

Integrating Social Policies and the Delivery of Social Protection Floors
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Remarks of
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Distinguished senior officials of the Royal Government of Cambodia

Distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

Good Morning.

I have the honour to deliver these remarks on behalf of the ASEAN Secretariat. First and foremost, I would like to congratulate the Government of the Kingdom of Cambodia, ILO and partner organisations for convening this Technical Workshop. I also wish to express our sincere appreciation for the warm hospitality extended to us and excellent arrangement of this Technical Workshop.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The topic of this Workshop is very dear and relevant to ASEAN for various fundamental reasons. With a combined total population of nearly 605 million of people, ten ASEAN Member States share a common goal of building a community that is socially responsible and people oriented by 2015. With the men and women ratio of one to one, around half of the total population is young people. In 2012, people aged 65 and above have reached 5.6% of the total population and this percentage is particularly much higher in Singapore and Thailand which have shown early signs of ageing societies. In average, approximately 45% of the total population is living in urban areas. Combined with the on-going concern that unemployment remains concentrated among youth, these demographic characteristics of ASEAN say a lot to us. Almost all peoples of ASEAN are vulnerable, at least at certain point of their lives. Some peoples are facing multiple vulnerabilities for being poor, born as female, working in the informal economies, and for some other factors. They need adequate access to social protection.

ASEAN economic prosperity improved during the past decade as reflected in its rapid growth in real aggregate and per capita GDP across the region. The average GDP per capita in 2011 has reached PPP US\$ 5,581. It grew 7.7% since 2000. This robust economic growth of ASEAN should be combined with equal distribution of the economic gains. However, given our imperfect conditions, the population of ASEAN who are living under PPP \$ 1.25 a day is still around 15% in 2010. Those people living in poor

conditions need adequate access to social protection. The income gaps in the region and between rural and urban areas have contributed to the massive flow of migrant labour, especially the low-skilled workers, from rural areas to urban cities within country, and to other countries. According to ILO, an estimated 1.5 million ASEAN workers leave their home countries each year to work abroad, including in other ASEAN Member States. Those migrant workers need adequate access to social protection.

We have witnessed various natural and man-made disasters happening in our region. Many people were affected. They lost their homes, belonging and sources of income. It took them some time to be able to stand on their feet again, and along the way they need social assistance. Again, this situation underlined the importance of social protection, including for the victims of disasters.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As reflected in the ASEAN Charter, one of ASEAN's purposes is to ensure that all peoples of ASEAN could contribute to the integration agenda and also benefit from it. We are mindful that social protection is an important tool in improving the quality of life and livelihood of peoples, especially the vulnerable groups in the region. It is important that the development and implementation of social security measures and national plans would cover the human life cycle from birth to death. Access to social protection and social services is a human right that should be promoted, protected and fulfilled in accordance with the commitments of ASEAN Member States to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other relevant international instruments. I also noted that at the Rio+20 UN Conference on Sustainable Development last year, countries worldwide agreed on, among other issues, the importance of supporting developing countries in their efforts to eradicate poverty, including the provision of social protection floors.

I am pleased to note that Cambodia, being the ASEAN Chair in 2012, initiated a very important regional strategy to strengthen social protection coverage and delivery through inter-sectoral collaboration and coordination. A holistic approach with the involvement of government officials, civil society, private sector, social partners and other stakeholders was emphasized. Cambodia's initiative to develop an ASEAN social protection framework has been consulted with the relevant ASEAN sectoral bodies and was welcomed. In parallel, the ASEAN senior official body in charge of social welfare and development also proposed for the development of an ASEAN declaration to reflect our collective commitment to strengthening social protection floors in the region. I am pleased to inform you that acting upon these two important initiatives, an inter-sectoral workshop has been planned to be held very soon to bring together multiple ASEAN sectoral bodies to translate those initiatives into an ASEAN document of commitment for submission to the 23rd ASEAN Summit in October 2013 in Brunei Darussalam. I trust that this endeavor is timely for our region, and the ASEAN Secretariat is excited with it.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It could not be overemphasized that sharing knowledge and experiences in promoting social policies integration and effectively delivering social protection floors is important. I am here to listen and learn from the experiences of not only ASEAN Member States, but also of other countries from around the world participating in this Technical Workshop.

Let me close my remarks by wishing you all fruitful discussions. Thank you.

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