

Intervention of the labour, represented by the International Trade Union Confederation – Asia Pacific (ITUC-AP) on the item 2 on strategies for building a healthy, protected and productive workforce in Asia and the Pacific

The International Trade Union Confederation – Asia Pacific, representing workers and trade unions in Asia and the Pacific, would like to appreciate the report of the agenda item recognising rampant and persistent decent work deficits in the region.

I also want highlight the social outlook 2022 includes a clear reference to the fundamental principles and rights at work including freedom of association, the collective bargaining right, safe and health working environments, elimination of all forms of forced and compulsory labour, child labour and any discriminatory practices at work. In addition, the outlook underlines ‘a just transition’ and ‘social dialogue’.

A healthy, protected and productive workforce can only be guaranteed under decent work since decent work is productive work for all, regardless of employment status, race, sex, colour, age, with/without disability, etc., in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity, based on employment, workers’ rights, social protection and social dialogue. Therefore, decent work is a foundation stone for sustaining economic growth with social development being ensured.

In this regard, we support the recommendations in the report which are in line with our demand for a new social contract with jobs, rights, social protection, equality and inclusion.

In particular, I would like to reiterate that building strong labour market institutions complying with all fundamental rights is an essential prerequisite for a right-based and human-centred recovery with a just transition towards sustainable and inclusive development.

Collective bargaining is the most effective institution to protect workers, to better working conditions as well as to adapt new changes. Beyond an enterprise level, the scope of collective bargaining is able to cover sectoral, regional, national and even cross border dialogues.

Without realising occupational safety and health, it is impossible to have a healthy, protected and productive workforce. We must remember almost 3 million workers are killed by occupational diseases and accidents every year. We also must note that elderly workers are vulnerable to occupational diseases and accidents.

To realise decent work is critical in broadening the income tax base and creating feasible contributory systems for social protection including health care. Furthermore, social dialogue is an institution to guarantee needs of workers in various policies including active labour market policies.

It is not surprising that there are many studies proving that strong labour market institutions, measured by union density, are negatively correlated with income inequality.

Madam Chair,

Increasing informality and precarity in employment as well as the disguised self-employed are a result of having undermined the fundamental rights of workers. Asia and the Pacific is the region with the least ratification rate of the ILO fundamental conventions including Convention no. 87 and no. 98 on freedom of association and the collective bargaining right. Regarding the conventions on occupational safety and health (no. 155 and no 187) have ratified by only 9 countries and 8 countries respectively among 36 ILO member countries in the region.

Madam Chair,

Therefore, the ITUC-Asia Pacific asks the Committee to identify the need of ratifying and implementing ILO's fundamental convention as an appropriate place to embark on our journey to implement the recommendations for decent work to ensure the workforce we need for sustainable and inclusive future for all.

Thank you.