

2021 ASEAN DECLARATION ON PROMOTING COMPETITIVENESS, RESILIENCE AND AGILITY OF WORKERS FOR THE FUTURE OF WORK

Adopted on 26 October 2021

WE, the Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), namely Brunei Darussalam, Kingdom of Cambodia, the Republic of Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, the Republic of the Philippines, the Republic of Singapore, the Kingdom of Thailand and the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, on the occasion of the 38th ASEAN Summit chaired by Brunei Darussalam;

UNITED by the commitment to the ASEAN Vision 2025 and in realising an ASEAN Community that engages and benefits the people, and is inclusive, sustainable, resilient and dynamic, as also inscribed in ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint 2025 and the Narrative of ASEAN Identity;

RECALLING the importance to develop effective upstream preventive policies and initiatives such as transformative social protection enshrined by the ASEAN Declaration on Culture of Prevention for a Peaceful, Inclusive, Resilient, Healthy and Harmonious Society;

FURTHER RECALLING the purposes of ASEAN as stipulated in the ASEAN Charter to develop human resources through closer cooperation in education and life-long learning, and in science and technology as well as to enhance the well-being and livelihood of the peoples of ASEAN by providing them with equitable access to opportunities for human development, social welfare and justice;

RECOGNISING the guiding principles laid out by the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration, which recognises one's right to work, free choice of employment, enjoy just, decent and favourable conditions of work, and access to assistance schemes for the unemployed as well as the spirit to promote the rights of migrant workers and their family members already residing with them as stipulated on the ASEAN Consensus on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers;

REAFFIRMING ASEAN's commitment to develop human-centred approach in preparing ASEAN workers' ability to adapt to the transformative changes, such as technological advances, demographic transitions and the rise of green economy as stipulated in the ASEAN Labour Ministers' Joint Statement on the Future of Work: Embracing Technology for Inclusive and Sustainable Growth as well as the ASEAN Declaration on Human Resources Development in the Changing World of Work;

COGNISANT of the unprecedented impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the peoples of ASEAN, many of whom are workers, whose lives and livelihoods have been greatly affected;

REAFFIRMING our interconnectedness as One Community and commitment to work together in building back better and resilience in future through the concerted efforts paved by the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework;

FURTHER REAFFIRMING the commitment for better preparedness of labour and employment policies and the resilience and agility of ASEAN workforce for the potential outbreak/recurring of pandemic, economic crisis or natural disasters in the future as stipulated in the Joint Statement of ASEAN Labour Ministers on Response to the Impact of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) on Labour and Employment as well as the Consolidated Strategy on the Fourth Industrial Revolution for ASEAN in accordance with AMS' respective capacities, laws and regulations;

DO HEREBY DECLARE our commitment to undertake the following actions to promote competitiveness, resilience and agility of workers for the future of work by taking into account the capacities, resources, laws, regulations and policies of ASEAN Member States:

1. Encourage the harmonisation of skills training standards and professional certification systems to accelerate the application of skills recognition, and skilled labour mobility in ASEAN by promoting and supporting the referencing of National Qualifications Frameworks of ASEAN Member States to the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRF) and other frameworks/mechanism;
2. Foster the efforts to increase labour productivity of ASEAN Member States through strengthening policy measures and implementation of a holistic framework in the management of labour productivity which involves institutional approaches, strategies, and cultures;
3. Encourage the participation of the communities as well as private business in capacity building initiatives and business incubation strategies to enable young talent, including those in the rural areas, to create start-up businesses and develop entrepreneurship;
4. Strengthen the existing social dialogue towards harmonious and fair industrial relations through a cooperative bipartite consultation to promote the rights and obligations of workers and employers at the workplace, and a tripartite consultation to endeavour the formulation of proper labour policies to maintain decent work, sustainable businesses, and stable economic climate for investment to support rapid economic growth;
5. Initiate appropriate and sustainable social protection measures, including social assistance and social security, for all workers, as well as migrant workers, to ensure their rights, benefits and welfare are protected, especially in times of emergencies and disasters, in accordance with the laws, regulations and policies of respective ASEAN Member States;
6. Revitalise the significant role of public employment services to ensure inclusive access of the workforce, including but not limited to women, youth, and persons with disabilities, to the labour market through innovative approach and mechanism of services in the effort towards decent work, reduced unemployment, peace and social cohesion;
7. Encourage the optimisation of the use of secure internet of things (IOT) to intensify and advance manpower training, job creation, job placement, career advancement, labour inspection, and labour protection; to improve the performance of government services on labour and employment; as well as to adapt to the changing nature of work and businesses;
8. Promote the sharing of knowledge, information, and best practices of labour and employment strategies and policies through regional initiatives, including among others, the Regional Centre for the Future of Work (RCFW) and ASEAN Future Workforce Council (AFWC), to prepare all ASEAN workers' readiness for regional and global competitiveness amidst the fourth industrial revolution and the changing world of work;
9. Encourage fostering adaptive labour market policies and programmes to respond to double disruption caused by the automation and COVID-19 pandemic with the engagement of private sector, civil society and other relevant stakeholders to build effective solutions through, but not limited to, training partnership programme as well as business assistance and financial access for the society in dealing with the unprecedented situations;

10. Promote close collaboration and partnership amongst ASEAN Member States and external partners, international organisations, and relevant international entities to enhance labour and employment development in ASEAN, and boost our efforts in creating new opportunities for collective action and innovation for building more inclusive, resilient and peaceful societies in the recovery and post-pandemic era.

WE tasked the ASEAN Labour Ministers Meeting (ALMM) with the support of the Senior Labour Officials Meeting (SLOM) to realise this Declaration through a guiding document and resource mobilisation for its implementation in accordance with the national laws, regulations and policies of ASEAN Member States.

ADOPTED at the 38th ASEAN Summit on this Twenty Sixth Day of October in the year Two Thousand and Twenty-One, in a single original copy, in the English Language.