



ASIA-EUROPE MEETING

**Fourth ASEM Labour and Employment Ministers' Conference  
Ha Noi, 25 – 26 October 2012**

**HANOI DECLARATION  
ON  
EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL PROTECTION – A KEY TO SUSTAINABLE  
AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH**

We, the Ministers responsible for labour and employment of ASEM countries and representatives of the European Commission and the Secretariat of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), gathered at the 4<sup>th</sup> ASEM Labour and Employment Ministers' Conference held in Ha Noi, Viet Nam on 25-26 October 2012. The Conference was opened by H.E. Mr. Nguyen Tan Dzung, Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam and chaired by H.E. Mme. Pham Thi Hai Chuyen, Minister for Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs. Bangladesh, Switzerland and ILO Regional Office responsible for Asia and Pacific also attended the Conference as guests of the host.

1. Recognizing the employment and social impacts of the global financial and economic crisis, and the pursuit of sustainable development and fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); the important role of employment and social protection in ensuring social cohesion and in promoting economic growth – two essential pillars of sustainable development;
2. Reiterating ASEM commitments on labour and employment that have been made at ASEM 8 Summit in Brussels in October 2010 and the previous ASEM Labour and

Employment Ministers' meetings, particularly the Leiden Declaration in December 2010;

3. Noting that the global financial crisis and economic slowdown have exposed the weaknesses of labour markets, that the promotion of decent work, fostering employment and labour market participation would be practical measures to help recover from the crisis and stimulate sustainable and inclusive economic growth;

4. Recognizing that despite common efforts and positive achievements the world is facing a worsening youth employment crisis and therefore, smooth transitions from school to work, access to quality apprenticeships, life-long learning and investment in skill development both in formal and informal sector is of great importance in this context;

5. Taking into account the views expressed by workers and employers at the ASEM Social Partners Forum on 24 October 2012 that took place just before the 4<sup>th</sup> ASEM LEMC in Ha Noi,

We adopted the following Declaration:

### **Employment**

6. We reiterated the need to adopt and implement policies to foster employment and to create decent jobs, in particular for youth and other vulnerable groups, in consultations with social partners and other stakeholders and to make employment accessible to all.

7. We agreed to improve youth employment by providing youth with skills matching labour market needs. Therefore; vocational training and quality apprenticeships should be enhanced, where necessary. We further agreed to promote adequate social protection combined with active labour market policies, to improve the effectiveness of employment services and to promote youth entrepreneurship in line with Resolution and Action Plan adopted at International Labour Conference in June 2012 that integrate measures aimed at addressing youth employment issues.

8. We encouraged ASEM members to invest in information and communication technologies to strengthen the links between human resource development and the labour market; emphasized that Governments and social partners should work together to ensure that labour market information is widely available to all segments of the youth population so as to prepare and help youngsters to make informed career choices and to navigate and combine the complex world of education and the labour market and support social groups which experience the most difficulties in accessing to and completing education and training such as young people living in extreme poverty and in rural locations, young women and youth with disabilities.

9. We highlighted the importance of investment, through innovative financing, in social enterprises owned by and focused on employing young people, and to support young entrepreneurs with the purpose of ensuring decent and quality jobs.

10. We recognized the important development contribution that legal migrant workers make to both countries of destination and origin, when skills of workers and demands in labour market match and call for the exchange of experience on development of effective policies in ensuring the rights of migrant workers.

11. We noted that the fair transition to a green economy may open opportunities to reduce poverty and generate decent jobs. This could require adaptation of the training systems, active labour market policies, development of new skills and promotion of occupational health and safety in jobs created or transformed due to the greening of the economy. In this context, we welcomed the outcomes of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development Rio+20, encouraging sustainable development, creation of quality jobs and social protection while continuing our efforts to eradicate poverty, malnutrition and hunger. We also called to enhance these issues with a view to the up-coming review of the MDGs.

12. We reemphasized employment as a central objective of economic policy and a key pillar for strong, sustainable and balanced growth and agreed to enhance dialogue and cooperation among different relevant government agencies and with

the social partners, in formulating and implementing employment policies and programs.

13. We recognised the importance of social dialogue taking place in many countries based on mutual trust and shared objectives, in helping implement policies to accelerate a job-rich recovery, shaping a more stable and inclusive path for the global economy as well as building up social cohesion. In this regard, we acknowledged the outcome of the ASEM Social Partners Forum on 24 October 2012 that preceded the Ministerial meeting and encouraged the organisation of the ASEM Social Partners Forum ahead of the next Ministerial meeting. In this context, we took note of proposals to enhance consultations with social partners in ASEM on employment and labour issues.

#### **Our joint decent work agenda**

14. During the recent financial and economic crisis the ILO's Decent Work Agenda has proven to be an important tool to achieve a more decent life for all. It encompasses fundamental principles and rights at work; employment and income opportunities; social protection and social security and social dialogue and tripartism with gender equality as a crosscutting objective, is a basis for global social policy, both in the formal and informal sectors. We reaffirmed our commitments made in Bali and Leiden "that the internationally recognised ILO core labour standards should be fully respected and effectively implemented" and underline the importance of working toward implementing national laws consistent with ILO's labour standards.

15. We called on relevant international organisations to intensify their cooperation in evaluating and anticipating social impacts during financial and economic crisis to enable a more effective response, at the global and country levels. We also recommended that multilateral organisations with an employment and social mandate be consulted, when appropriate, to assess the social impact of economic and financial policies advocated by other international organisations.

16. Following the point 11 of the Leiden Declaration, we welcomed the progress underlined by the ILO's resolution on Myanmar, adopted during the ILC in June 2012.

### **Social protection**

17. We agreed that social protection is a key to ensure a just share of the fruits of progress for all and has proven to be a powerful anti-crisis measure and a durable investment in social justice, stability, economic and labour market development. We reaffirmed that effective nationally defined social protection floors are powerful tools to provide income security, to prevent and reduce poverty and inequality and promote social inclusion and dignity, both in formal and informal economy.

18. We are committed to implement nationally defined social protection floors at our own development pace. To be effective, these policies require an appropriate mix of preventive measures, benefits and social services which are to be designed and implemented with the participation of and in consultation with social partners, relevant representative organizations of persons concerned and adjusted to the national conditions and priorities.

19. We reiterated that an adequate and sustainable social security system will encourage human capital investment by both employers and workers and play an important role as an automatic stabilizer in times of crisis, that closing gaps in the coverage of social security is of utmost importance to inclusive economic growth, social cohesion and decent work for all. In this regard, we welcomed and supported the discussions and unanimous adoption of the ILO Social Protection Floors Recommendation, which calls on member states to build comprehensive social security systems and to extend social security coverage, in line with national circumstances and priorities.

20. We encouraged ASEM members to consider and/or provide appropriate and effective governance and management mechanisms for their national social security system which promotes gender equality in both urban and rural areas, caters to the

specific needs of vulnerable groups, and improves compliance with respective national legislation.

21. We stressed the need to enhance cooperation within ASEM and between ASEM countries and the ILO and other relevant international organizations, particularly in formulating and implementing country-specific social protection policies, in terms of technical support, capacity building and piloting new policies and programs in line with national priorities and circumstances.

22. We called for the employers' and workers' organizations to raise awareness and build public support for social protection among their members and the wider public; actively participate in social dialogue processes aimed at the design, implementation and monitoring of national social security strategies and policies, with a view to responding to the evolving needs and capacities of workers and enterprises; contribute to the development of innovative solutions through consultation including those which might address economic shocks, structural changes and sustainability.

23. We appreciated the valuable contribution in the area of nationally defined social protection floors under the joint leadership of Vietnam and Finland, through an ASEM Forum on Social Safety Net organized in Hanoi, Vietnam in April 2011.

### **Corporate Social Responsibility**

24. We reaffirmed the role of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in the creation of decent jobs for small, medium and large companies through national, international and voluntary instruments. In this context, we recalled the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalisation in 2008 which states that the violation of fundamental principles and rights at work cannot be invoked or otherwise used as a legitimate comparative advantage and that labour standards should not be used for protectionist trade purposes. We also recalled the importance of promoting and applying the principles of the ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning

Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy as a key element in ensuring the social responsibilities of business and their contribution to the Decent Work Agenda.

### **Health and safety at work**

25. We stressed the importance for ASEM partners to exchange their experiences as regards to adoption, implementation and evaluation of OSH national strategies in ASEM countries, considering the relevant ILO conventions, and agreed:

- To promote awareness that a good OSH performance improves the well-being of workers and has a positive impact on productivity, employability and competitiveness.
- To establish and sustain platforms for sharing of information in order to anticipate emerging OSH risks and challenges, including the stress at work and health and safety in SMEs and in the new forms of employment in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- To maintain and enhance tripartite partners' close consultations and partnerships with a view to developing coherent and effective approaches for national OSH strategies.
- To strengthen the collaborations between OSH inter-regional and international networks and improve co-operation in the area of research, development and capacity building among ASEM partners.

26. We welcomed the valuable contributions in the area of health and safety under a joint leadership of Indonesia and Singapore, through a workshop organized in Yogyakarta, Indonesia in October 2011 and a Symposium jointly organized by Singapore, France and the European Commission in Singapore in September 2012.

### **Future cooperation**

27. We agreed to take the following actions leading to the fifth ASEM Labour and Employment Ministers' Conference in 2014 following the successful fourth ASEM Labour and Employment Ministers' Conference in Hanoi:

- (i) Contribution to the debate on employment and social policy at the global level on issues of common interest.

(ii) Promotion of social dialogue through active involvement of social partners in the ASEM employment and social policy cooperation including technical projects.

(iii) Strengthening dialogue and cooperation through regular Senior Official and/or technical meetings.

(iv) Implementation of technical projects on the basis of the issue-based leadership in the following areas:

- Social Protection: India and the Netherlands
- Youth Employment Policies: China and Poland
- Health and Safety at Work: Malaysia, Korea and France
- Skill Development: The Philippines and Finland
- Social Dialogue on working conditions: Belgium and Indonesia

28. We recommended that ASEM Leaders at the 9<sup>th</sup> ASEM Summit (in Vientiane, Lao PDR., 05 – 06 November 2012) continue to discuss labour, employment issues and their social dimensions alongside economic, monetary and financial issues in order to improve the coordination and coherence of our economic and social policies and to strengthen the social dimension of globalisation.

29. We decided that the 5<sup>th</sup> ASEM Labour and Employment Ministers' Conference will take place in a European country in 2014.

30. We thanked Vietnam for its leadership and hospitality in preparing this ASEM Ministerial Conference.