



International Trade Union Confederation

**GENERAL COUNCIL**

Brussels, Belgium, 29 November – 1 December 2017

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Agenda item 14:

The Regions

(c) Asia and the Pacific

The General Council is requested to approve the report of ITUC Asia-Pacific.

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17GC/agt – 6 November 2017

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## ITUC Frontlines and Priorities

Region: ITUC-Asia Pacific

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### Highlights - 2017

The paying membership of the ITUC-Asia Pacific stands at 23,345,976 of 59 affiliates in 34 countries and territories. The effective membership is over 60 million.

The ITUC-AP Priorities of Action are set by the ITUC-AP Regional General Council on the basis of the ITUC priorities and the ITUC-AP Regional Conference Decisions. The ITUC-AP Action Plan and Calendar of Events, organised and participated in by the ITUC-AP, are available on request made to [gs@ituc-ap.org](mailto:gs@ituc-ap.org).

Priorities for national policy and action of the Bali Declaration adopted by the 16th Asia and the Pacific Regional Meeting of the ILO (6 - 9 December 2016, Bali, Indonesia), including developing campaigns for the ratification/application of the ILO Conventions 87 and 98, promoting **migrant workers' rights**, addressing decent work deficits in global supply chains (GSCs), facilitating the transition from the informal to the formal economy, strengthening social dialogue and tripartism, etc., are incorporated in ITUC-AP activities.

Outlined reports of activities are posted on the ITUC - Asia Pacific Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/ITUC-Asia-Pacific-459205360928675/>.

### Frontlines - 2017

#### Climate Justice and Industrial Transformation

The ITUC-AP collaborated with the ITUC in organising the regional Union for Climate Change meeting (31 August - 1 September, Singapore) with the objectives to strengthen the understanding of workers and their unions on what is at stake in the UNFCCC COP climate negotiations, and demonstrate the commitments from workers and unions to national, sectoral and/or workplace action on climate. The issue of Just Transition was discussed in various activities related to the 2030 Agenda as well as the Future of Work Initiatives.

#### Taming Corporate Power in Supply Chains

Under the umbrella of the ITUC's "End Corporate Greed" campaign, the ITUC-AP promoted unionisation for ensuring minimum (living) wages, secure employment, universal social protection and elimination of slavery. Availability of international instruments, such as the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises and the ILO Tripartite Declaration, has not made much impact. Hence, the ITUC-AP organised activities to discuss ways for unionising multinationals and supply chains,

familiarising various international instruments and chalking out plans of action for protection and promotion of workers' rights in multinational enterprises (MNEs) and the global supply chains. It also participated in discussions on business and human rights issues.

## Eliminating Slavery

The ITUC-AP raised the issue of modern slavery, such as the kafala system as well as exploitative working conditions of migrant workers, with a view to giving relief to and organising workers in need and difficulty in various events related to global supply chains (GSCs), corporate social responsibilities and due diligence, public procurement in mega sports events, etc. in meetings organised by the UN, the ASEAN and others. The ITUC-AP also focused on the issue in its own meetings where appropriate.

## Priorities - 2017

### Countries at Risk

The situation of workers' rights remains critical in the region. The average of the score of the index in Asia and the Pacific has increased from 4.20 in 2016 to 4.28 in 2017 (systematic violation of rights). Countries such as Yemen, Bahrain, Cambodia, Fiji, Kuwait, Laos and Myanmar have seen their ranking rise this year. The Philippines, Republic of Korea, Turkey and Bangladesh are among the ten worst countries in the ITUC Global Rights Index 2017 report. This report carries six country situation reports on workers' rights; they are Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Republic of Korea and the Philippines.

The 106th Session of the International Labour Conference (ILC) examined 24 individual cases, of which five cases were from the Asia and Pacific region, namely, Afghanistan (C.182), Bangladesh (C.87), Cambodia (C.87), India (C.81) and Malaysia (C.19). The Human and Trade Union Rights Network (HTURN) of the ITUC-AP reviewed the report of the ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR) and prepared a list of suggested priority cases from the region.

### Global Coherence and Development

The ITUC-AP continued to engage with International Financial Institutions (IFIs) to advocate decent work with full respect of international labour standards while explaining actual situations within the labour market in the region. In particular, the ITUC-AP urged the ADB to review its safeguard policy to include the ILO Core Labour Standards with effective enforcement mechanisms, including an improved complaints procedure.

The ITUC-AP established the Asia Pacific Trade Union Development Cooperation Network (APTUDCN) as well as its Steering Committee. The APTUDCN is aimed at strengthen the capacity of member organisations to participate in the process of implementing and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 Agenda.

### Global Governance of Migration

The ITUC-AP participated/organised activities on labour migration at regional, sub-regional and national levels and they included: (1) ITUC-AP/SARTUC Pre-Departure Training Material Development Workshop (7 December 2016, Dhaka); (2) 9<sup>th</sup> Global Forum on Migration and Development (8 - 12

December 2016, Dhaka); (3) Inter-Regional Trade Union Meeting on Trade Union Cooperation on Labour Migration in Origin and Destination Countries (19 - 21 April 2017, Beirut); (4) ITUC/ITUC-AP/FES Regional Meeting on Fair Recruitment of Migrant Workers (24 - 25 May 2017, Kathmandu); and (5) ITUC-AP/SARTUC Regional Conference for Coordination and Policy Development on Migration (29 - 30 May 2017, Kathmandu).

In addition, the ITUC-AP organised coordination meetings among three sub-regional organisations, namely the ASEAN Trade Union Council (ATUC), the South Asian Regional Trade Union Council (SARTUC) and the Arab Trade Union Confederation. The three sub-regional organisations agreed to establish a joint Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) in Jordan to provide legal assistance to migrant workers coming from Bangladesh, Indonesia, Nepal and the Philippines as a priority. Jordan was chosen because the country hosts migrant workers both from South and Southeast Asian countries, the office of the Arab TUC is located there, and its environment is more open to setting up an MRC compared to other countries in the Arab region.

The ASEAN TUC with the support of the ITUC-AP received the ILO contribution for the ASEAN Triangle Project Phase II (September 2017-March 2020), aimed at strengthening the role of trade unions in advocating and protecting migrant workers' rights.

## Count Us In!

A variety of gender-equality-related activities, meetings and programs in the region resulted in the following:

- Increased organising and membership of domestic workers. In India for instance, affiliates organised close to 400,000 domestic workers.
- Completed two new national surveys on domestic violence and its impact on work, workers and workplaces in Mongolia and Taiwan. The launching events attracted a full-house of stakeholders eager to explore collaborative partnerships with affiliates to improve the well-being of workers, particularly women.
- **Employers responded positively to affiliates' advocacy on building gender-based violence-free workplaces.** For instance, in the Philippines and Israel, affiliates signed cooperation agreements with employers' groups on joint workplace prevention and assistance for victims of domestic violence.
- Expanded contacts and partnerships with various regional and international partners through various speaking engagements sharing the ITUC-AP gender- equality activities.

In terms of mainstreaming gender in regional national programs, data shows reduced participation of women at 29 per cent (compared with 35 per cent in 2016) with less than a 30 per cent participation rate in 5 out of 11 meetings. Participation in the ITUC-AP-supported national meetings is better at 33 per cent. The resolution on Ensuring Minimum 30 Per Cent **Women's Participation** in ITUC-AP Programmes at All Levels calls the ITUC-AP to implement a standard selection procedures/policy in all programmes and monitor follow-up action towards "**minimum 30 per cent women's participation.**"

Together with CFL in Taiwan-ROC, (2,000 respondents) and CMTU in Mongolia (6,600 respondents), the ITUC-AP completed two new national surveys on the impact of domestic violence on work, workers and workplaces. Both launching events attracted a full house of stakeholders eager to explore collaborative partnerships with affiliates to improve the well-being of workers – women, men and their families. The 15<sup>th</sup> RGC of the ITUC-AP adopted the resolution on **Ensuring Women's Participation** in ILC Discussions on Violence and Harassment of Women and Men in the World of Work.

The ITUC-AP expanded contacts and partnerships with various regional and international partners through various speaking engagements sharing its gender-equality activities in six regional and international meetings:

1. Asia-Pacific Dignified Work Impact Growth Strategy Advocacy Workshop (27 - 29 June 2017, Bangkok, Thailand)
2. 61<sup>st</sup> Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (13 - 24 March 2017, New York, U.S.A.)
3. APEC Workshop on Improving Quality Employment Opportunities for Women (6 - 7 March 2017, Bangkok, Thailand)
4. Asia-Pacific Policy Dialogue on “Women’s Economic Empowerment in the Changing World of Work” (23 - 24 February 2017, Bangkok, Thailand)
5. Global Trade Union UNCSW Preparatory Meeting (6 - 7 December 2016, New York, U.S.A.)
6. ILO-Nordic Council of Ministers Global Dialogue on Gender Equality in the World of Work: Nordic Perspectives (29 - 30 November 2016, Helsinki, Finland)

The ITUC-AP supported national meetings: (1) ITUC-AP/ITUC-BC Rally and Meeting on the Implementation of Domestic Workers Law (8 March 2017, Dhaka, Bangladesh) and (2) ITUC-AP/HMS Seminar on Women in the Changing World of Work: Planet 50-50 by 2030 (25 - 26 March 2017, Puri, Orissa, India).

## Domestic Workers

A variety of activities resulted in increased organising and membership of domestic workers. In India for instance, affiliates organised close to 400,000 domestic workers. The ITUC-AP organised **Strengthening Networking among Domestic Workers’ Organisations** in India (22-23 May 2017, New Delhi) with the two key outcomes: (1) documentation of experiences and best practices in networking and alliance building at all levels, organising, services provision and expanding support mechanisms for domestic workers; and (2) the immediate next steps and other plans to address three key areas: draft domestic workers bill, enforcement of existing laws and ratification of C.189.

## Organising

ITUC/ITUC-AP Organising Academy was organised (6 - 10 February 2017, Yangon). Eighteen participants (eight women) presented their progress reports on organising and shared various aspects of their work dealing with trade union education, anti-union management tactics, multinational companies and their global supply chains, violence by the security forces and local thugs, intra-/inter-union rivalry, campaign and advocacy work, alliance building with NGOs, resources limitation, social media, and welfare provisions. At the end of the course, participants came out with their own national campaign plans.

The ITUC-AP organised jointly with the ITUC the **National Workshop on Building Workers’ Power** through Corporate Research (27-28 September 2017, Jakarta) with more than ten participants from KSPI and KSBSI Indonesia. Participants learned and practiced online research on corporate information with a view to designing appropriate strategies for their organising campaigns.

## Other Regional Issues

### Informal Economy

The ITUC-AP organised the following programmes for popularising ILO Recommendation No. 204 on Transition from Informal to Formal Economy (2015) among the trade unions in the region: (1) Regional Symposium on Formalising Informal Economy: Role of Trade Unions (22 - 23 November 2016, Colombo, Sri Lanka); and (2) National Workshop on Formalisation of Informal Economy: Decent Work for Informal Workers (27 - 28 2017, Chennai, India).

## Occupational Health and Safety

The ITUC-AP Regional OHS Conference took place in Singapore on 8 - 9 March 2017. Twenty-eight participants from 24 affiliates of 17 countries delivered their country reports on OHS, discussed challenges and exchanged their actions to **advance OHS as a fundamental human and workers' right**. The Conference concluded with the following proposals as practical modalities to advance the campaign for healthier and safer workplaces in the Asia and Pacific region: (1) 28 April as Day of Action; (2) The ITUC-AP OHS Audit Manual; and (3) the ITUC-AP OHS Network. The Network, after the approval of the 15th ITUC-AP RGC (August, 2017), was established with the participation of most of its member organisations.

## Youth

The first edition of ITUC-AP Youth Audit Manual as an indicator to monitor the implementation progress of the ITUC-AP Youth Charter 2015-2019 was formally approved at the 14th ITUC-AP Regional General Council (December, 2016). To commemorate its completion, a USB flash drive was customised to store the manual.

The 10th ITUC-AP/OTCI/JILAF Youth Leadership Course held on 12-21 September in Singapore brought 35 young trade unions, including 16 women from 27 affiliates and friendly organisations in 22 countries/territories.

## IFIs

Nowadays, the IFIs have started focusing on (re)distributive mechanisms, climate change, gender equality, etc., for inclusive and sustainable growth. This may be due to the prolonged global economic sluggishness with rising income inequality. However, it is also attributable to the effort of the ITUC/ITUC-AP to engage with them on a regular basis to advocate decent work with full respect of international labour standards.

However, there is still some inconsistency between rhetoric at the global level and implementation at the national level. Further, trade unions, especially at the national level, are seldom invited by the IFIs to any consultation, study or analysis on economic situations, including the labour market of their own country. Therefore, the ITUC-AP continues to facilitate more trade union engagement with the IFIs at the national level, such as a national consultation meeting.

## Relations

The ITUC-AP actively participated in events and programmes of G20/L20, ASEM, APEC, ASEAN TUC and SARTUC. The ITUC-AP also maintained coordination with GUFs, TUAC and the ILO Bangkok/ACTRAV.

## Registration of the Secretariat in Singapore

The ITUC-AP has been incorporated under the Singapore Companies Act on 6 February 2017 as a Public Company Limited by Guarantee named as "INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION – ASIA PACIFIC LTD." (ITUC-AP LTD.).

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