

FACT SHEET: Initiative to Promote Fundamental Labor Rights and Practices in Myanmar

The Governments of Myanmar, the United States, Japan, Denmark, and the European Union and the International Labor Organization convened the 2016 Stakeholder Forum under their joint Initiative to Promote Fundamental Labor Rights and Practices in Myanmar.

The *Initiative to Promote Fundamental Labor Rights and Practices in Myanmar* with the Governments of Myanmar, the United States, Japan, Denmark, and the European Union and the International Labor Organization (ILO) is intended to help modernize Myanmar's labor code, improve compliance with international labor standards, and foster a robust dialogue between the government, business, labor and civil society.

Structure of the Initiative

This innovative engagement is designed to use a multilateral, multi-stakeholder approach to strengthen and support Myanmar in labor reform, enforcement, transparency, and domestic stakeholder consultations. The *Initiative* is based on two pillars:

- **Labor Reform:** The *Initiative* will support development by the government and stakeholders, in cooperation with the ILO and partner governments, of a multi-year labor reform plan. Building on some significant labor law reforms, this reform plan should solidify reforms, help Myanmar comply with international standards, and lay out a plan to build the capacity of the government and other relevant actors to achieve and implement these reforms. A strategy for comprehensive labor law reform was agreed at the 2015 Stakeholder Forum, and the Government of Myanmar and its social partners have begun work to identify and work through their priorities for reform.
- **Stakeholder Consultative Mechanism:** The *Initiative* aims to bring stakeholders into the discussion on labor reforms and build the foundations for good industrial relations and civil society consultations in Myanmar. Specifically, the *Initiative* supports the Government of Myanmar in its efforts to strengthen stakeholder consultation through: a) encouraging Myanmar's National Tripartite Dialogue Forum in its work, as the country's regular body for tripartite consultation (i.e., consultation between government, employers, and workers); b) supporting the establishment of mechanisms that facilitate strong industrial relations, including social dialogue between Myanmar's workers' and employers' organisations, and the involvement of civil society; and c) convening the Stakeholder Forum as a mechanism for broad stakeholder engagement and for building relations among domestic and international stakeholders from business, labor and civil society.

Development of the Initiative

- On August 28, 2014, U.S. Trade Representative Michael Froman and representatives of the Myanmar government announced that they intend to work together to establish a

partnership to advance labor rights and protections for workers in Myanmar.

- On November 13, 2014, the United States, Myanmar, Japan, Denmark and the International Labor Organization formally launched the *Initiative*. In May 2015, the European Union formally announced its partnership.
- In May 19, 2015, the Government of Myanmar and the Initiative Partners hosted the first Stakeholder Forum under the *Initiative*. The Stakeholder Forum brought together over 200 participants representing labor, business, and civil society interests, as well as governments and international organizations in two days of constructive engagement on labor law reform and other important labor issues in Myanmar. The Stakeholder Forum endorsed the Government of Myanmar's strategy for comprehensive labor law reform through several phases over the coming years.

Next Steps

The Government of Myanmar has identified a number of immediate priorities for labor law reform, which it will pursue in consultation with workers' and employers' organizations, even as Myanmar continues to lay out its medium-term priorities for reform.

The *Initiative* partners will seek to continue and strengthen their ongoing support for the Government of Myanmar and relevant actors to reform its labor law and build institutional capacities through stakeholder consultation.

- The U.S. Government has provided seed funding to support the Initiative and provide technical assistance through the ILO to the Government of Myanmar as it works to reform its labor laws.
- The Government of Japan has seconded a labor law expert to the Ministry of Labor, Immigration and Population to work with the Government of Myanmar on its labor law reform efforts.
- The Government of Denmark is providing capacity building support on both occupational safety and health to Myanmar's Factories and General Labor Laws Inspection Department as well as on social dialogue to Myanmar's tripartite constituents.
- The European Union is helping to build capacity in the garment sector for sustainable and responsible production and will provide funding to support work under the *Initiative* going forward through the ILO as well as other technical assistance programmes in areas of relevance for this Initiative.
- The ILO is providing technical support to the Government's labour law reform process, the strengthening of the National Tripartite Dialogue Forum, and capacity building to employers' and workers' organisations for freedom of association and social dialogue.

In the long term, the *Initiative* is designed to support the government and stakeholders in promoting fundamental labor rights and responsible business practices, helping to make Myanmar an attractive sourcing and investment destination, protecting Myanmar's workers and supporting its businesses, and advancing the country's overall sustainable growth and development.