

**ASEAN TRADE UNIONS' STATEMENT CONCERNING
THE ASEAN DECLARATION ON STRENGTHENING SOCIAL PROTECTION**

Preamble

1. The ILO, the ASEAN Trade Unions Council and Cambodian trade unions confederations jointly held the ASEAN Trade Unions Workshop on Social Protection in Phnom Penh on 26-27 August 2014, with the participation of representatives from trade unions of Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam.
2. We, participants, acknowledged the ASEAN Declaration for Strengthening Social Protection and compared its guiding principles with those established by ILO Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102) and ILO Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202). We support the government initiative of ASEAN member states to put into effect the ILO Recommendation No. 202 by adopting the ASEAN Declaration for Strengthening Social Protection. However, trade unions urge ASEAN governments to take concrete measures to ensure more participatory, transparent and effective consultations and engagements of trade unions in the design, implementation and monitoring of social protection at national and regional levels.
3. Over the last decade, the ASEAN economies have achieved fast and high economic growth; however amid growing vulnerable employment, alarming inflation rates and an increasing cost of living. Social protection as a fundamental human right and an economic necessity could serve as a remedy to tackle those social and economic challenges. We, participants, urge the governments of ASEAN to commit to the realization of social protection floors and progressive extension of social security systems across ASEAN member States.

We, participants, recognize the following challenges and key issues concerning the implementation and extension of social protection for all in ASEAN:

4. Universal healthcare is yet to be a reality in ASEAN. Quality, affordability and accessibility of healthcare services remain a major challenge for most of the ASEAN population, especially in rural areas. Only a few countries have systems in place that ensure healthcare for all, including for migrant workers.
5. While primary and secondary education is free of charge in most ASEAN countries; quality, accessibility and additional costs still hinder children' full attendance to school. None of the ASEAN countries is equip with a universal child allowance that supports families in meeting the basic needs of their children, in terms of education, health and nutrition.
6. Informal, rural and migrant workers are not adequately covered by social protection. Some countries have introduced a voluntary extension of their social insurance system, but so far with limited coverage and rarely covering comprehensively risks over the life cycle, such as

employment injury, maternity, sickness and medical care. Unemployment protection is also absent from most ASEAN countries. Countries have implemented comprehensive active labour market policies including programmes promoting public work, vocational training, employment creation, and support to women's entrepreneurship; however, youth unemployment and mismatch between labour supply and demand persist. Right to maternity protection is yet to be a reality for all working women, in particular among informal, rural and migrant female workers. Occupational health and safety is not sufficiently linked to employment injury insurance.

7. Only a few countries have introduced a universal social pension, leaving vulnerable older people with no income security, particularly in a context where family support patterns are evolving. More particularly, even when migrant workers are recognized as contributors to the old-age and survivors' pension, portability of their entitlement is not permitted across ASEAN social security offices.
8. Exclusion in social protection is often the result of a lack of information and awareness on social security rights and benefits among workers and contributors. It is also a consequence of poor coordination among line-ministries and government agencies dealing with social protection, and the absence of effective and integrated delivery mechanisms that guarantee reaching out those most in needs.
9. There is a need to reinforce monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure transparency and accountability in the management and investment of the social insurance fund. Similarly, there is a need to develop standards and methodology for proper monitoring and accounting of States' budget allocation for social protection interventions, especially interventions aimed to assist people affected by natural disasters and armed conflicts.
10. Disparities in levels of development of social protection, different objectives introduced in national social protection policies and strategies might challenge the implementation of the ASEAN Declaration on Strengthening Social Protection.

We, participants, suggest the following actions for the implementation of the ASEAN Declaration and ILO Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202), and recommend governments, in consultation with social partners, to take concrete steps:

Action¹. Support national policies, strategies and mechanisms to strengthen the implementation of social protection programme, as well as effective targeting systems to ensure that social protection services would go to those most in need;

11. Commit to adopt a time frame to develop and implement national social protection policies and strategies in accordance with the guiding principles of the ASEAN Declaration on Strengthening Social Protection and ILO Conventions No.102, No.87, No.98 and Recommendation No.202.
12. Establish inter-ministerial coordinating bodies in each of the ASEAN member States.

¹ Actions underlined are taken from the ASEAN Declaration on Strengthening Social Protection.

13. Develop and scale-up the Single Window Service as an integrated and effective mechanism for efficient and responsive delivery of social protection services and benefits.
Action. Strengthen the capacity of government officials, communities, service providers, and other stakeholders for better responsiveness, coordination and effectiveness of social protection and delivery services at regional, national and local levels;
14. Provide education and information through mobilization of the social and mass media and development of educational materials (e.g. short TV and radio announcements, and information brochures and booklets).
15. Disseminate information on social security rights and obligations in receiving countries for migrant workers prior to departure.
16. Develop public and private partnerships to facilitate payment of contributions and delivery of social protection benefits (for example, through banks and grocery shops).

Action. Advocate strategies that promote the coverage, availability, comprehensiveness, quality, equitability, affordability and sustainability of various social protection services, including the expansion of social insurance to the informal sector; strengthening social assistance programmes for persons with disabilities, elderly, children and other vulnerable groups; greater access to social protection programmes and services, including vocational trainings as part of active labour market interventions and human resource development;

Action. Collectively accelerate the progress towards Universal Health Coverage (UHC) in all ASEAN member States by strengthening capacity to assess and manage health systems to support UHC through sharing of experiences, information and experts;
17. Develop universal health care, old-age pension, and universal maternity benefits as priorities of nationally defined social protection floors, and introduce unemployment insurance.
18. Consult with trade unions in defining vocational training curricula and selection criteria. Promote measures targeting youth employment and vocational training.
19. Establish a mutual framework for certificate, skills, and competencies recognition and accreditation throughout ASEAN member States, with one institution in charge of accreditation.
20. Ensure that public employment programmes comply with labour laws, including minimum wage, OSH and working conditions.
21. Introduce government subsidies as an incentive for self-employed, informal and rural workers to contribute to the voluntary social insurance system. Allow registration of domestic workers to the social insurance system. Offer short- and long-term packages of social protection benefits (maternity, employment injury, sickness, medical care, pension, disability and survivors) as an incentive to increase registration among young people.

22. Foster linkages between OSH and employment injury benefits; cover accidents and diseases not only at workplace but also while commuting to and from work.

Action: Build and strengthen the networking and partnerships within and among ASEAN member States as well as with Dialogue Partners, UN Agencies, civil society, private sectors, development partners, and other stakeholders in supporting adequate resources and effective implementation of the commitments reflected in this Declaration.

23. Create and/or reinforce national tripartite committees, at both national and regional levels, to identify priorities, design, implement and monitor social protection policies and strategies in each of the ASEAN member States. Build capacities of trade unions to take an active and informed role in the tripartite committee's decisions.

24. Encourage exchange of expertise and experience within ASEAN member States.

Action. Promote results-based and evidence-based national assessments and benchmarking of social protection delivery services in ASEAN member States that would contribute to the progressive implementation, effective monitoring and evaluation, as well as optimum impact of social protection;

25. Encourage all ASEAN member States to conduct the assessment based national dialogue exercise to gather benchmark information that will be used to measure social protection progress and effective implementation of the ASEAN Declaration and ILO Recommendation No.202.

Action. Explore and develop assessment tools and regional statistical indicators where appropriate to measure the impact of social protection to the holistic development of vulnerable groups for future planning towards available accurate baseline data collection;

26. Link the indicators for measuring the effective implementation of the ASEAN Declaration and the ILO Recommendation No.202 with national contexts and available data and statistics.

27. Involve the tripartite committee on social protection, at both national and ASEAN levels for defining performance indicators and time frame for reporting, and monitoring the impact of social protection policies.

Action. Allocate adequate financial resources for social protection in line with national targets and subject to the capacity of each Government;

28. Envisage taxation of natural resources and investments as a resource for financing social protection subsidies. Avoid policies that introduce tax credits on foreign direct investments. Establish tax compliance mechanisms.

29. Build capacity of the trade union representatives at the tripartite social insurance board to take an active role in the management, monitoring and evaluation of the fund.

30. Develop a methodology for proper accounting and budgeting of public expenditure in response to natural disasters.

We, participants, commit to play an active role in the implementation of the ASEAN Declaration and ILO Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No.202) at national and regional levels:

31. Develop national and regional trade unions' campaigns for the effective implementation of the ILO Recommendation No.202 (for example, TV and radio announcements)
32. Push for the creation of national inter-ministerial coordinating bodies and tripartite committees on social protection issues, and actively participate in the national tripartite committees.
33. Involve ASEAN trade unions in the development of the monitoring framework for the effective implementation of the ASEAN Declaration and ILO Recommendation No.202.
34. Advocate for the inclusion of migrant workers under social security systems.
35. Organize South-South exchange of experiences and expertise among ASEAN trade unions on specific issues.

Adopted at the ASEAN Trade Unions Workshop on Social Protection,
Phnom Penh, 27 August 2014