

# 2024 VIENTIANE DECLARATION ON SKILLS MOBILITY, RECOGNITION AND DEVELOPMENT FOR MIGRANT WORKERS

*Adopted in Vientiane, Lao PDR on 9 October 2024*

**WE**, the Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), namely Brunei Darussalam, the 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 44th and 45<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summits chaired by Lao People's Democratic Republic;

**NOTING** the significant progress made by ASEAN Member States in achieving the ASEAN Community Vision 2025, including an ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community which engages and benefits the people and is inclusive, sustainable, resilient and dynamic;

**RECALLING** the purposes of ASEAN, as enshrined in the ASEAN Charter, which are to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms, to enhance the well-being and livelihood of the peoples of ASEAN, as well as to develop human resources through closer cooperation in education and lifelong learning, and in science, technology and innovation, for the empowerment of the peoples of ASEAN and the strengthening of the ASEAN Community;

**ACKNOWLEDGING** that the equitable rights of migrant workers are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of human rights and fundamental freedoms as enshrined in the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration;

**RECALLING** that the ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers (Cebu Declaration), Vientiane Declaration on Transition from Informal Employment to Formal Employment Towards Decent Work Promotion in ASEAN, and ASEAN Consensus on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers (ASEAN Consensus) outline the measures to protect and promote the rights of migrant workers, recognise the shared and balanced responsibilities of the countries of origin and destination to promote their full potential, dignity, fundamental rights, and fair treatment, and call for collaboration to promote human resources and skills development of migrant workers;

**REITERATING** the commitments in the ASEAN Declaration on Human Resources Development in the Changing World of Work and its Roadmap adopted at the 36th ASEAN Summit, the ASEAN Declaration on Promoting Green Jobs for Equity and Inclusive Growth of ASEAN Community adopted at the 33rd ASEAN Summit, the ASEAN Declaration on Promoting Competitiveness, Resilience and Agility of Workers for the Future of Work adopted at the 38th ASEAN Summit and the Bangkok Declaration on Advancing Partnership in Education for 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in ASEAN adopted at the 35th ASEAN Summit;

**COGNISANT** of the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, and international labour standards on fundamental principles and rights at work, which stipulate migrant workers' right and access to gender-responsive, skills development and recognition;

**MINDFUL** that income differentials among ASEAN Member States, demographic transition, technology advancement, just transitions, as well as climate change and crisis situations will continue to impact labour migration patterns, generating both opportunities and challenges for both countries of origin and destination;

**NOTING** that special attention is needed to realise women migrant workers' equitable access to skills mobility, recognition and development. There is a need to develop skills standards, curricula and assessment criteria and to provide training and assessment, as necessary, in women-dominated occupations and sectors where those are currently lacking, such as domestic work;

**ACKNOWLEDGING** that Labour Force Survey data from key ASEAN countries of destination indicates that the majority of migrant workers are employed in middle-skilled occupations while labour migration policies and Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) in the region mainly cater for low-skilled migration;

**UNDERLINING** the importance of rights-based, inclusive and gender-responsive measures to facilitate greater labour mobility within the ASEAN region and inclusion of all migrant workers in skills development, assessment and certification schemes that respond to labour market needs;

**DO HEREBY DECLARE** our commitment to take the following measures to enable access to skills mobility, recognition, and development to migrant workers of all skills levels in accordance with the respective ASEAN Member States' national laws, regulations, and policies:

#### **Skills Mobility and Skills Recognition in Recruitment Process and Admission Policies**

1. DEVELOP and STRENGTHEN admission and labour migration policies to enable labour migration at all skills levels in accordance with labour market requirements of both countries of origin and destination.
2. STRENGTHEN and PROMOTE the mechanisms to recognise skills of all migrant workers and, such as integrating the mechanisms into admission policies and recruitment processes with a view to facilitating migration at all skills levels within the region. The skills recognition approaches may include, but are not limited to:
  - a. Recognition of qualifications across ASEAN Member States through the ASEAN Qualification Reference Framework (AQRF) and ASEAN Guiding Principles for Quality Assurance and Recognition of Competency Certification Systems (AGP);
  - b. Recognition of country-of-origin qualifications in countries of destination based on mutual recognition of skills arrangements agreed between two countries;
  - c. Skills assessment and certification based on standards of countries of origin and destination including recognition of prior learning;
  - d. Industry-based skills recognition;
  - e. ASEAN Mutual Recognition Arrangements (MRAs);
  - f. Regional skills certificates; and/or
  - g. Specified process and licensing for registered occupations.
3. PROMOTE transparency of skills, qualifications and experience required for jobs that migrant workers take up and ENSURE skills recognition in recruitment processes are in place to adequately review migrant workers' skills and experience in the job matching and recruitment process.
4. Where applicable, CONSIDER the use of, but not limited to, Bilateral Labour Migration Agreements (BLMAs), Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs), or Skills Mobility Partnerships (SMPs) to facilitate inclusive, fair and gender-responsive recruitment and decent employment of migrant workers at all skills levels. The BLMAs, MOUs, and SMPs should specify:

- a. arrangements for recognition of skills;
- b. arrangements for skills matching in recruitment;
- c. access to skills assessment and certification, including recognition of prior learning;
- d. access to skills development, career progression and life-long learning;
- e. responsible authorities or other stakeholders, and cost structure for provision of the above.

5. MONITOR AND ASSESS skills and labour shortages to identify in-demand occupations for migrant workers in countries of destination to inform admission policies, including quotas, and negotiation of BLMAs, MOUs and SMPs and to inform the design and delivery of training programmes in countries of origin and destination. Countries of origin will also assess impact of outlabour migration on their national labour markets, for example risks of brain drain and skills shortages.
6. PROMOTE whole-of-society and whole-of-government collaboration and partnerships at national level between government agencies, employers' organisations, workers' organisations and other relevant stakeholders as well as at regional or bilateral level between ASEAN Member States, international organisations, and other relevant stakeholders to enhance skills mobility, development, and recognition for migrant workers.
7. ENABLE the exchange of labour market information, where available, among ASEAN Member States, such as information on demand for specific skills and occupations.

### **Skills Development, Assessment, and Certification**

8. FACILITATE all migrant workers' access to skills development, assessment and certification at all stages of the migration cycle.
9. In countries of destination, PROMOTE migrant workers' right to fair treatment in accessing skills development, assessment, certification, career development and life-long learning in accordance with their skills development needs.
10. STRENGTHEN provision of technical and vocational training (TVET) and skill development to align with the demand of the labour market in countries of origin and destination. Specific attention should be paid to changing skills needs due to technology advancement, just transition, and other factors.
11. FACILITATE migrant workers' effective access to skills development, assessment, and certification through inclusive, gender-responsive design of these services, including access provided to women migrant workers, migrant workers with disabilities and those in vulnerable situations in the design of relevant services.
12. DEVELOP and IMPROVE skills standards, curricula, and assessment criteria which respond to the needs of migration including in women-dominated sectors, and SHARE information on national skills standards, quality assurance system among ASEAN Member States. The ASEAN Guiding Principles for Quality Assurance and Recognition of Competency Certification Systems (AGP) should be promoted as a tool to harmonise quality assurance for skills certification.
13. PROMOTE recognition of prior learning in countries of origin and destination as an important means to formally recognise migrant workers' skills gained through non-formal training or on-the-job learning.
14. DEVELOP guidelines for data collection on use of skills development, assessment, and certification services disaggregated by migrants and non-migrants.

15. PROMOTE the use and recognition of end-of-employment certificate issued by employers in countries of destination and countries of origin, specifying job scope, tasks performed, years of experience, and skills acquired on the job.

#### **Fair Recruitment and Decent Work**

16. Where skills training, assessment, and certification are required by employers as part of the recruitment process, ENCOURAGE ASEAN Member States that these costs are not charged to migrant workers.

17. ENSURE that all migrant workers' wages and benefits are fair and commensurate with their skills, qualification and experience, and PROVIDE decent work for all migrant workers regardless of their skills levels.

18. PROVIDE pathways to career development opportunities for all migrant workers including the right to change employers in countries of destination, where applicable.

19. MONITOR recruitment and employment practices and provision of skills development, assessment and recognition services to ensure compliance and to prevent exploitation of migrant workers with measures outlined in this Declaration.

**WE** tasked the ASEAN Labour Ministers Meeting (ALMM), with the support of the ASEAN Senior Labour Officials Meeting (SLOM) and its subsidiary bodies, ASEAN TVET Council (ATC), and other relevant ASEAN Sectoral Ministerial Bodies, to take appropriate and coordinated efforts to realise this Declaration, subject to the national laws, regulations and policies of ASEAN Member States, through various regional collaborations on skills mobility, recognition, and development for migrant workers.

**WE** further tasked the SLOM, with the support of the ASEAN Committee on Implementation of the ASEAN Declaration on Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers (ACMW), to develop a Checklist as a tool which facilitates the self-assessment of ASEAN Member States' progress in implementing this Declaration.

**ADOPTED** on this Ninth Day of October in the Year Two Thousand and Twenty-Four, in Vientiane, Lao People's Democratic Republic, in a single original copy, in the English Language.