

STATEMENTS 2016

Opening address at the ILO-ASEAN Seminar on the potential of social protection to build resilience to disasters, Crowne Plaza Galleria, Quezon City, Philippines, 22 November 2016

By Mr Khalid Hassan, Director, ILO Country Office for the Philippines at the ILO-ASEAN Seminar on the potential of social protection to build resilience to disasters, Crowne Plaza Galleria, Quezon City, Philippines, 22 November 2016

Greetings:

- Undersecretary Lagunzad of the Department of Labor and Employment,
- Undersecretary Villar of the Department of Social Welfare and Development,
- Mr Enoki of the Embassy of Japan in the Philippines
- Distinguished representatives from the ASEAN Secretariat, ASEAN Confederation of Employers, and ASEAN Trade Union Council,
- Distinguished officials from the governments of ASEAN member States, employers' and workers' organizations, and civil society organizations,
- Colleagues from the ILO and the UN,
- Ladies and gentlemen, *magandang umaga sa inyong lahat!* [Good morning to all of you]

Welcome to the ILO-ASEAN Seminar on social protection to build resilience to disasters. A warm welcome as well to the Philippines, especially for the delegates who have travelled from ASEAN countries to be part of this important gathering.

We are here today to discuss how we can jointly strengthen social protection programme and to improve our resilience to disasters.

Over the last 15 years, nearly 800 natural disasters hit the South-East Asian region, which affected more than 236 million people. The situation is expected to worsen due to global warming and climate change.

Disasters do not only affect people's lives and livelihoods, but also slowdown economic and human development achievements.

However, disasters are not inevitable, but preparing and mitigating risks is possible. Across the world, we have examples of disasters, even of large amplitude, which did not severely affect a country and its people. The capacity of the population to prepare and respond to hazards decides whether it will turn into a disaster or not.

Natural hazards do not decide on who to hit or not; everyone may, one day, lose their families, house, livelihood, or workplace. However, poorer households in exposed areas are more affected by disasters since they have fewer resources to cope and rebound.

Disasters tend to push people further into poverty and create a vicious circle, which aggravate vulnerability.

Our concerted efforts are needed to build ASEAN member States that are more resilient to disasters. Solutions will be found in integrated interventions, in which social protection can play a vital role.

Building back better after the disaster goes beyond the initial recovery and humanitarian response but also looks at prevention and transition to development. This is in line with the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda on poverty eradication and climate action.

Disaster management and social protection are closely linked areas that pursue similar objectives of managing risks and increasing resilience, specifically to:

- reduce poverty and vulnerability to income shocks through social protection such as cash transfers;**
- build human capital and diversify sources of income, needed for resilience;**
- support those not able to continue working through insurance; and**
- rehabilitate and build resilience to natural disasters through public work programmes for environment conservation and infrastructure development.**

There is now a global consensus on linking social protection and disaster risk management towards effective and efficient responses. This idea is at the core of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, adopted by all United Nations in 2015.

This idea is also supported through the ASEAN Declaration on Strengthening Social Protection in 2013, confirming the commitment of each ASEAN Head of States to extend social protection to everyone as a fundamental for reducing poverty and promoting inclusive growth. This includes addressing social protection needs of persons at risk or victims of natural disasters. The Declaration also echoes the principles of the ILO Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202).

Further, ASEAN Heads of States adopted the Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) in 2005, which pursues the ideas of the

Sendai Framework of a more comprehensive and integrated responses. A response that includes not only humanitarian response, but also sustainable development and poverty eradication.

Social protection plays a major role in building resilience to disasters. However, to date, majority of disaster preparedness and response programmes in ASEAN countries have to be sustained and coordinated.

Over the past decades, ASEAN member States have made great efforts to improve their social protection systems; however, concrete actions are still needed to strengthen the link between social protection and disaster management.

With climate change challenges ahead, it is urgent to take concrete actions to build resilience to disasters.

It is no coincidence that you have all come together here in the Philippines to discuss this issue. The Philippines is the third most disaster-prone country in the world, where an average of 20 typhoons annually. The experience of the Philippines provides all of us with a great opportunity to learn more on this issue, specifically on how to ensure that people affected by disasters will not fall as victims again.

The ILO team in the Philippines has supported decent work and sustainable livelihood programmes in response to disasters, which was also in partnership with the Government of Japan. Worker affected by the Super Typhoon Haiyan, locally known as Yolanda for example, were able to rebuild their lives. They were guaranteed minimum wage, social protection coverage including accident and health insurance. Personal protective equipment were also provided to ensure their health and safety.

The Philippines is one of the ASEAN countries, which has developed its social protection and disaster risk reduction system, targeting poor households as well as vulnerable workers.

Various social protection programmes include:

- conditional cash transfers,**
- public employment programmes, and**
- community development programmes to protect women and children.**

This regional seminar is an opportunity to look at programmes and experiences of Japan, New Zealand, Nepal, and Pakistan. Your voices matter and this gathering offers the chance to share information and to exchange ideas towards strengthening social protection and improving resilience to disasters.

Of course, this initiative will not be possible without the joint efforts of the ASEAN Secretariat and the ILO Regional Office in Bangkok, as well as the support of the Government of Japan, of which we are very grateful.

We are the first region to have this opportunity for a tripartite discussion on social protection and disasters, involving government, employers and workers organizations.

Your inputs are vital to help shape the agenda on disasters management, in the region and globally.

Disasters indeed affect lives and livelihoods but its risks can be mitigated. It is time to work together, to agree on urgent actions and to reinforce the potential of social protection for better resilience to disasters.

Thank you as I wish you all a productive and successful seminar!