
Chair's Conclusions

On 2 and 3 December 2004, the ILO (International Labour Office), the UNU (the United Nations University) and the Japanese Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW) held the above-mentioned symposium in Tokyo with high-level participants from Asia, Mr. Juan Somavia, the Director-General of the ILO and Prof. van Ginkel, the Rector of the UNU.

The symposium was attended by 14 government officials and a number of social partners from Asia.

In the midst of rapid globalization, active discussion took place on ways of providing all men and women with opportunities to enjoy the fruits of globalization through the world of work. The discussion highlighted effective approaches to attaining Decent Work in Asia, through the exchange of information on innovative policies and measures adopted in participating countries.

The ILO Director-General presented a keynote speech based on the report "A Fair Globalization - Creating opportunities for all (Report of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization)" released in February 2004. The Rector of the UNU reported on appropriate ways towards "a fair globalization" from a broad perspective in the international community.

Furthermore, a session was held to hear voices of youth, the very subject of the symposium, which turned out to be truly significant.

As a result of the discussions, the participants were highly appreciative of the sincere efforts made by governments, the ILO, the UN, and social partners. They also agreed that all parties concerned should strive towards a fair globalization and creating a society where young people can actively work and fulfil their aspirations.

1 Globalization and youth employment

-- Recent rapid globalization has created new economic opportunities around the world. Nevertheless, too many people in a number of countries are unable to enjoy its benefits. Therefore, an emphasis on the social dimension of globalization is called for. Meanwhile, the report of World Commission has made a detailed proposal on the efforts by each governments and the reform of global level.

-- Extremely important is the fulfillment of the strong desires of people to acquire Decent Work. It is mainly through work that people actually feel the impact of globalization and understand how it affects their lives. In order to share the benefits of globalization among a broader spectrum of people, it is important that Decent Work is achieved for as many people as possible. Therefore, Decent Work should be made a global goal in order to attain a fair and

people-centred globalization. Many tasks in Asia caused by globalization should be tackled with this perspective.

-- In Asian countries, the benefits of globalization have been brought to limited numbers of people. Youth, in particular, are susceptible to the negative impacts of globalization, as they are in the vulnerable position of being new entrants into the labour market. To realize a people-centred and fair globalization that would provide opportunities to all, it is necessary to give full consideration to these young people who are in a vulnerable situation.

-- On the other hand, youth possess brilliant creativity and flexibility. They have the potential to develop into leaders of future generations through their accumulation of knowledge and experiences in various activities. In actual fact, a considerable number of young people are active in the frontline at workplaces and are contributing to society and the economy amidst the rapid socio-economic changes brought about by globalization.

-- Youth is an asset that possesses great potential to contribute widely to the development of society and the economy. By drawing on such youth potential, societies and economies of each region can be activated, thereby building the foundation for the creation of Decent Work. In Asia, there are many examples where countries regard youth as assets and builders of the future, and have made active investments in developing capabilities of young people through education, etc., leading to exponential growth for some and a process of such growth for many others. The growth potential of Asian economies nurtured in this manner has attracted notices around the world.

-- Thus, in order to realize Decent Work for all people in all regions it is vital that as many young people as possible can fully demonstrate their abilities and contribute to society and the economy through their work.

2 Present situation and measures for youth employment

(1) Present situation of youth

-- Due to progressive globalization, competition has intensified. The importance of practical knowledge and experience, as well as developing personal networks is increasing. Youth, however, do not possess these sufficiently and are in a disadvantaged position.

-- The global unemployment rate for youth is 3.5 times as much as that of the adult average. In Asia, about 38 million young people are unemployed.

-- There are many youth who are in a situation where they cannot afford to remain unemployed and therefore would become engaged in jobs in the informal economy with inferior working conditions. Many such youth suffer in poverty with no future in sight and many others even lose their health.

-- However, there are many youth who, by their own efforts and those of a supportive society, have found a place for themselves to contribute to society by working hard and enthusiastically.

(2) Important measures for youth employment

-- From discussions at the "Tripartite Meeting on Youth Employment: The Way Forward" held by the ILO in Geneva this October and at other UN (United Nations) meetings, it has become clear that governments should implement comprehensive policies such as those mentioned in the annex.

-- At this symposium, among these policies, discussions have centred on measures to create societies where young people can fully demonstrate their capabilities and work actively by improving their employability.

3 Creating work opportunities and an enabling environment for young people

(1) Youth's own efforts to seize opportunities

-- Young people have the special quality of developing, using trial and error, which helps them grow and widen their fields of activities.

-- Whether or not young people become active and demonstrate their splendid capabilities or pass their lives aimlessly without improving their capabilities, or fall into a trap of poverty without making full use of their capabilities will depend on their own efforts.

-- For a brighter future, it is necessary that young people themselves do not hesitate to strive to create opportunities because of fear of failure, but search the way for self-reliance through Decent Work.

-- As leaders of the next generation, youth should maintain global perspectives while recognizing their role in society and striving to develop their careers.

(2) Support from society

It is necessary that the whole society, including governments and social partners, should actively support the voluntary efforts made by young people with a view that they are an asset.

-- Governments should strive to enhance education that would serve as a basis for improving the employability of youth. Additionally, governments should actively (i) secure training opportunities for Human Resources Development (HRD), (ii) offer information concerning HRD, (iii) support the promotion of career development, (iv) prepare standards and systems for the evaluation of vocational capabilities and (v) support entrepreneurship.

-- In the course of globalization, enterprises tend to seek short-term results, and favour employment of fully experienced human resources. Nonetheless, enterprises are in a position to offer immediate chances for improving vocational capabilities of workers through offering employment. Thus, from a point of view that "youth is an asset", enterprises should engage in

HRD with specified aims and with a long-term perspective. The growth of enterprises is founded on HRD. It also is important that enterprises should cooperate with the school education for the improvement of employability and vocational self-consciousness.

-- Trade unions should capture the needs of young workers concerning enhancement of their employability and implement efforts to encourage voluntary development and improvement of their vocational capabilities.

-- Besides social partners, all those who interact with young people, such as their supervisors and seniors in the workplace, families, communities, should become conscious of the importance of proactively nurturing young people. At the same time, they should develop a vision to support them, understand their needs and support them for their entrance into the society and their growth in it.

-- Meanwhile, support from international frameworks such as the YEN (Youth Employment Network) and APSDEP (Asia and Pacific Skill Development Programme) should be enhanced, in order to achieve the common goals of countries for economic and social development through supporting young people's active efforts and enabling them to realize their potential.

In today's symposium, information on the efforts in Asian countries has been exchanged. The participants have confirmed that we would further cooperate and share experiences and knowledge among the countries through various fora in order to make future efforts by governments and international organizations more effective. Through such efforts, we are committed to realizing a brighter future through supporting young people.

We are confident that the outcomes of this symposium will serve as a basis for the General Discussion on youth employment in the forthcoming International Labour Conference to be held in June 2005. At the same time, we anticipate that globalization and the future of youth will be placed as important agenda items and discussed in depth at the ILO Asian Regional Meeting scheduled to be held in Pusan, the Republic of Korea in the second half of the year 2005.

Annex

The integrated measures that governments should implement with regard to youth employment

- (a) The implementation of various macroeconomic policies that centre on employment, above all on ensuring Decent Work for the young people.
- (b) Policies that promote labour demand for youth.
- (c) Adequate national regulations that observe International Labour Standards and appropriate labour market management.
- (d) Wage policies that provide for fair and adequate incomes.
- (e) Promoting an entrepreneurship culture in society, and providing support for start-ups by improving the business environment, for example.
- (f) Support for the improvement of employability.
- (g) Provision of labour market information.
- (h) Provision of opportunities for career counseling.