

Ayuba Wabba

President
Président
Präsident
Presidente

His Excellency Dato Lim Jock Hoi
ASEAN Secretary General
70A Jalan Sisingamangaraja
Jakarta 12110 Indonesia
public@asean.org; LCSD@asean.org

Sharan Burrow

General Secretary
Secrétaire générale
Generalsekretärin
Secretaria General

ESP/EA

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Ensuring decent work, minimum living wages and social protection are on the ASEAN agenda

Your Excellency,

ASEAN + 50 is a campaign coordinated by the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and ITUC Asia-Pacific with the goal of ensuring decent work, including minimum living wages and social protection, across South-East Asia. Poverty wages are a reality across the region, driven by multilateral companies exploiting workers in their supply chains. At least 400 million people in the region are estimated to live in extreme poverty. Action to ensure evidence based minimum wages and social protection would support workers and their families, create decent work and negate unfair competition based on exploitation.

This campaign is led by national trade unions in Malaysia, the Philippines, Cambodia, Myanmar, Vietnam, Thailand and Indonesia.

You may find attached a short briefing providing more details on the campaign and providing evidence for why wage increases and improvements to social protection are a matter of regional concern.

With this letter we would like to call upon ASEAN to support this campaign.

ASEAN's Agenda 2025 provides a strategic framework for the social and economic transformations of the region over a ten-year period to boost growth, encourage sustainable development, and ensure better lives for the peoples of ASEAN. Quality jobs, social responsibility and resilience to social and economic vulnerabilities are all part of this agenda. Despite this, we see that the current model of economic growth in this region has failed many working people – as this growth has largely relied on low wage, insecure and often unsafe work. This must change.

Minimum living wages and social protection are foundations for decent work and wages must be set at a level that guarantees decent standards of living for workers and their families. Governments share a collective responsibility to guarantee a living wage for workers as well as adequate social protection benefits and services.

Raising wages and social protection in ASEAN would also have important macro-economic benefits. This would stimulate aggregate demand, improve the attractiveness of formal work and reduce informality, and support inclusive and sustainable economic development in the region.

We therefore request that ASEAN places wages and social protection at the center of its agenda for economic growth and development in the region, and to dedicate work in these areas within its next work plan for 2021-2025. Through regional coordination between governments, wages and social protection can be taken out of competition.

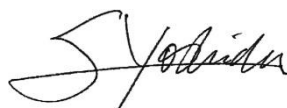
We moreover request that ASEAN organizes **a dedicated meeting with ASEAN Labour Ministers in early 2020** in order to discuss the urgency of raising wages and enhancing social protection for the peoples of ASEAN.

We remain available to discuss with you further the ASEAN +50 campaign and the benefits of strengthening wages and social protection for the ASEAN region.

Yours sincerely,



Sharan Burrow
General Secretary, ITUC



Yoshida Shoya
General Secretary, ITUC Asia Pacific

Copied:

Ms. Mega Irena
Assistant Director, Head of Labour and Civil Service Division
Human Development Directorate
ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) Department
megairena@asean.org

Dato' Amir bin Omar
ASEAN SLOM Chair
Level 6-9, Block D3, Parcel D,
Federal Government Administrative Centre
62502, Putrajaya, Malaysia
amir.omar@mohr.gov.my