

Intervention to Agenda Item No. 15
Ministerial Dialogue "Towards a Resource-Efficient and Pollution-Free Asia Pacific"

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Thank you Mr. Chair!

While we heard much about the green economy in the Conference, not much was discussed and reflected in the report about what it entails. We should take "inclusivity" to heart and into policy. Specifically, workers and CSOs envision a people-oriented and participative greening process with a "just transition framework" that considers compensation, skills training, job placement, social protection, social dialogue and respect for the rights of workers and the community who will be affected by a shift to a green economy. We hope that Asia Pacific governments commit to the promotion of green jobs or decent jobs that:

- Improve energy and raw materials efficiency
- Limit greenhouse emissions
- Minimize waste pollution
- Protect and restore ecosystems
- Support adaptation to the effects of climate change

Mr. Chair, a resource-efficient and pollution-free Asia will not come into fruition without workers, who will build an environment friendly and resource efficient society for us and with us. Workers have long been the first ones to be exposed to hazards and pollutants as the first liners in manufacturing, agriculture, mining, service and construction, to name a few sectors. Thus, it is important that governments have national laws, policies, systems and programs on Occupational Safety and Health and the Environment.

As we conduct the Ministerial Summit, the World Occupational Safety and Health Congress has just wrapped up in Singapore.

The global economic impact of the failure to adequately invest in occupational safety and health is roughly equal to the total GDP of the poorest 130 countries in the world," according to the International Labour Organization (ILO) Director General.

Thus, the new global estimates on work-related illnesses and injuries represent 3.94 per cent of global GDP per year, or 2.99 trillion US dollars. In human lives, that means 2.78 million workers continue to die each year from

work-related injuries and illnesses - 2.4 million of these deaths can be attributed to work-related diseases alone, where exposures to hazards and pollutants could be attributed.

Basic principles such as assessing occupational risks or hazards; combating occupational risks or hazards at source; and developing a national preventative safety and health culture are important. These are reflected in ILO Convention 187, the OSH Framework Convention, which if ratified can open international cooperation. Information-sharing, consultation and training, are also important. This training for government should extend to workers. Safety and Health and Environment Standards inspection is also crucial as we go green. Workers and CSOs are more than willing to help the authorities as deputized inspectors or monitors to help them cover Multinational Corporations and their supply chains.

Occupational Safety, Health and Environment Committees should be established in all enterprises, with the meaningful participation of workers, through their trade unions.

Lastly, government should also be willing to give protection for workers-whistleblowers who will expose corporate practices that harm the environment and sacrifice the safety, health and lives of their workers and the community.

Greening the economy entails green jobs and decent work under a just transition framework. We can't build a resource efficient and pollution-free Asia Pacific if the builders are sick and injured, or worse, if they are DEAD.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.