

## International Trade Union Confederation

### Policy proposals to the 4<sup>th</sup> ASEM Labour and Employment Ministers Conference, Hanoi, Vietnam, 24-25 October 2012

#### 1. Restoring higher employment, decent job creation and growth

*"[The Leaders] agreed to promote decent work by spurring job creation and labor participation. They reiterated their support for the Global Jobs Pact of the ILO adopted in June 2009, which promotes practical measures to help recover from the crisis and stimulates "growth with employment".*

*Chair's Statement of the Eighth Asia – Europe Meeting (Brussels, 2010)*

The unions urge the ASEM Labour and Employment Ministers to promote macro-economic policies that can attain employment-led growth and the creation of millions of new decent jobs. The Ministers should promote the implementation of the ILO Global Jobs Pact and the delivery of Decent Work National Plans. To this end, the developed ASEM partners should provide technical assistance on the implementation of such policies starting with productivity-enhancing measures and human resources development programmes. ASEM partners should also increase workers' protection by ratifying and implementing the ILO Conventions of internationally recognised labour standards and taking measures to ensure the effective application of law.

#### 2. Social protection for sustainable and inclusive growth

*"Leaders also noted with interest the gradual development of a global Social Protection Floor, [which] would seek to ensure livelihood security for poor and vulnerable populations and provide access to essential services, fighting persistent poverty effectively."*

*Chair's Statement of the Eighth Asia – Europe Meeting (Brussels, 2010)*

The trade union movement encourages ASEM Labour and Employment Ministers to establish broad social protection systems and improve the financial sustainability and the quality of existing ones. The ratification of ILO Convention No. 102 on social protection and the implementation of ILO Recommendation 202 on social protection floors would considerably help ASEM countries in enhancing social protection. ASEM partners should set the goal of achieving universal access to quality social protection systems and develop programmes to formalise economic activities with a view to providing sustainable funding for social protection. ASEM partners with long experience of social protection should offer their technical assistance to partners which start putting such systems in place.

#### 3. Skills development and mismatches; promoting youth employment and employability

*"Today's youth are the best-educated generation ever, yet we note with concern that they make up nearly half the world's jobless population."*

*Leiden ASEM Youth Declaration (Leiden, 2010)*

The trade unions encourage ASEM Ministers of Labour and Employment to promote a better match between education and needed skills, provide quality apprenticeships with possibility of hiring after successful completion, and public employment services and training programmes. ASEM countries should deliver unemployment benefits and social assistance. The ASEM partners should also share experiences and best practices for state support to enterprises that employ young persons and be prepared to invest in sectors where the majority of workers are young.

#### 4. Health and safety at work

*"[Employment and social policies] should promote decent work for all, support gender equality, improve the quality of jobs and occupational health and safety in the workplace".*

*Potsdam Declaration of ASEM Ministers of Labour and Employment (Potsdam, 2006)*

Without a safe, healthy and clean working environment, social justice and economic wealth will be out of reach. ASEM partners must ensure there is a better application of international standards on OSH. The great vulnerability of workers to OHS risks arising from precarious employment, the raise in the exposure to hazardous substances as well as the emergence of new risks, including psychosocial ones, should all be addressed by ASEM.

## **5. Preparing for the low-carbon economy**

*"At the same time new skills and competences will be required in a low carbon economy, as well as enhanced labour mobility across occupations and sectors posing new demands for education and training institutions and labour market policies."*

*Leiden Declaration of ASEM Ministers of Labour and Employment (Leiden, 2010)*

ASEM partners should make further progress on the delivery of skills for workers to grasp opportunities for green jobs in a low carbon economy. The ASEM Ministers of Labour and Employment should introduce pilot programmes and promote the proliferation of transitional measures to accompany workers and enterprises in the transformation of their jobs and economies, including income protection mechanisms for the unemployed or those in declining sectors and human resource development. An exchange of best practice could take place between countries which have tackled skill gaps and those who lack such assessments.

## **6. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)**

The ASEM trade unions understand that Corporate Social Responsibility is the responsibility of business for the impacts of its decisions and activities on society. ASEM trade unions encourage the ASEM Ministers of Labour and Employment to give the utmost consideration to the three most authoritative international instruments relevant to CSR: the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, the ILO Tripartite Declaration of Multinational Companies and Social Policy and the OECD Guidelines on Multinational Enterprises. Corporate Social Responsibility is about accountability to stakeholders including shareholders, business partners, consumers, workers and their trade unions, and the public for compliance with law and with authoritative international expectations of business behaviour including respect for human rights and by making contributions to the broader societal interest in sustainable development.

## **7. Establishing an Asia Europe Labour Forum to allow trade unions make contributions to ASEM**

*"Leaders stressed that effective dialogue between social partners should be encouraged in order to promote mutual understanding on issues of productivity, working conditions, remuneration and economic change. Such dialogue also contributes to effective national policy design and implementation."*

*Chair's Statement of the Eighth Asia – Europe Meeting (Brussels, 2010)*

Social dialogue is an indispensable element of good governance on both national and international levels. Policies formulated and implemented in cooperation with the social partners promote industrial peace and social stability and have the potential to boost economic and social progress. Social dialogue is a process of participation and inclusion that provides workers and employers with the opportunity to influence policy-making. For instance, the involvement of social partners in the planning, the development and implementation of social protection and vocational training systems is essential, as it increases ownership, improves outcomes and achieves better coordination of implementation.

Trade unions have been engaged in the ASEM process since its very beginning in 1996. An Asia Europe Labour Forum, analogous to the Asia Europe Business Forum (AEBF), not only would make dialogue more inclusive but would add their relevant experience on issues of employment and social affairs and increase ownership of ASEM's work. Therefore trade unions from Europe and Asia call upon ASEM Ministers of Labour and Employment as well as the ASEM Leaders to grant trade unions a formal consultative status through an Asia Europe Labour Forum comparable with the arrangements made for the Asia Europe Business Forum. The ASEM trade unions further look forward to deepening engagement in the ASEM process by being directly involved in specific ASEM cooperation projects in the near future.