approach is to assist on training and job redesign, making work less strenuous, while in New Zealand, older workers are valued for having more leadership skills and better work habits. The employer representative from Pakistan commented that managers generally lack capacity to analyze economic trends and the implications for skill demands.

In conclusion, it was agreed that rapid economic restructuring, high unemployment, skills shortages, changing technologies and the exclusion of some groups from easy access to skills training are challenges common to many countries in Asia and the Pacific. Key issues raised in the discussion included the need for:

- education and training at the workplace to improve participation, to improve quality and to ensure relevance;
- availability of skills development for all levels, from entry level to managerial and supervisory;
- ensuring all those requiring skill development (i.e. those structurally unemployed, unemployed youth, older/mature workers) can access appropriate training;
- involving social partners, private and public training providers and civil society;
- improving literacy and numeracy skills of both new entrants and existing members of the labour force, to ensure they can adapt to increasing levels of technology;
- undertaking research and findings disseminated to improve the quality and effectiveness of training.

#### **4. Technical Session 2: Networking and technical cooperation in the region -- perspectives from government agencies**

Mr. Indera Putra Ismail (Malaysia, Worker participant) chaired the session. Mr. Alex Gorham, ILO International Training Centre Turin, gave a presentation on networking, covering definition, objectives, process, and the role of networking in technical cooperation and examples. Networking was defined as the process of creating linkages between organizations so that individuals in them could better communicate and collaborate. The objectives of networking were to strengthen collaboration between social partners, to promote the transfer of knowledge and expertise, to provide an avenue for increased private sector involvement, to increase the availability of the ILO's comparative information and data, and to provide a mechanism to attract donor interest and resources. Networking is increasingly used as a tool by development agencies to support their technical cooperation programmes and promote capacity development. Examples of networking in action include strengthening higher education in Indonesia; a technical cooperation network in the health sector; the APEC Network; technical cooperation research in Latin America; and networking in Agriculture in Asia-Pacific.

The panel members were government participants from Thailand, Australia, Korea and Japan.

Ms. Areeya Rojvithee (Government representative, Thailand) described the roles of the Ministry of Labour, the Department of Employment, the Department of Labour Protection and Welfare, and the DSD in terms of technical cooperation and networking in the region. Thailand has received technical assistance from the ILO for many years, has and is now involved in networks at both the national and regional levels. The government participated in regional cooperation, for example DSD actively works on HRD issues in the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) group, in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS), in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Asia European Meeting (ASEM). Under its

regional network and cooperation, cooperation is regional, bilateral (e.g. providing assistance to Cambodia through bilateral cooperation) or trilateral (e.g. Thailand, Bhutan, UNDP/Germany). DSD is now working on the potential for cooperation with Chulalongkorn University and its institutes for skills development (Songkla International Institute and Chiang-Saen International Institutes). At the national level, Ms. Areeya described how networking has been established through a national tripartite cooperation which matches the workforce and industry demands. Some initiatives are also undertaken in the private sector: Siemens, a German company, has a cooperation programme with a university for upgrading skills of their workforce.

Ms. Sandra Pattison (Australia, Government participant) explained that the six Australian states and two territories have their own training systems. The National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) is an independent, non-profit agency operated jointly by the state, territory and federal ministers responsible for vocational education and training in Australia. NCVER provides research management and evaluation, data collection, access and support, audit, client outcomes and satisfaction surveys and information and statistical services to a wide range of stakeholders. VOCED is the UNESCO/NCVER research database for technical and vocational education and training and is based jointly at NCVER and Adelaide Institute of TAFE. VOCED offers a mechanism for sharing research results on skill development, lifelong learning, work based learning, competency-based training and assessment, recognition of prior learning, and other issues of interest to all network members.

Mr. Jung Woo Yi (Korea, Government participant) described the organizational structure of HRD Korea and how it is affiliated with other government agencies. Its main functions are vocational competency development, national technical qualification certification, employment services, skills encouragement, international cooperation and foreigners' employment support. HRD Korea has built an E-learning network to facilitate distance training, broadcasting vocational training and cyber training including computer based testing and worknet. HRD Korea has provided bilateral technical assistance through KOICA with countries in the region as well as in Africa and South America. HRD Korea has collaborated with the Japanese Overseas Vocational Training Association (OVTA). To support networking, Mr. Yi suggested a strategic approach with a lead institution in every member state, a cyber network/online system, a database, and securing sustainable technical cooperation for TVET activities and follow-up support.

Mr. Hideo Kamaishi (Japan, Government participant) recalled the activities of the Asian and Pacific Skill Development Programme (APSDEP) which the Government of Japan had supported since 1980. He referred to the new Strategic Framework for Skills and Employability in Asia and the Pacific (SKILLS-AP) which builds on APSDEP's work. He described two Japanese institutions: OVTA and the Employment and Human Resources Development Organization (EHDO); that could contribute to the new Strategic Framework. Japan has provided international cooperation in the field of vocational training for APSDEP and APEC programmes through OVTA, for example, a meeting on vocational training and education for youth would be held in November 2005. EHDO, which is a sub-administrative organization under the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, receives financial support from private sector employers, and delivered international cooperation in the field of vocational training for over four decades in collaboration with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). Mr. Kamaishi concluded by saying that the Government of Japan will continue to provide financial assistance to SKILLS-AP as it did with APSDEP.

## Questions and Comments

In response to a question from Malaysia on financing databases, the representative of the Korean government stated that Korea would support finding funding sources such as contributions from member states and from ILO. He added that Korea has an advanced IT system and it could provide expertise. Other discussion points explored the formal links between trade unions and HRD Korea, and how information from workers and employers is shared in Australia. Singapore's interest in learning from Australian models was mentioned, and a number of participants made contributions on different approaches to skills development, as well as systems for funding training. A specific question on Korea's policies for migrant workers produced the information that Korea issues employment permits for all foreign workers. To avoid receiving undocumented workers, the Government of Korea and HRD Korea had entered into Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with Indonesia, Philippines, and Thailand. Other comments related to the model of networking that had been presented, and whether adjustments would be made.

In summing up, Mr. Ian Cummings, ILO Consultant, noted that there are different approaches to skills development and it varies from country to country, but that all countries faced similar issues such as providing vocational guidance for young people, training for older members of the workforce, developing skills standards, measuring and increasing investment in training and stimulating greater investment by the private sector. Many people had agreed there are benefits to exchanging information but that it is the value of the content that determines its worth. There was a need to ensure that SKILLS – AP and the Regional Skills network was clearly distinguished from other existing international/regional networks.

*Prior to the Working Groups Sessions, and throughout the meeting, the ILO Rapporteur, Ms Carmela I. Torres, provided a summary of the previous day's discussions*

## 5. Working Group Session 1: Discussion on major skills issues

The participants were divided into two working groups (A and B) and were asked to use four questions to guide their discussions:

- What are the 5 common key issues/challenges emerging at national level?
- What are the 5 key issues/challenges at the regional level?
- What are the emerging good practices on networking and technical cooperation at
  - National level?
  - Regional or Sub-regional level?
- What are the major constraints to networking and technical cooperation?

## **Presentations of Working Groups and brief discussion**

**Working Group A** presented by Ms. Sandra Pattison (Australia, Government participant):

1. What are the 5 common key issues/challenges emerging at national level?
  - mismatch between training and skills required: different countries are at different stages: what are the roles of training in country? Training is not just about industry needs but skills (individual) needs
  - poaching by employers -- structure must in place to identify replacements
  - recognition of prior learning-- how do we capture this information? Why do we need to capture this information?
  - funding-- who pays? Governments think employers should pay while employers think governments should pay
2. What are the 5 key issues/challenges at the regional level?
  - poaching: Australia from New Zealand, New Zealand from UK which causes brain drain or brain exchange (according to New Zealand); there must be some point in the cycle where this should stop
  - funding --management of the movement of labour and recognizing qualifications among countries
  - movement of labour
    - recognition of qualifications
    - immigrants
    - foreign workers
- 3(a). What are the emerging good practices on networking and technical cooperation at national level?
  - Good relations with employers (NZ)
  - Assistance for SMEs through a training fund managed through a training consortium (Korea)
  - country to country cooperation -- Malaysia and Japan; Japanese employers organized a seminar for employers in Pakistan
- 3(b). What are the emerging good practices on networking and technical cooperation at regional level?
  - learning from other things which have failed --review regional models and improve them;
4. What are the major constraints to networking and technical cooperation?
  - need to determine value -- must be clear to individual countries
  - resources -- who will fund and maintain
  - purpose: why we need the networking, technical cooperation; this is also linked to value
  - language -- is there a common platform
  - bureaucratic setups
    - need for a focal point

**Working Group B** presented by Ms Kathryn Rankin (Australia, Employer participant):

1. What are the 5 common key issues/challenges emerging at national level?
  - changing demographics – new & older workers
  - quality of training and training providers
  - creation of foundation skills to ensure a productive skilled workforce
  - improving the supply of skills to meet demand - skill development and labour matching
  - consistent and comprehensive labour market information
2. What are the 5 key issues/challenges at the regional level?
  - relationship between labour market mobility and skills within countries
  - facilitation of global mobility across region
  - literacy, numeracy, IT infrastructure and capability
  - accreditation of VET across countries within the region
  - knowledge sharing to support countries in developing skills capabilities: do we sit in isolation or do we share?
- 3(a). What are the emerging good practices on networking and technical cooperation at national level?
  - corporate partnership to develop regional skill networks (Thailand)
  - country to country collaboration – institution based (Malaysia)
  - VET network –school based VET across the country (Australia)
  - Industry Skills and Training Councils (industry sector)(Singapore)
  - worknet – web-based database of labour market information for training institutes and employers (Korea)
  - vocational ability development association database for HRD --prefecture sources of information for employers (Japan)
- 3(b). What are the emerging good practices on networking and technical cooperation at regional level?
  - Greater Mekong Sub region – sharing of best practices (Thailand)
  - AusAid's development of regional skills standards across 10 countries
4. What are the major constraints to networking and technical cooperation?
  - initiatives not directly transferable between/among countries
  - no consistent vocation education & training standards
  - no common vocabulary to talk about skills issues---language of skill development (workers and employers are not always talking the same language)
  - competitive nature of business and competition for available skills—a challenge to collaborate rather than compete to aid growth
  - gaps in IT infrastructure
  - gaps in knowledge due to poor monitoring
  - resources need to be appropriate to scale
  - note the differences between establishing a network and continuing networking

## **6. Technical session 3: Networking and technical cooperation in the region- perspectives from employers' and workers' organizations**

The session was chaired by Mr. Wan Seman Wan Ahmad (Malaysia, Government participant). Mr. Alex Gorham introduced the session by observing the different perspectives of the social partners - employers link skills with productivity while workers link skills with job security. He noted the work of the International Organization of Employers (IOE) and Union Network International (UNI) in the area of skills development.

Mr. Indera Putra Ismail (Malaysia, Worker participant) reported that Malaysia has many migrant workers and mobility of labour is an important concern. Malaysia's skill competency authority, the Malaysian National Vocational Technical Council (NVTC) ensures a single skills qualification framework, and this is beneficial for countries which export labour. He called for the ILO to facilitate labour to labour, government to government and management to management recognition of competencies, as a way to avoid exploitation of migrant workers. In addition, competency-lined wage levels would allow a fairer movement of workers and help upgrade company operations. He suggested that reducing the flow of unskilled migrant workers would alleviate problems in both receiving countries and sending countries and result in better conditions for national and migrant workers.

Mr. Lloyd Woods (New Zealand, Worker participant), National President, Association of Staff in Tertiary Education (ASTE) discussed the different perspectives one could take on networking. On the positive side, everyone wanted to work together to secure decent work, health and prosperity, to eliminate child labour, poverty in general, HIV/AIDS and to support older workers. On the other hand, there was the reality of competition. New Zealand workers have been affected by free trade agreements, and other types of networks which promote competition and unfair practices, and encourage, for example, the cheap labour of migrant workers. In his view, networks should function to reduce competition and promote fair treatment of all peoples irrespective of culture, race and nationality. Therefore from the workers' perspective, a network could be positive but there has to be sincere support and participation by all with a view to improved collaboration and not competition, and that the benefits for all participants, including workers, should be clear, in a 'win-win' environment. He closed by quoting a Maori saying meaning "together we must do this work".

Ms. Kathryn Rankin (Australia, Employer participant) described how the Australian National Training Authority had encouraged tripartite networking and the challenge will be to maintain this since ANTA had been dissolved<sup>1</sup>. Networking has been implemented across the country bringing together both employer and worker concerns. The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) and the Joint Industry Training and Education Council had been involved. Some of the training issues that employers had raised in networks included literacy, numeracy and ICT, noting that as technology was advancing employers see an increased need for technical skills and employability skills. Employability skills such as teamwork, communication, workplace attitudes and behaviours are crucial for keeping a job. Australian employers are major providers of training, with almost 400,000 Australians were trained as apprentices and trainees in 2004. Employer training is supported by a national skills

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<sup>1</sup> "from 1 July 2005, the responsibilities and functions of the ANTA would be transferred to the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST)".

[http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/training\\_skills/policy\\_issues\\_reviews/key\\_issues/nts/](http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/training_skills/policy_issues_reviews/key_issues/nts/)

qualification framework and 85 nationally recognized training packages utilised by small medium and large employers. Issues for employers in Australia included outreach and career advice to young people, quality issues in institution and employer-based training and effective links between the two, the ability of existing workers to reskill or upskill, cross-accreditation between VET and university, and increased unemployment and disability support. In terms of the region, employers noted increasing competition in manufacturing from global competitors, increasing pressure on available funding for training with little attention to a funding model, poor structure for recognition of prior learning, significant differences in the level of engagement of employers in training and increasing levels of specialization within industries where a broad based qualification is the only formal skill development initiative. There are a number of networking opportunities through national industry skills councils and web-based information channels. In concluding, she identified a need for an effective database on skills and labour market information and a holistic approach by government to integrate industry development, skill need responses and training.

Mr. Iftikhar Randhawa (Pakistan Employer participant) stated that literacy and numeracy are important issues in Pakistan as there is a high unemployment rate and prospective workers lack even these basic skills, so employers are unable to hire them. Beyond basic skills, productivity is also a concern for employers giving the textile sector as an example. This sector is facing competition with other countries and must modernize and adopt new technology to compete with giants like China – and this will imply significant improvements in the skill level of workers. Pakistan has no national qualifications framework and would benefit from guidance and advice on how to establish one. Pakistan has a National Training Board including tripartite representatives responsible for evaluating training needs. However, Pakistan has insufficient resources for skill development, although it is a priority for the government. The Employers Federation of Pakistan would support a regional network, giving as an example their positive experience with Nikkeiren (Japanese Employers' Group).

### **Questions and comments**

The representative of the Thai government agreed that countries should not compete but cooperate with each other, stating that cooperation in the region is very important and especially the “philosophy of sufficiency of economy”. Networking was a way to support cooperation. However, there could be difficulties in limiting participation, for example Thailand has 9 employers and 11 workers organizations. Mr. Gorham noted that not all problems could be addressed effectively by networking. It becomes “win-win” only if there is ownership and if participating organizations find the network useful. Other participants asked whether Australia’s training packages included one on rapidly changing technologies, to which the reply was that all packages are updated to respond to new developments, and that there were specific packages on IT. Further detail on the wage situation in Malaysia was provided. Malaysia’s agricultural industry is still dependant on relatively low skilled labour and needs many foreign workers, and there continues to be a wage discrepancy in all areas between Malaysia and neighbouring countries such as Indonesia and the Philippines.

## **7. Introduction to the key elements of the new website and internet-based networking tool**

The session was chaired by Mr. Iftikhar Randhawa (Pakistan, Employer participant). Mr. Riordan presented the key elements of the new website and the internet-based networking tool. He mentioned that it will have three components: a static section with general information

and linkages to many sites; a dynamic component in which news, events and conference information will be updated; and a virtual forum in which all network partners can participate in real time. This new website would support the development and operation of the regional skills network. It would provide information and links to other databases such as those on the ILO HRD Recommendation, ILO publications, International Labour Standards, KILM, national qualifications frameworks and VOCED. The site would provide links to good examples from all partners, but decisions on how much information should be included were needed. Participation and access to information for countries where internet access is limited also needed to be addressed, and participants were asked to share their views on this following the meeting. Mr. Riordan explained the structure of the website and its database using the Singapore site index as an example. Content could include country profiles and information on technical cooperation projects, such as the project funded by United States Department of Labour (USDOL) on Training for Rural Economic Empowerment (TREE) in Pakistan and the Philippines. Links to other websites, such as the Human Resources Development Recommendation database, would enable participants to access details on national policies and initiatives, national qualifications framework and related information. Practical considerations in establishing the website include defining the contents, the process for updating, and most importantly, the purpose.

### **Open discussion**

In discussion of the proposed website participants identified a number of concerns. It was not clear whether all constituents would be interested in the website, and it would have to include relevant information. The potential to make the site more interesting by linking current topics, such as free-trade agreements, with skills development implications was noted. Many noted concerns about accessibility, and it was observed that one area for technical cooperation could be assisting constituents in other countries to access the information and the network. The challenge posed by multiple languages and the fact that not all relevant information for sharing would be in English was also noted.

## **8. Introduction to the draft Cooperation Framework for the Regional Skills Network**

Ms. Kah-Wei Kok (Singapore, Worker participant), chaired the session. Mr. I. Cummings, ILO Consultant described vision of a dynamic skills network in Asia and the Pacific which would share knowledge, ideas and data, would provide members with up-to-date information on skills, promote innovation in skills development, and would initiate cooperative activities and projects for the benefit of all members. This work would be supported by better availability of data, papers, publications, and relevant national and international websites. The draft paper proposed a flexible approach to launch the network, with responsibility ultimately being shared among member states with the ILO in a facilitating role. Key partner institutions from ILO member states in Asia and the Pacific would participate in the Network fair and equitable access for all partners. A “virtual forum” to provide channels of communication between and among partner institutions and organizations would be supported. The resources for the Regional Skills Network could come from a number of sources including ILO member States, institutes and organizations, with more developed economies likely contributing financial resources in addition to their expertise, and in-kind contributions of all partners. However, this meeting would not consider any contribution level or framework. The ILO was concerned to ensure that skills development should not be considered in isolation, but in the context of other issues which affect the region as a whole, youth employment and migration.

## **Open discussion**

Questions were raised as to the current status of the Asian and Pacific Skill Development Information Network (APSDIN), which ILO had operated in collaboration with NCVER. The response was that this arrangement had ended with a change in ILO's structure and in APSDEP. An example of a network in the region, the APEC HRD Working Group labour market information (LMI) network was given. However, this group had difficulty in collecting information since the LMI indicators varied from country to country and it was also costly to maintain the system. It was noted that the purpose of the Regional Skills Network was to share innovative processes, approaches and methodologies. Further details on criteria and accountabilities for operating the network would be developed through further discussion, including at a follow-up meeting in Oct/Nov, 2005 which would build on the comments at this first meeting.

It was suggested that evaluation of the network and website, at micro- and macro-levels, be incorporated from the beginning, including a formal independent evaluation. Questions of sustainability and of the sources for content were raised. On the question of 'lead institution', the differences between countries were such that this should be determined nationally.

## **9. Working Group Session 2: Discussion of Draft Cooperation Framework and Implementing Strategy**

Following the presentation and general discussion, two working groups were formed to provide more detailed comments on the text of the draft cooperation framework. The groups were asked:

- to make suggestions to improve the text,
- to expand, develop or modify any elements that need further clarification
- to add additional elements where appropriate.
- to discuss benefits of the Network for
  - Lead Institutions and
  - other key partners in member states (including workers and employers organizations)
- to discuss the "vision" and "boundaries" of the Network.

## **Presentations of the working groups and discussion**

**Working Group A** was presented by Mr. Lloyd Woods (New Zealand, Worker participant)

While the draft framework would need some editing, in the overall discussions, two key issues arose: the paper focused mainly on the website; and also it was unclear on the role of lead institutions. The website was essential but the paper should focus on the network and its importance and contribution. The working group believed that the network is more than just the website. Further, the network should include joint actions, meetings, projects and

programmes. Participation should not be restricted to just one institution in the country but should include key partners, institutions, and tripartite organizations.

The paper should start with a vision statement which encompasses tripartism and the Asia-Pacific area. The network should be a two-way street where a project should assist a country and recognize that both countries have something to offer. The framework should mention other networks, as well and explain the comparative advantage of this network vis-à-vis the other networks. Tripartism should be emphasised.

Detailed suggestions to improve the text were:

1. Section 1, paragraph 3: Clarify who is the lead institution. It is also important to consider an institution that may not be present in this meeting but may be interested to be lead institution.
2. Section 2, last paragraph: There is ambiguity on this last paragraph as it may be read to state that the website is more important than other projects. Further comments are on the participation in the network. Second bullet point implies that an IT system exists in a country. However, if it does not exist (this is possible with developing countries) how can access be fair and equitable. The delivery of network services should not rely on IT and the network should consider countries with no easy access to IT.
3. Section 3: This section is very website focused. The system should be transparent. Who is responsible for the updating of the network? Who is paying for this? Is this the expectation for lead institution/s?
4. Section. 4: Why confidential? The network should be constructive. Information that is not appropriate to be public should not be made available on the database.
5. Section 5: This should be in the latter part of the document. The nomination process should be fair and there must be wide acceptance of consultants in the database.
6. Section 6: This section and paragraph 1 is what the whole document should be. The Group supports Section 6. It is acknowledged that the website will assist in leading to its activities. The section should be named: major/key activities/projects. Should put this section under Section 3 (Network Information and Data) and Section 3 could be Section 6. It should include examples.
7. Section 7: 2nd paragraph is not supported and should be edited. All member countries can contribute. Group did not like using terms such as “poor”.

On the benefits of network, the Group identified the following benefits:

- access to other networks dealing with skills development
- country may have a better idea of skills and training level required for migrant workers and clear advantage with receiving countries
- better linkages with other countries
- provide information and experiences for skills development reforms and modernization
- opportunity to attain broader goals
- raise safety and health standards
- access to specialists from other countries with real experience
- access to examples of information and databases, i.e. skill recognition framework
- allow for real tripartite decision-making with countries

- benefit with the interaction with other lead institutions and alliances

On the vision of the network, the Group agreed on the following:

- shares knowledge, ideas and experiences
- optimises the development of human resources in the region
- raises the overall skills and well-being of people across the region
- increase economic development of the region

On boundaries of the network, the group did not set any boundaries. They agreed there should be a boundary on content of the website. Boundaries should be quite focused and must be nationally recognized, nationally acknowledged, nationally registered and/or accredited.

**Working Group B** was presented by Ms. Anneliese Parkin (New Zealand, Government participant).

The Group indicated that they had difficulty in identifying what a lead institution should be. As to definition of lead institutions, it could have a practical function: lead institutions could be governments. It would be important to ensure that governments and social partners make equal contribution to research, and that the value of triangulated commentaries on policy and data be recognized. Other general comments included an apparent assumption that the network is the website, and the suggestion to restructure the paper into three sections: rationale of network, implementation of data and information source via website and value propositions. The language of the paper is process-driven and should be outcomes as well as input driven:

1. Detailed comments on the text were:

Section 1 paragraph 1: There is need to put upfront the following points:

- definition of network
- vision, mission
- definition key/lead/partner institutions
- discussion of fit with ILO strategic framework

2. Section 1: on the value propositions, there is need to identify gaps (e.g. virtual forum, development of protocol for data collection) and need to state clearly value-added to existing provisions. The core essence of network should include lessons learnt.

3. Section 2: In terms of roles and responsibilities, there must be clarity on who are lead organizations, the need for protocols and the need to clarify ILO's role as lead and funder

4. Section 3: There is need to clarify roles of network and website. The website should provide comprehensive records of technical cooperation in the region. Themes should include balancing status quo with emerging issues, need to clarify how/when/by who themes will be selected, will they be strategic priorities, 2001's themes were great but too broad. In terms of validity, there is need clear information protocols and disclaimers. Further, clarify on updating information (frequency) and need to balance compliance cost with values and needs of developing countries.

5. Section 4: Specify the importance of opportunities to request information considering “push pull” mechanism, the need to investigate good practices used by similar sites and need for a clear rationale for password protection.

6. Section 5: For consultants, must clarify roles, who will manage selection, who would control quality and suggest to concentrate on processes and selection of consultants rather than individuals.

7. Section 6: Propose statement for activities and determine who would support the vision/purpose statement for activities – what do they support (Vision? Network?), more emphasis on collaboration for capacity building and more emphasis on collaboration rather solving common problems.

8. Section 7: Request commentaries to be included as a contribution. Some questions raised: what will be needed to mobilise the network, how would it be coordinated, will resource be adequate for the purpose and if not, what will be the core, and finally what is the process to identify priorities.

On the benefits of the network to all stakeholders, the following were identified:

- helps to develop technical assistance
- shorten learning/development curves (less expensive and more likely to be effective)
- useful to have better information on aid provided by other countries for target in assistance
- will allow better international dialogues on such issues as global skills exchange
- research shortcut and helps avoid duplicators
- provides an avenue for collaboration, refining ideas and innovations
- adds value to the regional supply chain

On the benefits to key partners (employers and workers), the following were identified:

- corporate social responsibility (through altruism alone is tough to sell)
- driving commercial activities

On the vision of the network, it was suggested that the vision was to raise the quality of HRD in the region and its mission is to develop a mechanism to promotes information exchange and facilitate collaboration resulting to more effective and efficient cooperation across region.

On the boundaries, the following were identified:

- exclusions on compulsory education and general labour issues unless linked to skills
- need for permeable boundaries and must be linked to other networks
- not to duplicate existing materials but must add value
- key themes will set boundaries around subject relevance
- other boundaries: size and usability, political sensitiveness, commercial sensitiveness, timeliness, accuracy and skills issues only
- must know who are the target users: developed countries, tripartite organizations and delivery organizations (training providers)

On comments of the draft framework:

- assumption is that the network is the website

- document should be three (3) sections: rationale of the network, implementation and data information source via website and value prepositions. Language is process driven and should be outcomes we well input driven.

## **10. Regional Skills Network: Common understanding on Cooperation Framework and Implementation Strategy, and discussion of follow up action**

The session was chaired by Ms. Areeya Rojvithee (Thailand, Government participant). It provided the opportunity for participants to make further comments and raise questions regarding the framework and consider the next steps.

Participant's comments focused on the definition and function of 'lead institution', raising the following points:

- Focal institutions from each country could be the lead institutions and the patronage of the government is a key factor to effectively engage in the regional skills network. Lead institutions could be for example OVTA and EHDO in Japan, HRD Service in Korea and NVTC, Malaysia. But the need for a specific designation of "lead institution?" was not clear.
- In previous APSDEP activities institutions in some countries worked very actively but institutions in other countries were not as active. This suggests that institutions will take on different roles and responsibilities.
- The function of a lead agency could be to ensure the tripartite partners are involved.
- The types of contributions made by member states may vary depending on the strength and specialization of the lead institution.
- The lead institution should have the authority or should have the capacity to coordinate with other countries.
- That the designation of a lead institution could leave to individual member States.
- The main factors in determining which should be the lead institution are: agencies should have resources, expertise and commitment.

### **The Way Forward**

The group agreed on three follow up steps:

ILO will revise the draft Cooperation Framework based on the Working Group presentations and have a finalized document to take to the Regional Skills Network follow-up meeting in November, 2005.

The participating agencies were requested to discuss the question of "lead institutions" with their respective authorities and social partners and should send their inputs/comments by 23 September to Ms. Wipusara at [wipusara@ilo.org](mailto:wipusara@ilo.org). Participants were also requested to give feedback on the website.

ILO would coordinate the next Regional Skills Network meeting with Korea and agree on a schedule. A broad cross- section of views will be obtained during this meeting.

## **11. Closing session**

In closing the meeting, a representative each from the government, employers and workers were requested to give their views and feedback.

The workers' representative from Singapore thanked the ILO for a very engaging meeting. Ms. Kah-Wei said that there are key challenges in many countries to be faced in skills networking and these are aging issues, skills quality, skill matching, etc. But the strategy is to move forward in the region together in a sustainable manner.

The government representative from Japan, Mr. Kamaishi, thanked both the ILO and the participants for their inputs and a fruitful and lively interaction. The meeting could realize the issues and challenges and is hopeful for solutions in the future. He thanked the ILO Regional Office for Asian and the Pacific (ROAP), SKILLS-AP, Turin Centre and SRO Manila. He stressed that they expect the acceleration of the transition process from APSDEP to SKILLS-AP and will provide continued support to SKILLS-AP as they have done with APSDEP. They look forward to the second Planning Meeting which will be held in OVTA in March next year.

The employer representative from Pakistan, Mr. Randhawa, thanked the ILO for the opportunity which has brought all the key institutions together. The meeting is the next step in the right direction. The Pakistan Employers, in particular gives their full support to this common understanding.

Finally, Mr. Riordan, in his closing message, said that he appreciated the very professional inputs and papers presented during the meeting. He thanked the ILO Colleagues, Korea, Japan, Thailand (as host) and the ILO Secretariat. Whilst the meeting talked about technical issues, participants were also learning from each others cultures and developing friendships.

## Annex 1

### *ILO/Korea First Planning Meeting of Lead Institutions in the Regional Skills Network*

*Bangkok, 29 – 31 August 2005*

## PROGRAMME

### Monday, 29 August 2005

|                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|--------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>0800 - 0815</b> | Registration                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>0815 - 0900</b> | Individual meetings of Government, Employer and Worker participants                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>0900 - 0930</b> | <i>Inaugural session</i><br><br>Addresses: Mr. Hasegawa, ILO Regional Director<br>Mr. T. Riordan, Senior Adviser, ILO Regional Skills<br>and Employability Programme (SKILLS-AP)<br>Inauguration by the Ms Areeya Rojvithee, Director-<br>General Representative, Department of Skill<br>Department, Ministry of Labour, Thailand                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>0930 - 1000</b> | Tea/coffee break                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>1000 - 1200</b> | <i>Technical session 1: Knowledge and skills development in<br/>Asia and the Pacific - Issues and challenges</i><br><br>Panel Chairperson: Ms Kathryn Rankin, Senior Policy Adviser,<br>Australian Business Limited<br>Introduced by: Mr T. Riordan, ILO SKILLS-AP<br>Resource persons: Panel members: Three country perspectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Ms. Anneliese Parkin, Senior Analyst,<br/>Department of Labour, New Zealand</li><li>➤ Mr. Kok Hoong Christopher Yip,<br/>Principal Manager, Workforce<br/>Development Agency, Singapore</li><li>➤ Mr. Wan Seman Wan Ahmad,<br/>Director General, National Vocational<br/>Training Council, Malaysia</li></ul> Worker and Employers View <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Mrs. Kah-Wei Mui-Kok, Director,<br/>Skills Development Department,<br/>National Trades Union Congress,<br/>Singapore</li><li>➤ Mr. Jin-Soo Park, Subject Specialist,<br/>Korea Employers Federation, Korea</li></ul><br>Open discussion |
| <b>1200 – 1330</b> | LUNCH                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |

**1330 - 1530**

***Technical session 2: Networking and technical cooperation in the region – perspectives from government agencies***

- Panel Chairperson: Mr. Indera Putra Ismail, Vice President, Malaysian Trades Union Congress, Malaysia
- Introduced by: Mr A. Gorham, ILO Turin
- Resource persons: Panel members:
- Ms. Areeya Rojvithee, Senior Expert on Skill Development, Department of Skill Development, Ministry of Labour, Thailand
  - Ms. Sandra Pattison, Manager Surveys Branch, National Centre for Vocational Education Research, Australia
  - Mr. Jung Woo Yi, Director General/Global Project Bureau, Human Resources Development Service of Korea
  - Mr. Hideo Kamaishi, Deputy Director, Overseas Cooperation Division, Human Resources Development Bureau, Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare, Japan

Questions and comments

**1530 - 1600**

Tea/coffee break

**1600 – 1730**

***Working group session 1: Discussion on major skills issues in the region and preliminary discussion on networking*** (mixed working groups)

**1800 – 2000**

ILO Reception

**Tuesday, 30 August, 2005**

**0900 – 0930**

Summary of previous day's sessions by ILO Rapporteur  
Ms. C. I. Torres

Presentations of working groups and brief discussion

**0930 – 1030**

***Technical session 3: Networking and technical cooperation in the region – perspectives from employers' and workers' organizations***

Panel Chairperson: Mr. Wan Seman Wan Ahmad, Director General, National Vocational Training Council, Malaysia

Introduced by: Mr A. Gorham, ILO Turin

Panel Members:

- Mr. Indera Putra Ismail, Vice President, Malaysian Trades Union Congress

- Mr. Lloyd Woods, National President, Association of Staff in Tertiary Education, New Zealand
- Ms. Kathryn Rankin, Senior Policy Adviser, Australian Business Limited
- Mr. Iftikhar Randhawa, Member Managing Committee, Employers' Confederation of Pakistan

**1030 – 1100** Tea/coffee break

**1100 – 1200** ***Introduction to the key elements of the new website and internet-based networking tool***

Panel Chairperson: Mr. Iftikhar Randhawa, Member Managing Committee, Employers' Confederation of Pakistan

Introduced by: Mr T. Riordan, ILO SKILLS-AP  
Open discussion

**1200 - 1330** Lunch

**1330 – 1500** ***Introduction to the draft Cooperation Framework for the Regional Skills Network***

Panel Chairperson: Mrs. Kah-Wei Mui-Kok, Director, Skills Development Department, National Trades Union Congress, Singapore

Introduced by: Mr. S. I. Cummings, ILO Consultant and Mr. T. Riordan, ILO SKILLS-AP

Open discussion

**1500 – 1530** Tea/coffee break

**1530 – 1600** ***Working group session 2: Discussion of draft Cooperation Framework and Implementation Strategy (mixed working groups)***

**Wednesday, 31 August, 2005**

**0900 – 1030** ***Working group session 2: continued***

**1030 - 1100** tea/coffee break

**1100 – 11:20** Summary of previous day's sessions by ILO Rapporteur  
Ms. C. I. Torres

**11:20 – 1200** Presentations of the working groups and discussion

**1200 – 1330** Lunch

**1330 – 1500**

***Regional Skills Network: Common understanding on Cooperation Framework and Implementation Strategy, and discussion of follow up action***

- Panel Chairperson: Ms. Areeya Rojvithee, Senior Expert on Skill Development, Department of Skill Development, Ministry of Labour, Thailand
- Introduced by: Mr T. Riordan, ILO SKILLS–AP
- Comments from Rapporteur: Ms. C. Torres
- Panel Members: Chairpersons of the Working Groups
- Ms. Sandra Pattison, Manager Surveys Branch, National Centre for Vocational Education Research, Australia
  - Ms. Maneethip Chat-Uthai, Assistant Executive Director, Employers' Confederation of Thailand
  - Mr. Lloyd Woods, National President, Association of Staff in Tertiary Education, New Zealand
  - Ms. Anneliese Parkin, Senior Analyst, Department of Labour, New Zealand

**1500 – 1530**

tea/coffee break

**1530 - 1600**

***Closing session***

- Chairperson: Mr. T. Riordan, Senior Adviser, ILO Regional Skills and Employability Programme (SKILLS–AP)
- Statements by: Representatives of Governments, Employers' and Workers' organization
- Mr. Hideo Kamaishi, Representative of Governments
  - Mr. Iftikhar Randhawa, Representative of Employers
  - Mrs. Kah-Wei Mui-Kok, Representative of Workers

## **Annex 2**

### **List of Participants**

Ms.Sandra Pattison  
Manager Surveys Branch  
National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER)  
PO. Box 828 Station Arcade SA 5000  
Level 11, 33 King William Street,Adelaide  
Australia  
Tel+ 61 8 8230 8635  
Fax+ 61 8 8212 3436  
e-mail: sandra.pattison@ncver.edu.au

Mr.Hideo Kamaishi  
Deputy Director, Overseas Cooperation Division  
Human Resources Development Bureau, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare  
1-2-2, Kasumigaseki, Chiyoda-ku,Tokyo 100-8916  
Japan  
Tel +81 3 3502 6959 Fax +81 3 3502 8932  
e-mail: kamaishi-hideo@mhlw.go.jp

Mr.Yuki Shimazaki  
Chief of Cooperation Section, Overseas Cooperation Division  
Human Resources Development Bureau, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare  
1-2-2, Kasumigaseki, Chiyoda-ku,Tokyo 100-8916  
Japan  
Tel +81 3 3502 6959 Fax +81 3 3502 8932  
e-mail: shimazaki-yuuki@mhlw.go.jp

Mr.Jin-Soo Park  
Subject Specialist  
Korea Employers Federation  
276-1 Daeheung-Dong, Mapo-Gu, Kef Building,Seoul  
Korea  
Tel +822 3270 7310 Fax +822 701 2495  
e-mail: meelee98@kef.or.kr, jinsoo1124@hotmail.com

Ms.Soo Kyong Yoon  
Deputy Director, Training Policy Division  
Ministry of Labor,  
Government Complex-Kwanchon,Kyunggi-do, 427-718  
Korea  
Tel +82 2503 9754 Fax +82 2504 2039  
e-mail: sookyong\_y@yahoo.com

Mr.Young Il Cho  
Director of International Cooperation Division  
Human Resources Development Service of Korea  
#370-4 Gongdug-dong, Mapo-gu,Seoul

Korea  
Tel +82 2 3271 9120 Fax +82 2716 5742  
e-mail: kma140@hrdkorea.or.kr or chosole@yahoo.co.kr  
Mr.Jung Woo Yi  
Director General of Global Project Bureau  
Human Resources Development Korea  
#370-4 Gongdug-dong, Mapo-gu, Seoul  
Korea  
Tel +82 2 3291 9144 Fax +82 2916 5942  
e-mail: tchhrdkorea@hitel.net or kma140@hrdkorea.or.kr

MrWan SemanWan Ahmad  
Director General  
National Vocational Training Council Malaysia  
Aras 7-8, Blok, D4, Parcel D, Pusat Pentadbiran Kerajaan Persekutuan, 62502 W.P Putrajaya  
Malaysia  
Tel + 603 88865421 Fax + 603 88892423  
e-mail: wseman@mohr.gov.my

Mr.Indera Putra Ismail  
Vice President  
Malaysian Trades Union Congress  
10-5, Jalan USJ 9/5T, 47620 Subang Jaya, Selangor  
Malaysia  
Tel: +603 8024 3224 Fax: +603 2693 5066  
e-mail: mtuc@tm.net.my

Ms.Anneliese Parkin  
Senior Analyst  
Department of Labour  
56 The Terrace, Wellington or PO Box 3705, Wellington  
New Zealand  
Tel + 64 4 9154235 Fax + 64 4 915 4040  
e-mail: anneliese.parkin@dol.govt.nz

Mr.Lloyd Woods  
National President  
National President of Association of Staff in Tertiary Education (ASTE)  
PO Box 27, 141 Wellington  
New Zealand  
Tel + 64 4801 5098 Fax +64 4385 8826  
e-mail: lloyd@aste.ac.nz

Mr.Iftikhar Mahmood Randhawa  
Member Managing Committee  
Employers'Confederation of Pakistan  
Skill Development Council, 397-A, Gulberg-III (Near Galib Market), Lahore  
Pakistan  
Tel + 92 42 515 5176 Fax +92 42 576 3477  
e-mail: imr40@hotmail.com

Mr.Christopher Yip  
Principal Manager  
Singapore Workforce Development Agency (WDA)  
1 Marina Boulevard #17 - 01, 018989  
Singapore  
Tel:(65) 6512 1266 or Fax: (65) 6512 1328  
e-mail: christopher\_yip@wda.gov.sg

Ms.Kah-Wei Kok  
Director, Skills Development Department  
National Trades Union Congress  
No.1, Marina Boulevard#11-01, One Marina Boulevard, 018989  
Singapore  
Tel: + 65 6213 8000 or 6213 8400 Fax: +65 6213 8688  
e-mail: kokkw@ntuc.org.sg

Mr.Chin Soon Lee  
Manager, International Relations Policy  
Ministry of Manpower  
Singapore  
Tel:+65 6419 2738  
e-mail: lee\_chin\_soon@mom.gov.sg

Ms.Areeya Rojvithee  
Senior Expert on Skill Development  
Department of Skill Development  
Ministry of Labour,Mit-Maitri Road, Dindaeng, Bangkok 10400  
Thailand  
Tel: +66 2 248 3385 Fax: +66 2 643 4979  
e-mail: areeya@dss.go.th, areeyaroj@yahoo.com

Ms.Maneethip Chat-Uthai  
Assistant Executive Director  
Employers'Confederation of Thailand  
2 Soi Premier 2, 4th Floor, Premier Place Bldg, Srinakarin Rd., Nongbon, Prawet, Bangkok 10250  
Thailand  
Fax + 66 2 399 1044-9 Tel +66 2 399 1043  
e-mail: maneethip@ecot.or.th

Ms.Masiri Anamarn  
Vocational Traing Officer  
Department of Skill Development  
Ministry of Labour,Mit-Maitri Road, Dindaeng, Bangkok 10400  
Thailand  
Tel +662 245 5785 Fax + 662 248 3671  
e-mail: w\_csd@yahoo.com

Ms.Sopha Jareangjit  
International Relations Official  
International Cooperation, Department of Skill Development  
Ministry of Labour, Mit-Maitri Road, Dindaeng, Bangkok 10400  
Thailand  
Tel/Fax+ 662245 1829  
e-mail: missophie\_7@yahoo.com

Mr. Sang-ahn Lee  
Resident Representative  
KOICA Thailand Office  
209/1 CMIC Building Tower B, Sukhumvit 21, Wattana, Bangkok 10110  
Thailand  
Tel + 66 2 664 3241-4 Fax +66 2 664 3245  
e-mail: lesangankr@yahoo.co.kr

Ms.Ju-HuiLee  
Associate Expert  
UNESCO Bangkok, Office, 920  
Sukhumvit Road, Prakanong, Bangkok 10110  
Thailand  
Tel +66 2 391 0577 Fax + 662 391 0866  
e-mail: jh.lee@unesco-bkk.org

Mr.Kwanchai Niyomthamkit  
Human Development Program Specialist  
The World Bank  
The World Bank Office, Bangkok, 30th Floor, Siam Tower, 989 Rama I Road, Pathumwan,  
Bangkok 10330  
Thailand  
Tel: +66 2 686 8351 (Direct) or 686 8300 Fax:+66 2 686 8301  
e-mail: kniyomthamkit@worldbank.org

Mr.Trevor Riordan  
Senior Advisor, SKILLS-AP  
ILO, Geneva  
4 route des Morillons, CH-1211 Geneva 22  
Switzerland  
Tel: +4122 799 6661 Fax: +4122 799 0866  
e-mail: riordan@ilo.org

Mr.Alex Gorham  
Manager, Regional Programme for Asia and the Pacific  
ILO, Turin  
Wiale Maestri del Lavoro, 10, 10127 Turin  
Italy  
Tel:+39 011 6936 525 Fax: +39 011 6936 789  
e-mail: ASIA@itcilo.it or A.Gorham@itcilo.it

Ms.Carmela I.Torres  
Deputy Director and Senior Vocational Training Specialist  
ILO-Manila  
19th Floor, Yuchengco Tower, RCBC Plaza, 6819 Ayala Avenue, 1229 Makati City, PO. Box 4959  
Philippines  
Tel:+632 580 9902 Fax: +632 580 9999  
e-mail: torresc@ilomnl.org.ph

Ms.Junko Nakayama  
Technical Officer on Vocational Training  
ILO-Manila  
19th Floor, Yuchengco Tower, RCBC Plaza, 6819 Ayala Avenue, 1229 Makati City, PO. Box 4959  
Philippines  
Tel: +632 580 9900 Fax: +632 580 9909  
e-mail: nakayama@ilo.org

Mr.Takeo Hayaki  
Chief Technical Officer  
ILO-Bangkok  
United Nations Building, 11th Floor, Rajdamnoen Nok Avenue, Bangkok 10200  
Thailand  
Tel:+66 2 288 1720 Fax: +66 2 288 1023  
e-mail: hayaki@ilo.org

Mr.Yeongdon Na  
Development Economist  
ILO-Bangkok  
United Nations Building, 10th Floor, Rajdamnoen Nok Avenue, Bangkok 10200  
Thailand  
Tel: +66 2 288 1715 Fax: +66 2 288 3062  
e-mail: na@ilo.org

Ms.Wipusara Rugworakijkul  
Programme Officer  
ILO-Bangkok  
United Nations Building, 11th Floor, Rajdamnoen Nok Avenue, Bangkok 10200  
Thailand  
Tel: +662 288 1778 Fax: +662 2881086  
e-mail: wipusara@ilo.org

Ms.Anyamanee Tabtimsri  
Secretary  
ILO-Bangkok  
United Nations Building, 11th Floor, Rajdamnoen Nok Avenue, Bangkok 10200

Thailand

Tel: +662 288 2300 Fax: +662 2881086

e-mail: anyamanee@ilo.org

Mr.Sam Ian Cummings

Resource Person

92/21 Mooban Setsiri, Tambon Ta-Sai, Sanambin Nam Road, Amphur Muang Nonthaburi,  
Nonthaburi 11000

Thailand

Tel: +662 525 4771

e-mail: malo@ksc.th.com

### **Annex 3**

**ILO/Korea First Planning Meeting of Lead Institutions in the Regional Skills  
Network in Asia and the Pacific  
Bangkok, 29 – 31 August 2005  
Address by Mr Hasegawa, ILO Regional Director, Asia and the Pacific**

It gives me great pleasure to deliver this address on behalf of the International Labour Office to this, the First Planning Meeting of Lead Institutions in the Regional Skills Network in Asia and the Pacific, which has been organized with the generous support of the Government of the Republic of Korea.

First, I would like to take this opportunity to extend a warm welcome to Ms Areeya Rojvithee, who is representing the Director General, Department of Skills Development, in the Ministry of Labour, and will address this meeting on behalf of the Royal Thai Government.

On behalf of the ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, I would also like to extend a warm welcome to distinguished representatives of the leading government, training and research institutions, together with workers' and employers' organizations, from Australia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Singapore and Thailand. We are delighted to have you with us in this important meeting and look forward to a close partnership with you, as Lead Institutions, in the development of a Regional Skills Network in Asia and the Pacific.

Ladies and gentlemen

As we move further into the twenty-first century, countries in this region are striving to attain full employment and sustainable economic growth amid a globalizing world challenged by technologies that a century ago were images created by science fiction writers. Today, the added pressure of social and economic volatility and threats to world peace are creating an environment of uncertainty and insecurity within and among nations, making serious demands on governments, enterprises and society at large to develop more responsive and flexible approaches to global economic and social fluctuations and rapid changes to technology.

The World is rapidly becoming more and more reliant on new technologies, no where more than in the Asia and Pacific region. However, if economies in the region are to continue to grow, their enterprises remain productive, and gain a competitive edge in world markets, they must have a well educated and trained workforce. An essential component of regional economic and social stability is workforces with the appropriate skills and the ability to adapt to new technologies and work practices. In a great number of enterprises today there is a growing need for workers to become knowledge workers – those able to adapt their skills to changing technology, solve problems, work as part of teams, access knowledge and adapt it to their own working environment.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Education, learning and training benefits a nation, its enterprises, its individuals and its society at large. Thus, if education, learning and training policies and strategies are to be effective, mechanisms must be in-place that encourage the involvement of the social partners and other key stakeholders, as well as governments in the decision making process. Of course this requires changes to the way in which education and training is organized and made accessible. Many countries today embrace the concept of “lifelong learning and training,” but without the reform of education and training policies, restructuring of the framework in which they operate and the development of relevant strategies, as well as access to new knowledge and innovative ideas, lifelong learning will only remain a concept.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The ILO’s Director General, Mr Juan Somavia, stressed the importance of developing knowledge and skills in his address to the International Labour Conference in 2004. He said that “Human resources development and, in particular, education and training are critical to the ILO goal of creating greater opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work, in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity.” He went on to say that “Education and training are therefore a central pillar of the Decent Work Agenda.”<sup>2</sup>

Ladies and Gentlemen

This brings me to the substance of this meeting. The ILO, through its headquarters and field structure, has for many years supported research on knowledge and skills for employability, knowledge sharing, networking and capacity building. But in order to create more synergy and effectiveness on skills development among its own entities and within member states, the ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific is in the process of developing a *Strategic Framework for Skills and Employability in Asia and the Pacific*. This is being developed as a common platform to provide better cooperation and services to its member States on skills issues. All ILO programmes and activities for skills development in the region, planned and managed by different ILO units, will eventually be integrated into a single Workplan. We are also developing a new *Regional Skills and Employability Programme (SKILLS-AP)* to lead and coordinate this work. SKILLS-AP builds on the earlier work of APSDEP, which was generously supported by the Government of Japan for many years. The important work done by APSDEP provides a sound technical basis for the design of the new SKILLS-AP programme. We look forward to your support for these important new initiatives.

Within the Strategic Framework, this Planning Meeting of Lead Institutions has been organized to revitalize the ILO’s Regional Skills Network in Asia and the Pacific. This is the first step in the process of change that will enable countries to address their critical skills and employment issues through access to information, knowledge sharing, and joint action programmes that will be of mutual benefit to ILO member states.

The development of the Regional Skills Network comes at a critical juncture of time for the Asia and Pacific region. With many countries in economic and social turmoil, there is no better time to establish a mechanism that promotes sharing of knowledge, solving problems and establishing activities and projects across borders and between institutions. Offering a

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<sup>2</sup> The Director General’s reply to the discussion of his report, ILO International Labour Conference 2004.

helping hand across borders in the region will not only contribute to making decent work a reality, but will also contribute to peace and harmony in the region.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Although the ILO Regional Office has taken the initiative in organizing and facilitating this Planning Meeting, the future success of the Regional Skills Network can only become a reality with support from you, the Lead Institutions in this region.

I thank you for your participation in this Planning Meeting and wish you every success in establishing a dynamic and very much needed Regional Skills Network for Asia and the Pacific.

#### **Annex 4**

**INAUGURATION ADDRESS**  
**For**  
**ILO/Korea First Planning Meeting of Lead Institutions in the Regional Skills**  
**Network in Asia and the Pacific**  
**Bangkok, 29 – 31 August 2005**  
**By**  
**Ms. Areeya Rojvithee,**  
**Senior Expert on Skill Development**  
**Department of Skill Development, Ministry of Labour Thailand,**

Mr. Hasegawa, ILO Regional Director,  
Mr. Trevor Riordan, Senior Adviser, ILO Regional Skills and Employability Programme (SKILLS-AP),  
Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to welcome you, on behalf of the Royal Thai Government, to this First Planning Meeting of Lead Institutions in Asia and the Pacific. I would first like to convey apologies on behalf of the Deputy Permanent Secretary, Mr Tapabutr Jamasevi, who is now in the United Kingdom., and, therefore, unable to address the opening of this Planning Meeting of Lead Institutions . He has requested that I convey, to Mr Hasegawa, ILO Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific his appreciation and strong support from the Department of Skills Development of the Ministry of Labour, Thailand for taking this initiative to establish a Regional Skills Network in Asia and the Pacific. I would like to echo my personal thanks and appreciation to that of the Deputy Permanent Secretary in thanking Mr Hasegawa and the ILO.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to welcome such distinguished and knowledgeable representatives from leading training and research institutions, and workers' and employers' organizations, from Australia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Pakistan and Singapore together with international specialists and technical experts from the ILO.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Skills development has never been as important as it is in today's globalizing world, where technology dictates rapid changes to the way in which skills are acquired, new skills developed and existing skills upgraded. However, the rapid pace at which information technology is developing, as the driving force behind globalization, is making it difficult for many countries to maintain their knowledge and skill base, while at the same time keeping abreast of changes to knowledge, skills and work practices. It is only through cooperation and sharing of responsibility and information on skills development at the national and regional level that we can be fully aware of the changing skill needs in the workplace. The DSD is continually examining ways in which it can maintain its knowledge and information base on skills development. We are presently restructuring the DSD website so that all information and data can be accessed in the English language.

Ladies and Gentlemen

In the past Thailand received technical support from the ILO. Today, Thailand itself provides technical support in skills development to a number of its neighbours, for example, Bhutan, Cambodia, East Timor, Sri Lanka to name but a few. Thailand acknowledges the important role of human resources development plays in national and regional economic and social development. To this end, it is active and supported regional and international bodies such as ASEAN, the APEC Human Resources Development Working Group and the ASEM Lifelong Learning for Employability Programme.

At the national level we have developed strategies and ways of working together with our social partners, particularly on the development of training courses and workplace learning strategies within a number of Thai enterprises. Our Skill Development Promotion Act introduced in 2002 embodies pre-employment training, upgrading skill training, skill standards and recognition, a skill development fund, incentives to training providers and the establishment of a Skill Development Committee. However, similar to other regional countries, we would also like to know what is going on in other countries in the area of skills development learning examples of good practices, learn about other initiatives and discuss how we can work more cooperatively together to ensure economic and social stability of the nation, competitiveness of our enterprises and full employment for our workers.

Ladies and Gentlemen

The establishment of a Regional Skills Network in Asia and the Pacific, we feel, is an important step in bringing together regional countries to share information, knowledge and develop better linkages with each other in the area of skills development. It will also provide regional countries with the opportunity to share ideas and resources, including human as well as physical resources. Indeed, resource allocation to skills development is becoming more and more problematic today as technology and knowledge rapidly changes, giving little opportunity for teachers and trainers to keep their knowledge and skills up-to-date, not to mention equipment, which, by the time it is allocated is often moving towards obsolescence. A Regional Skills Network will provide the opportunity to see what is happening in skills development in other parts of the region, share challenges, experiences and resources as well as establish activities and projects of common interest.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Thailand fully endorses the ILO initiative to bring together its specialized skill development experiences of Headquarters, Geneva, and its field structure in a *Strategic Framework for Skills and Employability in Asia and the Pacific*, within which the *Regional Skills Network* will function. It will not only add synergy and the full experience of the ILO behind the region, particularly the *Regional Skills Network*, but will also ensure that we, Lead Institutions and organizations have access to other areas of ILO technical support.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to finish here, but first I would like to again thank Mr Hasegawa and the ILO staff and resource persons that have made this meeting possible. I am privileged to be participating in this important meeting and anticipate a positive outcome that will be a milestone in cooperation among leading government, training, research institutions and employers' and workers' organizations in the Asia and Pacific region.

Finally, we Thais are always pleased to welcome visitors from neighboring countries as friends, particularly such eminent visitors as you. Ladies and gentlemen, I hope that during your stay you will have the opportunity to visit some of our attractions, sample Thai cuisine and enjoy the culture and hospitality of Thailand. Thank you and good luck.