

Social Protection Floor Workshop Opening Ceremony

Siem Reap, Cambodia

29 May 2013

Address by Mr. Maurizio Bussi, ILO Bangkok

Welcoming Remarks

His Excellency Dr Yim Chhay Ly, Deputy Prime Minister of the Royal Government of Cambodia

Her Excellency Mme Maw Tun Deputy Minister of Labour, Employment of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar

Her Excellency Mr. Enrique Deibe, Deputy Minister of Labour of the Republic of Argentina

His Excellency Jean-François Cautain, Ambassador of the European Union to Cambodia;

His Excellency Yuji Kumamaru, Ambassador of Japan to the Kingdom of Cambodia;

Ms. Claire Van der Vaeren, United Nations Resident Coordinator in Cambodia;

Mr. Francisco Simplicio, Assistant Director of the UN Office for South-South Cooperation;

Ms. Mega Irena, Head of the Social Welfare, Women, Labour and Migrant Workers Division at the ASEAN Secretariat;

Ladies and gentlemen;

Good morning, it is an honour for the International Labour Organization, to be here today and contribute to this important workshop on Social Protection Floors and integrated social policies.

We feel really privileged to be here in the timeless city of Siem Reap – the cradle of Cambodian culture that represents the harmony between tradition and progress.

I wish to thank the RGC for hosting this important event, as well as to the ASEAN Secretariat for their fruitful collaboration with the ILO in preparing for this conference and for your continued engagement.

Again a very warm welcome to all participants who have travelled from Buenos Aires, Santiago, Bogota, New York, Pretoria, Delhi and from across the region. Your presence here highlights the commitment that each of you has shown to furthering the social protection agenda in Cambodia and elsewhere.

Social protection

Social protection is fundamental to the principle of social justice, and a prerequisite for a fairer and more inclusive globalization. It is recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and across several International Labour Standards. There is no doubt that it plays a pivotal role in relieving people from poverty and delivering more prosperous societies.

It is a win-win investment, and yet, despite six decades of strong economic growth across the regions, access to adequate social protection benefits and services still remains a privilege, afforded to relatively few people worldwide.

Further efforts are urgently needed to affirm that basic social protection guarantees are economically affordable and to explore new and innovative ways of delivering on this agenda.

Tangible progress has already been made in this direction and important development partners such as the EU, Japan and others are increasingly supportive of national plans to develop social protection. Your presence here today Ambassadors is the vivid and tangible testimony of this commitment.

Social protection floor

The UN's SPF initiative is an essential component of this global goal that is central to people's aspirations because it shows how SP can be introduced, completed and maintained everywhere in accordance with national circumstances.

It also provides a crucial contribution in advancing with the application of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda. We are convinced that Social protection Floors will be indispensable to move towards models of growth that are resilient and just.

SPFs comprise four basic guarantees:

- First, all residents of a given country should have access to essential health care including maternity care,
- Second, all children should have access to nutrition, education, and care,
- Third, all those of working age unable to earn sufficient income in cases of sickness, unemployment, maternity, disability, or acute poverty should benefit from income support; and be supported to access decent jobs,
- Fourth, all elderly people should receive a minimum retirement pension.

In Cambodia, the ILO – together with the European Union - has given close support towards the development of the National Social Protection Strategy which was launched 2 years ago and provides the vision for a social protection system, beginning with the establishment of a SPF.

This represents a commitment that all residents should be guaranteed a basic standard of living and a floor to stand on in hard times; that all children should be given a fair chance and an opportunity to reach their full potential; and that everyone should be guaranteed dignity and support in their old age.

Today the Royal Government of Cambodia has started, with ILO's support, the pilot testing of the National Social Protection Strategy through the establishment of the SSDM (Social Service Delivery Mechanism). This one stop shop will use similar procedures as the OWSO of the Ministry of Interior, but focusing on social protection and employment services. Established in sub-national administration (district, commune, villages), this sustainable mechanism will contribute to the empowerment of subnational administration in the delivery of social services. The SSDM will also contribute to increasing the coverage of existing social protection schemes, and enhance opportunities of people through the provision of combined benefit packages.

South-South cooperation

There is an increasing recognition that south-south cooperation has a crucial role to play in building this momentum; in better ensuring sustainability and national ownership, but also in generating new ideas and examples of good practices.

In the context of social protection, it means bringing together the collective knowledge, evidence and expertise from the many examples of national efforts to build social protection floors, and identifying areas of good practices. The presence there today of senior policy makers, committed and dedicated government official and SP practitioners from across all regions underscores that the innovation and solutions coming from countries in the South are often the most appropriate for others in the South to adapt to their circumstances.

And that is exactly what we wish to achieve from this workshop –bringing together experiences and examples of promising and good practices from around the world to inform the expansion of social protection in Cambodia.

ASEAN

At the ASEAN level, there is a growing recognition that social protection is key to achieving equitable and inclusive growth. We fully encourage the RGC's proposed initiative to extend social protection beyond national borders and to build an ASEAN Social Protection Framework.

We hope that this workshop will encourage the RGC to continue to engage in the development of an ASEAN Declaration on strengthening social protection floors, to which the ILO stands ready to provide the needed support.

Concluding remarks

This workshop represents an enormous opportunity not only for the development of a social protection floor in Cambodia but also to enhance south-south cooperation on social protection, and to use this to build momentum behind the global social protection agenda. We hope that Cambodian constituents will gain new ideas and inspiration from countries like Brazil, Colombia, India, Pakistan, Thailand, that have successfully implemented one stop services for social protection and employment. We believe that this knowledge will help them to contribute to the practical implementation of the Social Service Delivery Mechanism.

We are firmly convinced that Cambodia will continue to move ahead as more nations adopt proactive social protection stances, supported by clear visions and plans, competent governance, and a willingness to share prosperity broadly.

I wish you Your Excellency and the people of Cambodia ever success on this journey.