



Joint Communiqué

THE TWENTIETH ASEAN LABOUR MINISTERS MEETING

8 MAY 2008, THAILAND

1. The Twentieth ASEAN Labour Ministers Meeting (20th ALMM) was convened in Bangkok, Thailand, on 8 May 2008. It was preceded by a Preparatory Senior Labour Officials Meeting on 6-7 May 2008. The 20th ALMM carried the theme, “Promotion and Enhancement of Decent Work for the Vulnerable Categories of Labour”.

2. The 20th ALMM was opened by H.E. Mr. Samak Sundaravej, Prime Minister of Thailand. In his Opening Address, H.E. Mr. Samak Sundaravej welcomed all the Ministers and delegates to the meeting. He noted the progress that had been made by ASEAN Member States on the development of the ASEAN Charter and the drafting of the ASEAN Socio Cultural Community Blueprint. ASEAN’s economic growth has brought remarkable improvements in poverty reduction, particularly the uplifting of those who were extremely poor. However, the present challenges were not due to the absence of economic activities but rather the unproductiveness and underutilization of the workforce. Employment creation in ASEAN was mostly in the informal sector which was normally characterized by a high degree of vulnerability. Hence, the theme for the 20th ALMM on “Promotion and Enhancement of Decent Work for the Vulnerable Categories of Labour” was a timely response to the challenges.

3. H.E the Prime Minister also mentioned that Thailand had given priority to enhancing and promoting better lives and work conditions for all workers, particularly vulnerable groups and believed that through the decent work agenda this goal could be achieved. However, the governments' commitment and cooperation among Member States are needed to achieve decent work for ASEAN workers. The projects and activities that had been implemented under the direction of ASEAN Labour Ministers were the examples of the commitment. In closing, His Excellency reiterated that the involvement of all stakeholders, particularly those at the grassroots level was a key factor to success.

Promotion and Enhancement of Decent Work for the Vulnerable Categories of Labour

4. Recognising that human resource development is essential in achieving sustainable development and quality job creation, the Ministers agreed on the importance of decent work. In this regard, focus on the vulnerable categories of labour is imperative. The Ministers were of the view that ASEAN has a responsibility to identify these segments of labour and ensure that measures are taken to enhance their well-being and employability.

The Future of Labour within the ASEAN Community

5. The Ministers noted that various initiatives have been undertaken by the ASEAN Occupational Safety and Health Network (ASEAN-OSHNET) in the promotion of decent work through Occupational Safety and Health (OSH). The Ministers lauded the efforts of the ASEAN-OSHNET to raise OSH standards in ASEAN through the Plan of Action on National Frameworks. The Ministers also expressed their appreciation to Malaysia as the host of the ASEAN-OSHNET Secretariat from mid of 2004 – May 2008 and commended Lao PDR for assuming responsibility as the new host of the Secretariat.

6. The Ministers noted with satisfaction the report of the Senior Officials on the progress of ASEAN Cooperation in the area of labour, in particular the decisions on the following:

- (i) The reconstitution of the Ad-Hoc Working Group as a "SLOM Working Group on Progressive Labour Practices to Enhance the Competitiveness of ASEAN" (SLOM-WG), which would be a permanent grouping reporting to SLOM, and its proposed Terms of Reference. The Chairmanship of the SLOM-WG would coincide with that for the ALMM, while the outgoing Chair could serve as the Vice-Chair;
- (ii) The follow-up to the implementation of the ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers in particular the convening of the ASEAN Committee on the Implementation of the ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers, before the 14th ASEAN Summit in December 2008. The Committee will determine its work plan, including the timeline towards the development of the ASEAN instrument on the protection and promotion of the rights of migrant workers; and
- (iii) The adoption of an incremental approach to skills recognition that is based on prior establishment of national skills frameworks, before discussing how regional skills recognition arrangements can be established. The technical working group comprising the relevant experts would continue to drive the initiatives on skills recognition.

7. The Ministers noted the findings of the Study on "Progressive Labour Practices to Enhance the Competitiveness of ASEAN". The Ministers agreed that individual countries could decide on the follow-ups of the

study findings at the national level. The Ministers tasked SLOM to identify and undertake the appropriate ASEAN-level follow-ups to these findings.

8. The Ministers acknowledged other ASEAN initiatives under the ASEAN Labour Ministers (ALM) Work Programme which promote decent work including exploratory workshops to develop labour market statistics. The Ministers also noted the ASEAN – Japan Programme on Industrial Relations which assists and facilitates efforts of ASEAN Member States in promoting sound industrial relations, industrial harmony, higher productivity and social justice as essential elements of development and welcomed the launch of Phase III of the Programme (2008-2010).

9. The Ministers noted that the first meeting of ASEAN Labour Ministries Focal Points on HIV Prevention and Control was held in Jakarta in December 2007, with the support of the ILO, providing a platform for the sharing of information on good practices on HIV/AIDS approaches, tools and legislation concerning HIV/AIDS in the world of work among Member States' focal points.

10. The Ministers recognized the importance of strengthening joint initiatives among ASEAN Member States and reaffirmed the need for continued dialogue and forging of strategic partnerships with Dialogue Partners, and other stakeholders in labour cooperation.

ASEAN - ILO Cooperation

11. The Ministers recalled the Cooperation Agreement signed between the ASEAN Secretariat and the ILO in March 2007, and were pleased that working in partnership with the ILO has provided exchanges of knowledge and expertise in various areas related to labour cooperation. The Ministers noted the completion of activities and projects between the two parties.

ILO Titular Membership

12. The Ministers expressed full support for Singapore's candidature as ASEAN's titular member of the ILO Governing Body, and for, Viet Nam, Cambodia, and Thailand to be ASEAN's candidates for the first, second, and third Deputy Member respectively for the term June 2008 – June 2011.

21st ASEAN Labour Ministers Meeting

13. The Ministers agreed that the 21st ASEAN Labour Ministers Meeting would be held in Viet Nam in the second week of May in 2010.

Concluding Remarks

14. The Ministers expressed their profound sympathies and deepest concerns to the people and Government of the Union of Myanmar on the recent devastating cyclone which has affected so many lives.

List of ASEAN Labour Ministers or Their Representatives
Attending the Twentieth ASEAN Labour Ministers Meeting,
8 May 2008, Bangkok, Thailand

- 1. H.E. Pehin Dato Adanan Yusof**
Minister of Home Affairs
Brunei Darussalam
- 2. H.E. Vong Sauth**
Minister of State of Labour and Vocational Training
Cambodia
- 3. H.E. Besar Setyoko**
Secretary General of Manpower and Transmigration
Indonesia
- 4. H.E. Laoly Faiphengyao**
Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Welfare
Lao PDR
- 5. H.E. Datuk Dr. S. Subramaniam**
Minister of Human Resources
Malaysia
- 6. H.E. Tin Htun Aung**
Deputy Minister of Labour
Myanmar
- 7. H.E. Marianito D. Roque**
Secretary of Department of Labour and Employment
The Philippines
- 8. H.E. Gan Kim Yong**
Acting Minister for Manpower
Singapore
- 9. H.E. Uraiwan Thienthong**
Minister of Labour
Thailand
- 10. H.E. Nguyen Thanh Hoa**
Deputy Minister of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs
Viet Nam
- 11. H.E. Nicholas Dammen**
Deputy Secretary General
ASEAN Secretariat