

Statement by Sachiko Yamamoto
Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific
International Labour Office (ILO)
at the 21st ASEAN Ministers of Labour
Hanoi, 24 May 2010

Madam Minister Nguyen Thi Kim,
Ministers of Labour and Heads of ASEAN delegations,
Distinguished Participants,

The relationship with ASEAN is of great importance to the ILO. Thank you, Madam Minister, for inviting us to be part of this important meeting.

I bring you warm and respectful greetings from our Director-General, Mr. Juan Somavia. He very much wanted to be here but unfortunately, circumstances prevented him from coming at this time. Nonetheless, he wished to send his personal message and copies have been made available to the Secretariat for circulation.

I draw on his message in my statement, and thank you for giving me the opportunity to do so.

This Labour Minister's meeting comes at a time when the impact of the global financial and economic crisis is still fresh in our mind. Many ASEAN member countries were hit hard but the region has rebounded strongly, and GDP growth is now expected at 5.4 per cent in 2010. This remarkable recovery reflects the strength of the region's economic fundamentals as well as your vigorous policy

response including employment and social protection measures in line with the ILO Global Jobs Pact.

Ministers of Labour of ASEAN contributed to shaping the Global Jobs Pact adopted last year by the International Labour Conference. The Pact outlines policy measures for employment and social protection to soften the impact of recession, accelerate a jobs-rich recovery and support the move towards strong, balanced and sustainable growth.

It integrates respect for rights at work and social dialogue between governments, workers' and employers' organizations. It respects national specificity. It is an open source approach. You can continuously update and improve it.

It has been endorsed by the United Nations at intergovernmental and interagency levels, by the G8 and the G20 and in many regional forums.

2010 is a crucial year -- the first year after the crisis when your countries shift their attention from short-term urgencies to longer-term priorities. And years of transformation will come. This new longer-term focus was clearly expressed in the ASEAN's *Leaders' Statement on Sustainable Recovery and Development*.

The ILO Agenda, your Agenda, and its application through the Jobs Pact is a central element of the response to this call.

The prosperity of your region will depend on the ability of workers and enterprises to adapt to changing markets and to benefit from

innovations and investments in new technologies, clean energy, health and infrastructure as your economies adjust to new drivers of growth.

In this regard, the quality of the workforce and skills are critical, fostering a virtuous cycle of higher productivity, employment-rich and income-led growth and development.

I see a fundamental connection between your vision and the ILO's Decent Work agenda. They lead to a common quest for growth and jobs that bring hope, societies that support the dignity of work, and economies that can serve these objectives.

I believe that ASEAN could play a key role in guiding Asia and even the global economy to a more balanced and sustainable path of development based on decent work objectives. This is not only appropriate given the region's dynamism, increasing economic weight and its commitment to a "caring and sharing" society, but also necessary since ASEAN, together with its partner countries, is such an important part of the solution.

Finally, I assure you of the ILO's commitments to our collaboration in meeting decent work development challenges ahead.

Once again, thank you for inviting us to be here.