Action Programme 2019 - 2023

Conference Thematic Paper

Building Workers’ Power: Change the Rules
Unity - the Way Forward for an Inclusive, Sustainable Asia-Pacific

Contents

Preamble .................................................................................................................................................. 1
  Embracing a “Global Community” ......................................................................................................... 1
  A Diversified, Peaceful and Secure Asia-Pacific .................................................................................. 1
  Making a Better World .......................................................................................................................... 2

Introduction ............................................................................................................................................. 3
I. Clear and Present Challenges ................................................................................................................ 3
  1. Lack of Labour Governance ............................................................................................................... 3
  2. Far from Realising Rights ................................................................................................................. 3
  3. Expanding Non-standard Forms of Employment and Deficits in Industrial Relations .............. 4
  4. Deregulated Economic Power ........................................................................................................... 5
  5. Multilateralism in Crisis ....................................................................................................................... 5

II. Redefining Objectives .......................................................................................................................... 6
  1. Building and Delivering the Social Contract ................................................................................... 6
  2. Making Social Dialogue Work ......................................................................................................... 7
  3. Enhancing Capacity to Participate in Social Dialogue ...................................................................... 8

III. New and Old Approaches .................................................................................................................. 9
  1. Convergence of National and International Agendas ..................................................................... 9
  2. Combining Campaigning, Advocacy and Organising .................................................................... 10
  3. Capacity Building of National Trade Unions .................................................................................... 10

Areas for Action ........................................................................................................................................ 12
I. Peace, Democracy and Rights ................................................................................................................ 12
  1. Organising: Unite to Promote and Protect Your Rights ................................................................. 12
  2. Workers’ Rights: Continue Our Fight for Inalienable Rights ......................................................... 15
  3. Poverty: Leaving No One Behind ...................................................................................................... 19
  4. Migrant Labour/Domestic Workers: End Khafala and Exit Permit ............................................. 21
  5. Informal Economy: Transition from Informal to Formal Economy .............................................. 24
  6. Peace and Democracy: Prerequisite for Development ................................................................. 28
  7. Modern Day Slavery: Human Trafficking, Forced Labour, Child Labour .................................. 30
  8. Social Protection with Fair Taxation: Building Universal Social Protection for All .................. 33
  9. OHS is Not an Option: Decent OHS Standards for All Workers ................................................ 38
II. Regulating Economic Power ................................................................. 41
   1. Multinationals: Taming Corporate Power ...................................... 41
   2. Economic Integration: Rule Based and Democratic International Economic Order to Benefit All ................................................................. 43
   3. Employment/Labour Market Policies .................................................. 45
   4. Decent Work: Decent Wages and Working Hours for All Workers .......... 47
   5. Income-led Growth: Towards Sustainable and Inclusive Growth .......... 53

III. Global Shift ......................................................................................... 56
   1. Just Transition: No Jobs in the Dead Planet ....................................... 56
   3. Sustainable Development Goals ......................................................... 61

IV. Equality .............................................................................................. 63
   1. Advancing Women’s Rights and Equality for All .................................... 63
   2. More Youth in the Mainstream of Trade Union Movement .................. 65

Annexure I: ITUC-AP Platform of Action for Gender Equality (2019 - 2023) ........ 68
Annexure II: ITUC-AP Youth Charter 2019 - 2023 ......................................... 79

Figures
   1. Union Density and Collective Bargaining Coverage ............................ 14
   2. Countries at Risk in Asia-Pacific ........................................................ 17
   4. SDG Indicator 1.3.1: Percentage of the Total Population covered by at least one Social Protection Benefit (effective coverage), 2015 ......................... 33
   5. Effective Social Protection Coverage, Global and Regional Estimates by Population Group (percentage) .................................................. 34
   6. Social Insurance Coverage Rate by Employment Status in Korea ........... 34
   7. Social Protection Floor ...................................................................... 35
   8. Options to Expand Fiscal Space for Social Protection ............................ 37
   9. Distribution of Work-Related Mortality by UN Geographical Region ....... 39
  10. Number of Trade Agreements Notified to the WTO, by year ................... 44
  12. Labour Income Share (World and Asia, percentage) ............................. 48
  13. Labour Income Share by Country (percentage) ..................................... 48
  14. Working Poverty in Asia and the Pacific, percentage ............................ 49
  15. Mean Weekly Hours Actually Worked, per employed person ................. 50
  16. Share of Employees Working More Than 48 Hours Per Week ................ 51
  17. Excessive Hours of Work (more than 48 hours a week) ......................... 51
  18. Proportion of Workers Working More Than 48 Hours, by employment ....... 52
  19. Working Hours and Income Inequality (37 countries) ............................ 52
  20. World and Asia: Population Weighted Income Inequality, net Gini Index .... 54
  21. Job Shares Servicing Foreign and Domestic Demand, 2015 .................... 55
  22. Natural Disasters and Damages in Asia and the Pacific .......................... 56
  23. Countries with the Most New Displacements by Disasters, 2016 ............. 56
  24. Net Change in Employment in the Climate Mitigation Scenario, 2030 ........ 58
  25. Ratification of Convention No. 144 (out of 187 countries) .................... 60
Tables
1. Total Cost of Universal Social Protection Floors, Cash Benefits by Region .............. 36
A1. Count us in the Trade Union Movement: Performance Indicators ......................... 71
A2. Count us in Leadership: Performance Indicators ................................................. 73
A3. Count us in Economy: Performance Indicators ................................................... 74
A4. Count Everybody in: Performance Indicators ...................................................... 76

Boxes
1. Informal Economy .................................................................................................. 25
2. Formalisation of the Informal Economy ................................................................. 27
3. What is Trafficking? ............................................................................................... 31
4. ILO Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202) ............................ 36
5. Principles on Taxation ............................................................................................ 38
PREAMBLE

Embracing a “Global Community”

Increasingly, global trends influence our daily lives and work. We may feel closer to someone living on the other side of the world than to people close at hand. Due to the development of global supply chains, there are fewer and fewer workplaces which remain disconnected from global corporate trends and overseas economies, while, on the other hand, more people do not have a clear idea of what is meant by the national interest. We live in a “global community,” in which national borders and other boundaries that once separated us no longer hold important significance.

However, it is not that we are living in a homogeneous world with no individuality. Rather, the more seamless the world becomes, the more differences among people are emphasised. That often becomes a reason to exclude other people with different attributes, leading to conflict with those representing contrary views, and causing division within societies. It is a reality that, in the accelerated globalisation process, people are divided between those who feel they have benefited from the globalised economy and those who do not. Anyone would find a world with notable levels of exclusion or confrontation a difficult place to live in.

Therefore, we need to reconcile the contradictory views and concerns of various groups of people; in other words, it is imperative to embrace individuals, groups, societies, countries, regions and ultimately the whole world itself. Only then, while giving thorough consideration to current and past circumstances, can we share the kind of future which will benefit these diverse elements of our new global community.

A global approach is, of course, a part of the heritage of the trade union movement in world history. Trade unions value relationships that extend beyond borders. Global workers’ solidarity provides courage to people during times when the world is facing great difficulties. The trade union movement also sends a message about how important it is to combine people’s strengths, and its way of thinking has gradually come to influence a number of transborder movements in areas such as human rights, peace and the environment.

At present, in both domestic and international politics, the role of trade unions has become more important than ever in efforts to fight against terrorism and exclusion, to build an inclusive and sustainable society, and, in particular, to balance the various interests inherent in this changing world.

A Diversified, Peaceful and Secure Asia-Pacific

While growing ever bigger economically and increasing its presence in the global community, the Asian and Pacific region is one of vast diversity.

The region contains 11 of the world’s 30 richest economies in terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita1, while millions of people still live in extreme poverty, mainly in 13 Least Developed Countries (LDCs)2. China was the world’s fastest-growing major economy until 2015 and is now the world’s second largest economy by nominal GDP. The region is also diverse in terms of politics and political systems, religion, ethnicity, language, culture, demographic shifts, industrial relations and other elements surrounding workers and their trade unions.

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1 Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Hong Kong, Israel, Japan, Korea, Macao, New Zealand, Qatar, Singapore and the UAE.

2 Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, East Timor, Laos, Myanmar, Nepal, Yemen, Kiribati, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. LDCs, according to the United Nations, exhibit the lowest indicators of socioeconomic development, with the lowest Human Development Index.
Tensions, however, continue to threaten the region. An almost continuous series of armed conflicts has afflicted Afghanistan since the 19th century. The peace process in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict remains unfulfilled. While the potential for nuclear weapons to be used remains high, it is of great concern that the Asian and Pacific region is the only region in which annual growth of military expenditure has been continuous since 1988, and the 46 per cent increase between 2009 and 2018 is by far the largest of any region3.

Physical violence and intimidation of workers are still common practices to prevent the establishment of trade unions in the region. Trade unions often become subject to political oppression and the activities and even existence of trade unions are regulated or restricted under national legislation in many countries in the region. Many trade unionists have made the ultimate sacrifice with their life.

The ITUC-AP will continue its efforts to transform diversity into strength, to work towards a peaceful and secure Asia-Pacific and to make the region a better place for workers and their families to live in.

Making a Better World

The history of the trade union movement since its inception has been one of improving the world for the sake of working people. The slogan “Workers of the world, unite!” was emblematic of the ideal which has guided this history. In reality, however, we all have different attributes of class, race, ethnicity, religion and gender, as well as divergent interests and concerns depending on our industry, trade, occupation, form of employment and location. In some cases, conflicts arise between the interests of organised and unorganised workers, or where organisational differences arise between trade unions or even within their ranks. When differences between nationalities are also added to the mix, this creates further structural complexity in these diversities, differences and conflicts.

Even in the midst of such a complicated, unmanageable reality, the trade union movement has ceaselessly continued its efforts to evolve the interest of an individual or a group of individuals to the common good. It is the trade union movement which has made it its goal to make a better world, and it is keenly aware that it cannot succeed unless it continues patiently with steady, honest steps, not being discouraged by adversity. For making a wave which rocks society, the trade union movement is essential.

As determined by the Statement of the 4th World Congress of the ITUC (Copenhagen, Denmark, 2 - 7 December 2018), entitled “Building Workers’ Power: Change the Rules”, if workers and their trade unions do not join together, the world will not improve. That is, if we want to create a better world we want, we have no choice but to be united.

The 4th ITUC - Asia Pacific Regional Conference must examine the concrete steps towards reinforcing the strength and profile of the trade union movement in the region. But it can only provide an instrument, not solutions: it will remain for national trade unions to work out how that instrument can best be used.

Shoya Yoshida
General Secretary

INTRODUCTION

I. CLEAR AND PRESENT CHALLENGES

1. Lack of Labour Governance

The Bali Declaration adopted by the tripartite representatives at the 16th Asia and the Pacific Regional Meeting of the International Labour Organization (ILO) (Bali, Indonesia, 6 - 9 December 2016) clearly identifies the challenges that we are facing within the region, from realising freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining to responding to the impact of technological innovation on workers, closing gender pay gaps, addressing decent work deficits in global supply chains (GSCs) and so on.

Labour is one of the most crucial issues. Therefore, if labour issues can be ameliorated even a little, hope will dawn regarding many other issues. For example, environmental issues cannot be resolved without considering workers who have been using resources in various ways over long periods. Labour issues are seen as a major cause of persistent poverty, discrimination and rising inequality. Wars, conflicts and terrorism have their roots in economic and social deprivation of the toiling masses. Furthermore, artificial intelligence (AI) technologies cannot be designed to be compatible with ideals of human dignity without considering their potential impacts on employment. Labour issues are not only a problem for working people but are also of global importance and affect all people.

The crisis is not that enormous challenges are standing in our way. Although it is well-recognised that labour issues can be best addressed only if all relevant stakeholders – governments, employers and workers and their trade unions – can speak up, discuss and act together, such governance is not guaranteed in many cases. The crisis is that labour governance is not functioning, non-existent or moribund in the Asian and Pacific region. Labour governance, particularly in the form of social dialogue or constructive industrial relations, needs to be improved.

When we speak of labour governance, however, it is not as if a ready-made or correct solution or model has been prepared in advance. To embrace a global community which has complex, divergent interests, a mechanism must be established for cooperation among all stakeholders involved in all situations, whether affected by labour issues directly or indirectly, from workplaces in developing countries to the overall management of GSCs, including the decision-making and implementation processes of local, national and international rules, and the setting and enforcement of policies of corporations, governments and international institutions.

2. Far from Realising Rights

Many countries in the Asian and Pacific region have recently witnessed cases of shrinking democracy for workers with restrictions on freedom of association as well as of speech and assembly and violent attacks on the defenders of workers' rights. About 50 per cent of member countries of the ILO in the region have not ratified the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), while more than one third have failed to endorse the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98). These conditions constitute a serious hindrance to trade unions in organising workers and in turn creating an equal footing with governments and business.

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4 “Constructive industrial relations can only be built on the basis of full recognition and operation of trade unions in compliance with the ILO Core Conventions and common welfare, and in a stable political climate for social partners to operate without fear of reprisal; parties concerned share common interests in labour standards, performance of business, conditions of national economy; industries and labour market and share a principle of fair distribution of output to stakeholders”, adopted by the ITUC-AP 3rd Regional Conference (2015).
The victims of forced labour, which takes many forms, including debt bondage, trafficking and other forms of modern slavery, are usually the most vulnerable members of society – women and girls forced into sex work, migrant workers trapped in debt bondage, indigenous peoples with limited rights, and sweatshop or farm workers restrained by illegal tactics and paid little or nothing.

The Asian and Pacific region is home to more working children than any other in the world, with millions outside the school system. Furthermore, many of the worst forms of child labour are still important concerns, including child trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, bonded child labour, child domestic work, hazardous child labour, and the recruitment and use of children for armed conflict or drug trafficking.

The Asian and Pacific region continues to experience traditional forms of discrimination, such as those based on gender and ethnic origin, and is increasingly confronted with new forms of discrimination brought about by structural economic reforms, economic openness and greater movement of people. Women still remain the largest group facing discrimination in terms of employment opportunities and wage gaps. Equally serious and pervasive is the discrimination experienced by indigenous peoples. The growing number of migrant workers in the region has generated new forms of discrimination, with racism, xenophobia and other kinds of intolerance all reflected in low wages, long and exhausting working hours, and workplace-related violence. Other groups are also at risk of labour exploitation and discrimination at work, including domestic workers, people with disabilities, those with HIV-AIDS and members of the LGBTQI people.

3. Expanding Non-standard Forms of Employment and Deficits in Industrial Relations

More than one billion people are in non-standard forms of employment in the region and more people are involuntarily engaged in precarious employment than ever, i.e., non-regular, part-time, temporary and contract employment, both in developing and industrialised economies in the region. The number of economic migrants has soared, and informality is on the rise. Youth unemployment is persistently high. Women remain disadvantaged in the labour market by a high gender pay gap. These decent work deficits are putting serious downward pressure on wages and other working conditions widening the gap between rich and poor, immobilising the poverty, and forcing a number of people to live hand-to-mouth with no hope for the future.

Furthermore, the digitalisation of the world of work has provided beneficial tools but has also caused uncertainty and anxiety. It is associated with hope for efficiency gains, for new and better ways of working, for fewer physically damaging jobs or less excessive work intensity, for greater independence of workers in choosing where and when they work, and for improved economic conditions. At the same time, there is a risk resulting in job losses, precarious employment practices and limitations of traditional industrial relations.

On the one hand, industrial relations or a system of collective social dialogue and collective bargaining bear deficits largely in developing countries where specifically the informal economy has expanded and is surging. On the other hand, in industrialised countries, significant deregulation in labour markets throughout 1990s and 2000s has caused serious setback of industrial relations in the private sector. While many corporations have given greater importance to relations with individual workers, trade unions are unable to reverse or stem the tide of declining unionisation rates. Further, as they cannot fully meet the needs of individual workers and address changes in the organisation of work and production, there is a growing stratum in society which receives no benefits from collective industrial relations, which in turn pushes them towards a mass protest.
Meanwhile, in public services, outsourcing and privatisation are on the increase. As a result, trade unions themselves are placed in a vulnerable position to perform their function of ensuring fair working conditions for public service workers which are essential to achieving quality service. Structural deficits in industrial relations are becoming an issue common to both developing and industrialised economies.

The reciprocal relationship between industrial relations in developing countries and those in industrialised economies is growing stronger through GSCs. As a result, such deficits in the industrial relations in an outreaching economy does not simply affect industrial relations particularly in overseas operating corporations, but potentially causes a lack of labour governance overall in the host country. However, in many cases, awareness of this crisis on the part of social partners as well as governments and legislatures in outreaching economies remains as low as ever, overshadowed by an issue in another dimension such as the "outflow of jobs".

4. Deregulated Economic Power

Corporations are both driving forces and major beneficiaries of globalisation. They cover the globe with their GSCs and have the power to influence the domestic labour market and national economy. They even exert enormous influence over government mandates and benefit from preferential treatment, such as tax reduction, provision of expropriated land after the forced relocation of inhabitants for alleged development activities and lower environmental standards.

Growth in the financial market through corporate financialisation is making the power of dominant corporations even more significant. As a result, the corporate model has become more short-sighted and given less value to business models oriented towards long-term sustainability which value industrial relations. Furthermore, advancements in globalisation and innovation have facilitated international specialisation in the provision of capital and services, accelerated business speed sharply and shielded corporate behaviour from scrutiny. The rapid development of GSCs has given rise to many blind spots in corporate governance and resulted in a large number of compliance issues which even the corporations themselves cannot cope with.

What has spurred the deregulation of corporate behaviour has been the powerlessness of governments or a decline in public governance. Neo-liberalism – alongside the development of deregulation policies based on it – has stripped rules for corporate behaviour of all substance, especially when it comes to labour. Also, when viewed internationally, the rise of China and India and other newly industrialising economies, as well as trends such as masses of people migrating to seek jobs have promoted the deregulation of economic power.

At the same time, ungoverned corporate behaviour aggravates the subversion of international order or accelerates the loss of limits. The impact all these conditions have had, and continue to have, on labour governance is immense. They have had a particularly severe effect on social partnership or tripartism, which was established during the 20th century.

5. Multilateralism in Crisis

Hopeful signs are beginning to appear. Since the global recession following the bankruptcy of Lehman Brothers in the autumn of 2008, awareness of market limitations has been widely renewed. Since then, increasingly clear instances of poverty and inequality have been witnessed and calls for a policy paradigm shift are spreading beyond national and generational borders. This trend is shared by people in charge of policies at national and international levels, and the policy paradigm is gradually changing in the direction of inclusive growth and decent work. This has been reflected in the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), recent G20 discussions and other
global policy debates where the ITUC, its Regional Organisations and their affiliates actively took part. This is a favourable sign of an emerging paradigm shift of labour policies in the international community. However, the paradigm shift is not being fully applied to the national context.

What is worse is that multilateralism is in a crisis with a growing concern about globalisation. Multilateralism is built on international cooperation which binds individual nation states with the dual goal of preserving nationalism and ensuring fair and equitable sharing of responsibilities on issues requiring a global response. However, the economic dimension – aimed at trade, investment and financial liberalisation – has dominated global policy-making. It has supported a model of growth which has given rise to greater inequality and, in return, a popular backlash against globalisation and current multilateral institutions.

For example, many people are concerned that the increased influx of migrant workers intensifies competition in the labour market and increases public expenditure prompting them to adopt a hostile view of these migrant workers and globalisation itself, premised on an absurd thought: “My own income decreases, or my job is lost because of them.” Such views in turn fuel racism and xenophobia. This trend is in the opposite direction of values which trade unions promote, such as democracy, equality, tolerance, justice and solidarity.

It is urgently important to rebuild multilateralism such that benefits of the globalised economy are fairly distributed and income inequality is minimised. To this end, we must strengthen labour governance by comprehending the views of working people more accurately and reflecting them in public policies and programmes and transform the signs of an emerging policy paradigm shift into a steady stream.

II. REDEFINING OBJECTIVES
1. Building and Delivering the Social Contract
Different groups of people with differing interests constitute our global community. This is why we need to continue working towards a common value or social justice which embraces all the differing interests and enables everyone to join with anyone else, but not to submit to anyone else.

Trade unions are always striving to achieve social justice and fight injustice. The meaning of social justice differs depending on time and place. Nevertheless, in any age and place, people never stop speaking out against “things that are not right”. Working people speak out about various issues when they have dissatisfaction with their work or lives, and they appeal to society with whatever strength they have or methods available to them in, seeking out justice. Even if they meet great difficulties, society slowly begins to resonate with their demands, causing the nation or corporation to take action. As long as there are people who think about what form of society would be desirable and consider it important to work ceaselessly towards the realisation of such a society, the labour movement must provide a place for these people. Lending an ear to working people’s concerns, holding discussions with people who have different ideas, sharing problems and considering better policies for solving problems together with various stakeholders are the purposes of the labour movement.

The 4th ITUC World Congress commits the ITUC to strive for social justice with a new social contract and emphasises that the SDGs provide an opportunity to advance goals which are crucial to the trade union movement.

The Global Commission of the Future of Work of the ILO also urges that governments as well as workers’ and employers’ organisations need to reinvigorate the social
contract which guarantees to working people a just share of economic growth, respect for their rights and protection against risk in return for their continuing contribution to the economy⁵.

It is time to develop a social contract to realise the future of work we want and to ensure:

- All businesses, including e-market places and on-demand and cloud platforms, must respect human rights, especially freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining. They must carry out due diligence⁶, with mechanisms to remedy grievances, to avoid infringement of the human rights of others and to address adverse human rights impacts throughout their GSCs.

- Governments must fulfil their responsibilities to establish a Universal Labour Guarantee by ensuring that fundamental workers’ rights are fully respected, setting Minimum Living Wages as upheld by the ILO Declaration of Philadelphia, ensuring adequate social protection and working hours regulation, and introducing, preserving and expanding universal quality public services. They must also commit themselves to developing a new model to address the digitalisation of business and new forms of trade in goods and services which are not accounted for in the current trading system, so as to provide adequate protection to workers who are potentially affected and to impose tax on businesses with a view to strengthening redistribution mechanisms.

- Trade unions must play a central role as communities of workers and their families to make democracy better control the market, thereby maximising the happiness of individuals. They must to this end be fully equipped and prepared to participate as effective and responsible stakeholders in the process of developing a new social contract based on a fair labour market policy and changing rules for sustainable and inclusive growth.

Trade unions at all levels must use the SDGs and the ILO’s Future of Work initiative, including the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work (2019), as lobbying tools towards national governments and international organisations, including multilateral development banks. For that purpose, the ITUC-AP will support its member organisations in effectively participating in national dialogues; and together with the ILO, we call for a Universal Labour Guarantee including fundamental workers’ rights, an adequate level of minimum living wages, limits on working hours and safe and healthy workplaces.

2. Making Social Dialogue Work

For trade unions to effectively and steadily address labour issues towards the realisation of social justice, labour governance needs to be rebuilt by making social dialogue work.

The ITUC-AP adopted, in its 3rd Regional Conference (Kochi, India, 1 - 3 August 2015), a resolution on Constructive Industrial Relations. Constructive Industrial Relations, based on full compliance with the ILO Conventions Nos. 87 and 98, provide management and trade unions with a mechanism to coordinate their differing interests by sharing, from different standpoints, concerns about corporate performance and wages and other working conditions, as well as the economic outlook, the labour market

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⁶ UN Guiding Principle on Business and Human Rights (2011) and OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Business Conduct (2018) recommend that business carry out due diligence. The purpose of due diligence is first and foremost to avoid causing or contributing to adverse impacts on people, the environment and society, and to seek to prevent adverse impacts directly linked to operations, products or services through business relationships. When involvement in adverse impacts cannot be avoided, due diligence should enable enterprises to mitigate them, prevent their recurrence and, where relevant, remediate them.
situation and other macro factors. They support business sustainability and improve the welfare of workers and their families and the economy as a whole.

While there are corporations exercising exploitative operations throughout their GSCs, mainly in developing countries, some or many others are applying social dialogue in their corporate governance. They cooperate with trade unions to improve their business and share the profits with all relevant stakeholders and use social dialogue as a wellspring for their competitiveness and brand power. Moreover, people anticipate further growth in such corporations so as to contribute to building more stable societies and economies.

Constructive Industrial Relations are not merely a mechanism between management and trade unions. They can develop into a new type of social dialogue for trade unions to share common interests, establish mutual trust and work together, not only with management, but also with communities and other relevant stakeholders in order to bring about benefit for subcontractors and their workers, consumers and – through quality public services – children, students, the aged and the disabled, and to address global issues such as climate change. They are social capital that unites people together for stable economies and sustainable societies.

We must remain in pursuit of Constructive Industrial Relations in the region to make social dialogue work in reality at all levels. We must therefore first create a stable political climate for social partners to operate without fear of reprisal on the basis of the full recognition of trade unions in compliance with the ILO Core Conventions, promoting the concept of Constructive Industrial Relations in regional and international organisations, economic, trade and investment agreements and other inter-governmental forums. Together with the ILO, we call for “public policies that promote collective representation and social dialogues”.

3. Enhancing Capacity to Participate in Social Dialogue
Social dialogue functions effectively only when trade unions are equipped with the capability to participate effectively in labour governance and to develop this capability through real experiences.

Labour governance in a global community acts effectively to bind international systems with national systems in an organic manner. Thus, what is sought by trade unions when undertaking social dialogue is an understanding of national systems, including historical and cultural backgrounds of the labour issues concerned, and the knowledge of and ability to influence the framework which mutually binds national and international systems, such as trade, investment, finance and development policies. Above all, what is required is the will to proceed with steady efforts towards the improvement of issues.

In maximising their effectiveness and influence in labour governance, trade unions must meet their fundamental requirements of being united, representative, democratic and independent.

- Firstly, representativeness can be certified by increasing the level of paying membership. This requires continuing efforts to organise relatively stable workforces and new challenges to reach those who are traditionally difficult to organise, including workers engaged in non-regular employment, particularly in more networked and mobile production and services, the informal economy as well as women, youth and migrant workers;

- Secondly, trade unions must adopt, on the basis of membership, democratic procedures to determine their policies and programmes. They must develop effective

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structures to democratically represent the voices of members in different workplaces, communities and industries, as well as workers at large;

- Finally, trade unions must be independent of the domination or control of any business or political force so as to freely represent workers’ voices, make their own decisions and act accordingly. Trade unions usually mobilize political power by cooperating with particular political parties which share common interests in realizing legislations according to their own preferences. But they must remain, no matter which parties come to power, engaged in effective consultation as responsible stakeholders in the process of determining public policies in order to ensure the sustainable development of the country and the fair distribution of its fruits.

The ITUC-AP will assist in enhancing the growth and strength of democratic and independent trade unions in building workers’ power. In this connection, the ITUC-AP also pursues a constructive engagement policy with non-ITUC organisations, consistent with our values and principles, to reinforce the presence of the ITUC trade unionism in the region and globally.

III. NEW AND OLD APPROACHES

1. Convergence of National and International Agendas

Globalisation requires the convergence of national and international trade union agendas. While only a few or even no businesses are unaffected by overseas or global standards and trends, there is a limit on how far industrial relations at the enterprise, industrial and national levels can address global issues. However, it is a reality that many national trade unions are preoccupied with domestic issues and often relegate global issues to a subsidiary agenda. In particular, the gap is significant when compared to the strength of business to address various international issues within the context of the domestic agenda.

The gap between national and international trade union agendas must be closed by establishing mutual relations. National trade unions must identify how their national priorities – including getting worker-friendly legislations adopted and organising workers in GSCs – can be advanced effectively by a responsive international trade union movement. International trade union organisations must develop their work with such a perspective in mind; as a result, national trade unions will have a stronger sense of ownership of the international trade union movement and actively engage in global action.

As an organic part of the ITUC, the ITUC-AP must achieve this mutuality by determining its policies and action in a way to be more responsive in addressing national needs and priorities and better able to bring resources and effort to bear promptly where they are most needed through more efficient and effective discussions involving its Governing Bodies, as well as of its Women’s and Youth Committees. It will also pursue better information communication methodologies, and through strengthened cooperation with GUFs, the Trade Union Advisory Committee to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD-TUAC) and the trade union solidarity support organisations (TUSSOs).

Cooperation and coordination with the ILO must be strengthened with a view to grasping country-level situations in a timelier manner, especially through its country offices, and initiating dialogues with governments of challenging countries, for example through its supervisory mechanisms and Decent Work Country Programmes.
2. Combining Campaigning, Advocacy and Organising

Trade union campaigning, as an organised course of action to achieve a goal, is an effective means, for example, to increase public awareness about unacceptable behaviour of businesses in general and of specific corporations. We must continue efforts to lead campaigning in order to make a real difference to the current rules through advocacy work at international organisations and inter-governmental and/or regional institutions.

The ITUC-AP is currently engaged in the ITUC’s advocacy work at the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) and other institutions, and in the work of the OECD-TUAC. It is developing its own advocacy work at the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and elsewhere. It also supports the ASEAN Trade Union Council (ASEAN TUC) and the South Asian Regional Trade Union Council (SARTUC) in addressing issues related to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). These advocacy efforts are mainly aimed at strengthening strong social dimensions of economic integration.

Some have argued that we give undeserved legitimacy to these institutions and that the limited progress we have achieved does not justify the efforts and resources we have devoted to this work. But, if we ceased to engage in this work, workers’ voices would never be heard at either national or international levels. We will continue this work ceaselessly and steadily in closer cooperation with international and sub-regional trade union organisations, while reviewing the feasibility of initiating social dialogue with these institutions.

In strengthening our advocacy activities, we must also work to intensify the role of the ILO in order to ensure coherence of international policies in favour of social justice. The ITUC-AP will further strengthen concrete cooperation with the ILO at global, regional and national levels for realising fundamental principles and rights at work, and increasing the ratifications and the application of fundamental labour standards, particularly the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87) and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98), including a policy environment which enables the realisation of these rights.

Campaigning and advocacy in defending trade union rights and influencing the policy of governments and intergovernmental institutions must be complemented by a new initiative to provide support in the organising and collective bargaining issues which are the core of national trade union activity. The Global Union Federations (GUFs) have primary responsibility in dealing with individual corporations in specific sectors and provide direct services in the international dimension of organising. The international framework agreements made by the GUFs and various multinationals are useful tools if they are complied with in letter and spirit.

The ITUC-AP will primarily continue its efforts in creating a stable political climate by advocating the respect of workers’ rights to national governments through effective use of the ILO supervisory mechanisms, labour provisions in trade agreements and the labour safeguard policies of International Financial Institutions (IFIs). It will also strengthen regional-level cooperation with the GUFs in assisting national trade unions to establish dialogue with and organise workers of individual multinational corporations while participating in high profile global organising campaigns of the ITUC and the GUFs.

3. Capacity Building of National Trade Unions

The role of national trade unions is crucial to changing the rules which affect the daily lives and work of workers. The ITUC-AP will continue to provide opportunities through its
member organisations for national trade unions in order to develop their capacity to organise workers, conduct collective bargaining effectively, and participate in establishing and implementing processes of economic, social and labour policies, including on minimum wages, labour migrations, social safety nets and taxation. We will do this in better coordination with each member organisation to identify particular needs and priorities.

At the same time, the ITUC-AP will strengthen its effort to create a stronger sense of unity among its member organisations.

For that, we must first focus on the target of “Building Workers’ Power” and make this a resolution within the region, while entrusting decisions on methods and approaches necessary to realise the resolution to trade unions in various countries, sectors and occupations. While some unions will focus on organising the unorganised, others will prioritise political campaigns with a view to having worker-friendly legislation passed by the legislature or forming an alliance with civil society organisations to advocate on wider issues relevant to workers and their families.

However, under the slogan of “Building Workers’ Power”, they will all experience the process of hearing workers’ voices unerringly, leading them to decisions made through democratic procedures and conveying them effectively to employers, governments and society as a whole. By sharing these efforts throughout the whole region, improving together by encouraging each other, and providing feedback jointly on each other’s efforts, we can bring coherence among various efforts made by trade unions in different countries, sectors, occupations and others.

The result will be that trade unions in the Asian and Pacific region will share a stronger sense of solidarity with other organisations and movements along with other stakeholders in jointly making efforts in the same direction, acknowledge each other’s existence, and through doing so, develop self-esteem for themselves and pride in participating in the trade union movement in the region. The ITUC-AP will initiate this sort of chemical reaction aimed at creating a broader trade union unity nationally and regionally.

Unity - the Way Forward. Let us march forward unitedly for ushering in changes we want and a better, inclusive world.
AREAS FOR ACTION

I. PEACE, DEMOCRACY AND RIGHTS

1. Organising: Unite to Promote and Protect Your Rights

No substitute for genuine independent trade unions. Organising all working people in to free and democratic trade unions is the most important challenge facing the trade unions in all countries today. Organising and recruiting are the key to our future and the means to very survival. Mobilising workers’ power involves taking the collective strength of workers who have little voice or say in their workplace and organising them to the point where they are not only union members but understand what being a unionist is all about.

A survey commissioned by the ITUC at the time of the previous Congress threw light on the dismal picture of the state of organising in the world. Only 7 per cent of the working people are members in any democratic independent trade union. We are also concerned at the increasing phenomenon of declining union membership. In the region few unions have more than 10 per cent of the workers under their organisation. This declining trend continues unabated.

The organised trade union movement, that is the ITUC, is the largest democratic force in the world. It has presence in all continents and territories. It brings together working people of all races, religious faiths and levels of development to be their collective voice. Similarly, the Asia-Pacific regional organisation represents overwhelming majority of organised working people in the region. But still we must acknowledge that only a small percentage of workers are organised.

A union is strong because of the toiling masses behind it. Its effectiveness solely depends on the unity and active participation of members. Workers all over the world in various industries, enterprises and all economic activities join unions to defend and promote their working and living conditions. Thereby give practical meaning to the concept of solidarity and create their own means of action to achieve dignity and justice at work and in society at large. Only by mobilising and recruiting the unorganised and constantly striving to build strong representative unions can the achievements won by the movement for our members and for all working women and men be secured and the standing in the society asserted. Organising and recruiting is, therefore, the fundamental activities of all trade unions. Without significant membership many unions lack the argument of their strength. Where union membership is low, even declining or divided, then even their very right to represent working people is called into question.

Organising essentially means recruiting members. It is the job of the union to mobilise workers as trade union members through organisation, education and action. We are to create union strength, discipline and self-confidence among groups of disunited, and therefore vulnerable, and to establish a workplace network that can communicate effectively. But because of the different nature of problems, working conditions, values, etc., organising strategies, tactics and actions vary from region to region, country to country, area to area and even enterprise to enterprise.

Contrary to propaganda by vested interests and even media in some cases, trade unions are not for establishing islands of prosperity for the “privileged”. Unions are fighting for emancipation of working people by ensuring humane conditions. Unions depend on the collective strength of the workers overcoming individual weaknesses to protect them from the power of employers. Union promotes hope over fear, fights for dignity over oppression and believes in standing up together for fairness. Free trade unions are essential parts of all truly civil and democratic societies. The unions fight for their immediate needs – work, income, working conditions, social safety nets and thereby eliminate the means of exploitation.
The main causes of this decline are the loss of jobs in the formal sector and the absence of unions in newly created jobs. Then, there is the growing informal economy which does not provide a conducive atmosphere to encourage organising. Globalisation and resultant privatisation have also caused decreasing membership. Growing contractualisation, irregular/ataypical job arrangements and increasing small and medium enterprises are all hostile to the unions. For young people, their first entry into the job market invariably will be non-union job.

The impact of globalisation is evident to trade unions in all countries and all sectors. Increasing integration of national economies in a single global market and the appearance of a new world production system are bringing about a convergence of national and international agendas. Trade unions face the double challenge of representing workers effectively in the rapidly changing conditions of the global economy, and of bringing about fundamental changes in the working of globalisation so that it distributes its benefits more fairly and contributes to socially just and sustainable development.

Governments are turning increasingly intolerant of trade unions. To give credibility to their intolerance, they bring in the argument of “union versus development”. Many countries where well established industrial relations systems have withstood the test of the time are under attack to dilute or deny fundamental workers’ rights to organise and bargain collectively. Several countries have abolished the right to strike or make it severely conditional. By naming several industries “essential services”, large segments of workers are excluded from enjoying the right to strike and even their right to organise and collective bargaining (Figure 1).

In many cases, declining membership is attributed to the hostility of governments or employers, often engaging in vicious union-busting campaigns to prevent workers, including in the public sector, from exercising their fundamental human rights, that is freedom of association. Labour laws in countries do not guarantee unbridled right to join or form unions. Many categories of employment like informal economy, migrant workers and export processing zones (EPZs) are normally “non-union”. One of the incentives offered to foreign investors is guarantee of no union.

Collective bargaining is the means through which unions achieve better conditions for their members. Through collective bargaining, unions achieve higher income, reduce inequality, strengthen job security and protect the workers from the arbitrary power of the employers. Income re-distribution is one of the main results of collective bargaining. Unfortunately, the percentage of workers who are covered by collective bargaining is only 6 - 8 per cent.

There are many countries which have failed to ratify the fundamental ILO Conventions No. 87 and No. 98 on Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining. Convention No. 87 has been ratified only by 18 countries and No. 98 by 21 countries. Even in those countries that have ratified these conventions, they are not implemented effectively. The ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy as well as OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises (MNEs) stipulate observance of freedom of association and collective bargaining. But these covenants have no power to enforce workers’ rights in MNEs.

Therefore, unions face several obstacles to stem the tide of declining membership in bringing more and more workers in to trade union fold. Unions will have to face violation of trade union rights by governments and employers, international economic competition, technological change, new forms of business organisation and employment relationship, and increased job insecurity. Workers hesitate to join unions or form unions.
for fear of losing their job, their ability to earn a living. To overcome these obstacles, unions need to reset their priorities and devote increased resources to organising.

Figure 1: Union Density and Collective Bargaining Coverage

Often, traditional means for recruitment are no longer adequate and more effective strategies are required based on research and understanding of specific employers and groups of workers, as well as how to win the first and all-important collective agreement. Through greater cooperation and joint efforts, the use of more efficient tools and techniques, and better targeting and strategic planning, trade unions must make smart use of organising resources and create an organising culture throughout the world of work. Workers face many risks when they try to organise themselves and unions must be ready to defend them by a variety of means, including international pressure and community support.

There is no substitute for trade unions. Civil society organisations (CSOs), faith-based organisations, unions sponsored by employers and other interested groups, and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives cannot assume the role of
democratically set up independent organisation of workers. Joint organising efforts, union mergers and stronger inter-union procedures for avoidance of wasteful competition for union membership can help to focus scarce resources effectively. Recruiting more union members where unions are already recognised by the employer, organising workers in other subsidiaries, sub-contractors or the competitors of already organised employer or retaining the union membership of workers who changed job and employer are some of the most effective means of increasing union membership. Hence, organising should be wide and deep.

Top priority in all areas of its work should be accorded to supporting the organising activities and capacities of trade unions including recruitment, obtaining recognition and the conclusion or strengthening of collective agreements, resulting in the strengthening of trade unions as mass organisations. Unions should launch targeted organising campaigns aimed at women, youth, migrant labour and other sectors, specifically informal and atypical workforce, who are not organised. We will continue our campaign to achieve an institutional and political environment conducive to freedom of association and right to collective bargaining both in the private and public sectors. We will continue to support our affiliates in their intensified organising campaigns.

**Proposed Actions:**
- Continue to accord top priority to organising;
- Intensive campaign to ratify relevant ILO Conventions;
- Organise training programmes for women organisers;
- Assist affiliates to organise digital and corporate organising training;
- Organise sub-regional trainings on organising;
- Targeted organising campaigns aimed at informal/atypical workers, migrant labour, EPZs, women and youth;
- Along with the ITUC and the GUFs, concerted organising campaigns in supply chains, unorganised sectors within organised enterprises;
- Active involvement in the internationally coordinated and strategically targeted organising initiatives;
- Participate in and support the ITUC Organising Academy;
- Continue to work for preventing fragmentation of trade union movement and encourage all initiatives for greater trade union unity;
- Intensive organising campaign to achieve targeted 20 per cent increase in membership during the next Regional Conference period; and
- The results of organising must be properly reviewed by presenting the numbers of new members.

2. **Workers’ Rights: Continue Our Fight for Inalienable Rights**

Protection and promotion of workers’ rights are the sine qua non for trade union movement. As the sole representative global organisation of workers and its regional organisation, our paramount task is defending and promoting workers’ rights. The Founding Conference of the ITUC-AP has mandated us to the noble task of promoting social justice, democracy and peace through ensuring the conditions for the enjoyment of universal human rights and effective representation of working women and men in the region. Our fundamental areas of trade union action are tackling poverty, exploitation, discrimination, oppression and inequality, and of course workers’ rights. We should continue our efforts to build a strong, united trade union movement for voicing against oppression and denial and violation of workers’ rights everywhere, especially in the Asia-Pacific region.
Fundamental areas of workers’ rights are freedom of association and collective bargaining. All working people should have the right to organise, irrespective of the nature of work, nature of employer, location or types of wage structure. Hence, our determination to expose and denounce all cases of violation of workers’ rights, wherever they occur.

We are alarmed that the situation is getting worse in the region and in various countries. There is increasing incidence of blatant violation of trade unions rights in almost every country in the region, for that matter throughout the world. Workers space in the globalised world is shrinking paving way for increasing clout of corporations. According to the ITUC Global Rights Index, attacks and restrictions on workers’ rights, free speech and protests are on the rise and so also increasingly violent attacks on the defenders of workers’ rights. Decent work and democratic rights is witnessing a race to bottom and inequality is widening within countries and between countries.

In China, activists and labour activities are regularly detained. Some organisations sponsored by the government, ruling party or employer masquerade as trade unions. In Iran any independent unionism is barred, and activists may end up before kangaroo courts to face severe punishments including death penalty.

Democracy and workers’ rights go hand in hand. But in many countries’ democracy is paving way for dictatorial regimes. Even democratically elected governments are inclining towards authoritarianism. In turn these tendencies have led to increasing attacks on trade union rights. Physical attacks on trade unions are on the increase. Several thousand labour activities are jailed in various countries for legitimate trade union activities. Victimisation, dismissal, demotion and transfer are quite common. Some of them had to pay the ultimate price with their life for their struggle for improving the working and living conditions of fellow workers. Many people “disappear” indefinitely. Perpetrators of violence against unionists go scot-free. Industrial disputes are responded not by across the table negotiations, but by engaging muscle men, street goons and even police and army by the employers and governments.

The record of ratification of ILO conventions enshrined is rather dismal. It is more dismal in case of core labour standards. In the Asian and Pacific region, Convention No. 87 on Freedom of Association is ratified only by 18 countries and Convention No. 98 on Right to Organise and Bargain Collectively only by 21 countries. Workers covered by collective bargaining agreements are less than 5 per cent in many countries. Report on implementation is still worse with many countries that have ratified these conventions have failed to implement them effectively. Many countries do not have labour laws in conformity with the ILO conventions. Even if they have labour laws they are observed more in breach than in compliance. Moreover, where labour laws exist they exclude many categories of workers like informal economy, atypical/irregular workers, migrant labour, domestic workers, EPZs, etc. These categories of the workers constitute majority of working people in the developing parts of our region.

The 2018 ITUC Global Rights Index has identified ten worst countries for workers (Figure 2). They are: Algeria, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Colombia, Egypt, Guatemala, Kazakhstan, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia and Turkey. Middle East and North Africa (MENA) remains the world’s worst region when it comes to fundamental rights at work. Millions of migrant workers in Saudi Arabia are trapped in modern slavery under the Khafala system.

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9 ILO
10 2018 ITUC Global Rights Index
According to the Rights Index, 65 per cent of countries exclude workers from the right to establish or join a trade union. 87 per cent of countries have violated the right to strike. 81 per cent of countries have violated the right to collective bargaining. 86 per cent of countries exclude many categories of workers from the labour law. Countries where workers are arrested and detained increased from 44 in 2017 to 59 countries in 2018. During that period trade unionists were murdered in 9 countries. Freedom of speech constraint rose to 54 countries.

The Philippines’ elected autocracy showed the fragility of peace and democracy and introduced several anti-worker measures and workers still struggled to assert their basic right to associate freely and faced the violent opposition of employers. In India, there was rise in repression and oppression of trade unions. The existing 152 central labour legislations are being condensed into 5 labour codes removing several pro-labour aspects of the present laws. Our affiliate, the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC), was excluded from participating in any dialogue meetings including the ILO Conferences and events on some frivolous charges.

**Figure 2: Countries at Risk in Asia-Pacific**

There were numerous cases where workers exercising their right to strike were summarily dismissed: In Indonesia, where 4,200 mineworkers at Grasberg mine were laid off for taking strike action; in Myanmar where 184 union activists were made redundant due to alleged “drop in order”; and in Cambodia, where 588 workers were fired after a strike in the garment sector. Several activists and trade union leaders were
in jail for their labour activism. In Korea, after international calls for his release, Han Sang-gyun, leader of the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU), was granted parole on 21 May 2018 from his three-year jail term for organising the People’s Mass Mobilisation on 14 November 2015 against the repressive labour law changes of the former government.

Only through democratically elected free independent and strong unions can we protect and promote workers’ rights and improve working and living conditions. Free and independent trade unions can only exist in a climate free of violence, pressure, intimidation, fear and threats of any kind, where fundamental human rights are respected. These factors do not offer a conducive atmosphere to exercise the right to organise and bargain collectively and prevent unions from presenting the interests of working people. Factors inhibiting free functioning of trade unions include prior approval for holding meetings, prohibition on participation in the political process, etc.

Re-distribution of national wealth through collective bargaining not only ensures fair distribution but also plays a significant role in reducing inequality. Income inequality is on the rise. The impact of various factors originating from globalisation have led to increasing informality and precarious work causing declining share of labour in the national wealth and fattening the coffers of corporations. This is the root cause of increasing inequality. Strong unions and high collective bargaining coverage help reduce wage inequality and produce fairer distribution of income. Hence, the importance of freedom of association and collective bargaining in reducing income inequality.

The ITUC-AP will continue to promote trade union actions and objectives based on solidarity and focus on fundamental workers’ rights and ensure they are respected everywhere. Workers’ rights manifest in freedom of association and the right to bargain collectively constitute the essential base for the trade union struggle for social justice.

Proposed Actions:

- Intensive campaign for labour law reforms to allow universal unrestricted right to organise and bargain collectively in compliance with the ILO Conventions No. 87 and No. 98 irrespective of the ownership, nature, size, composition of workforce, employment status and location of workplace;
- Assist affiliates in capacity building to address the deficiencies in labour legislations;
- Monitor and act appropriately to oppose cases of violation of workers’ fundamental rights and mobilise solidarity to strengthen such efforts;
- Vigorous campaign for release of imprisoned workers in countries in the region;
- Campaign to achieve right to organise and collective bargaining for workers who are hitherto denied such rights like informal economy, EPZs, supply chains, migrant labour etc.;
- Work with the ITUC to use the ILO mechanisms to present complaints to the ILO Committee of Experts on Freedom of Association and Committee on Application of Standards and follow up;
- Encourage and support establishment of independent democratic trade unions in countries wherever they do not exist;
- Make effective use of all available means including the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises and to implement Framework Agreements with multinationals to ensure adherence to the ILO Core Labour Standards;
- Organise regional events to analyse trade union situations in the region and to familiarise about the international instruments like the ILO Tripartite
Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy and the OECD Guidelines on Multinational Enterprises;

- To continue to support the ITUC-AP Human and Trade Union Rights Network;

- To pursue a constructive engagement policy with non-ITUC organisations, consistent with our values and principles, to reinforce the presence in the region.

3. **Poverty: Leaving No One Behind**

The Asian and Pacific region has achieved remarkable progress in recent decades. Some of the countries are registering impressive growth rates. Despite this, it is home to nearly half of the world’s poorest people making poverty eradication the most important agenda to be addressed. According to the World Bank’s report in 2016, of the 766 million extremely poor who live below the poverty line of US$1.90 a day, about 33 per cent are living in South Asia. Later reports indicate that 896 million people lived in extreme poverty – double that in near poverty. In most countries, benefits of economic growth have mainly gone to urban sectors pushing vast rural areas under the poverty line. While the decline in poverty in several countries was impressive, many countries including the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing states, remain the poorest and vulnerable countries in the region. This calls for remoulding the development strategies to match the specific development challenges of those countries since their economic structure and resource endowments are different, and they have particular geographic and other constraints. For a significant number of people in the developing countries, life is truly bleak, characterised by hunger, poverty, disease and deprivation.

Extreme poverty or absolute poverty is defined as “severe deprivation of basic human needs”\[11\]. In 2015, global poverty line is set at US$1.90 by the World Bank. While the people living in extreme poverty declined to 10.3 per cent of the total population in the Asia-Pacific region, in the case of least developed countries, the proportion of people living in extreme poverty was still 14.7 per cent for the period 2010 - 2013. The Millennium Development Goals (2001 - 2015) showed the role of economic growth and pro-poor social development policies in eradicating poverty, though the emphasis on high economic growth not accompanied by employment creation had some adverse impacts increasing economic and social inequalities. But the reality is that several countries continue to have high poverty incidence. While at the global level, extreme poverty is found in Sub-Saharan Africa; in our region, it is South Asia where there is grinding poverty. According to latest estimates, in 2012, South Asia had 309 million people in extreme poverty.

The UN Sustainable Development Goal 1 of the 2030 Agenda calls for an end to poverty in all forms and in all regions of the world. It underlines the right to social security which is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It also calls for everyone, particularly the poor, to have equal rights and ownership of productive resources, as well as access to basic services. Although all the definitions of poverty are income-based poverty measurements, it is important to state that poverty is multidimensional. It covers a whole range of other issues besides the incomes of the poor. It relates to the basic needs such as access to food, shelter, drinking water, education or health, and extends to the enjoyment of basic human rights such as non-discrimination, freedom from forced labour and the right to organise.

Similarly, the Programme for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011 - 2020 (Istanbul Programme of Action) is designed to address the least developed

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\[11\] World Bank
countries’ specific needs and to help them eradicate poverty and hunger to improve their peoples’ standard of living.

Another important cause of poverty is the denial of the right to social security enshrined in article 22 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The lack of adequate levels of social protection is associated with high and chronic poverty, insufficient investment in human capital and weak automatic stabilisers of aggressive demand in case of economic crises. According to ILO estimates in 2012, only 27 per cent of the world’s working-age population and their families had access to comprehensive social security systems. This means that 73 per cent of the world’s population or some 5.2 billion people do not enjoy access to comprehensive social protection – they are covered only partially or not at all.

The SDG 2030 Agenda aims at reduction of at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions. To achieve this, there is need for implementing nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030, achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable. It urges ensuring all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial resources, including microfinance.

Inclusive growth should be the driver of poverty reduction in the Asia-Pacific region. Economic growth is or should be closely associated with poverty reduction. But with rising inequality, growth has become less inclusive over the years and losing efficacy in reducing poverty and promoting employment. Thus, poverty elasticity of growth is declining. Promoting inclusive growth is therefore essential. Encouraging growth that generates productive employment of the poor is done through promoting rural and agricultural growth, which reduces poverty in rural areas where poor mainly reside, and promoting structural change of economy towards productive employment in secondary and tertiary sectors.

To act proactively, governments must have larger access to resources that is through better revenue generation efforts. Resources must be spent inclusively with budgets focused on outcomes and by prioritising human development which is not sufficiently prioritised in Asia. Employment generation programmes like the MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) in India has had major poverty impact but better targeting is necessary. Basic infrastructure construction like rural roads and electrification reduces poverty directly by creating employment and indirectly through growth. Uncertain employment generation makes it necessary to provide income guarantees. Existing employment generation and anti-poverty programmes confront severe targeting failures and suffer from implementation problems.

Income guarantee schemes, introduced as poverty eradication measures, should not cause disincentives to work. They require developing reliable system of delivery of benefits. There is need for improving efficiency of public services for the poor. Efficiency is closely related to outcomes. Improving efficiency requires improving capacities at all levels, strong accountability, responsiveness and anti-graft systems. Full involvement and participation of beneficiaries is crucial for the success of the anti-poverty schemes.

Due to demographic changes, several countries face adverse changes in dependency ratio. Affordable health care and adequate pensions are needed in these countries to prevent aged from reverting to poverty. Demographic dividend is likely in respect of reduction/eradication of poverty but could become a threat if it leads to increasing
numbers of unemployed youth. Migration can certainly contribute to reducing poverty in the origin countries.

Another important target is to build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters. Employment generating high economic growth supported by income-generating activities for the poor and vulnerable groups is required for lifting millions out of the poverty trap. Governments should ensure significant mobilisation of resources from a variety of sources, including through enhanced development cooperation, to provide adequate and predictable means for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, to implement programmes and policies to end poverty in all its dimensions.

Proposed Actions:

- Campaign for poverty eradication to be on the top of the agenda on any platform for social dialogue;
- Campaign for inclusion of trade unions in the development, implementation and evaluation of any policy and programme for eradication of poverty; and
- Campaign for a national minimum living wage as upheld in the ILO Philadelphia Declaration (1944).

4. Migrant Labour/Domestic Workers: End Khafala and Exit Permit

There are over 258 million migrants around the world living outside their country of birth. The figure is expected to grow. There are several reasons including population growth, poverty and economic backwardness, alarming spiralling unemployment, rising inequality within and between countries, increasing connectivity, trade, demographic imbalances and climate change. With more than 250 million unemployed and underemployed in the world, there would be no let-up in increasing migration. Their search for a decent work pushes them to foreign shores. Migration provides immense opportunity and benefits – for the migrants, host countries and communities.

It is now recognised that migrant workers face undue hardships and abuse in the form of low wages, poor working conditions, denial of freedom of association and collective bargaining, virtual absence of social protection, discrimination, racism and xenophobia, as well as social exclusion. Too often they are used as cheap labour. Migration is a labour issue. It is about the movement of workers crossing borders to find employment and decent work, it is about equal treatment of these workers, about their conditions and their rights. Racism and xenophobia pose a real danger to the migrants in many countries. Migrants face physical attacks and abuse from votaries of racism.

Though women constitute nearly half of the international migration, they experience more disadvantages and discrimination at all stages of the migration process. Majority of them leave their home countries to work as domestic workers to pursue greener pastures overseas where they end up facing poor conditions, labour exploitation, neglect of their human rights and even gender-based violence. Besides the normal “woman jobs” like medical care, care sector and domestic work, women are engaged in large numbers in other sectors as well. Engagement of women is cheaper than men and coincides with the shift from manufacturing to service economies. It is high time there is recognition of the fact that female migrant workers also make significant economic and social contributions to national economies in both countries of origin and destination. While better paid jobs are the prerogatives of male workers, female migrants are left with lesser paid insecure jobs. Therefore, governments need to provide greater opportunities for these workers to maximise the social and economic gains from the migratory process.
Migrant domestic workers are in the worst position. Poor wages, long working hours, no social protection, no representative organisation and sexual harassment all lead to their exploitation and neglect. The adoption of ILO Convention No. 189 for domestic workers has not yet helped in improving their lot.

Migrant workers in most countries in the region are denied the right to join or form trade unions. Even in countries which allow freedom of association for the migrants, migrant workers can join only existing unions and not to form their own unions. In cases where they can be union members they cannot hold office in the union. In a country like Kuwait where the foreign workers constitute more than 80 per cent of the workforce, the workers must have resided in the country for at least five years and must obtain a certificate of “moral standing and good conduct” before they can join trade unions as non-voting members.

Migrant workers are normally offered dangerous, dirty and degenerating jobs. Safe working conditions have been a casualty in such situations. They are used in developed and underdeveloped economies as a low-cost means to sustain economic enterprises, and sometimes entire sectors, that are only marginally viable or competitive.

Occupational health and safety is an important issue for migrant workers. Migrant workers tend to be employed in sectors such as agriculture, construction, mining, which are all known for their high levels of fatal accidents and injuries at work. Language and cultural barriers mean that the workers may not easily understand specific occupational safety and health communications, instructions and training approaches. As many migrant workers work excessive hours, which can contribute to occupational injuries and work-related diseases. In addition, many migrant workers are forced to live in makeshift accommodation, shanty towns and substandard accommodation. This leads to poor general health making migrant workers more vulnerable to occupational diseases.

How decent work can be ensured for migrant workers? This is because:

i. Migrant workers are not forced to pay recruitment charges which are sometimes as high as 6 - 8 months' wages;

ii. All migrant workers contracts are clear and transparent;

iii. Policies and procedures are inclusive;

iv. Passports and other travel documents are not confiscated by the employer;

v. Wages are paid regularly, directly and on time;

vi. Respect migrant workers' rights to organise and bargain collectively;

vii. Decent work;

viii. No discrimination between migrant and native workers;

ix. Social protection; and

x. Khafala system in all forms eliminated - freedom to change employment, safe return guaranteed.

There is no dearth of international instruments for protection and promotion of migrant workers. The ILO Convention No. 97 on Migration for Employment (1949) focuses on standards applicable to the recruitment of migrants for employment and their conditions of work. The ILO Convention No. 143 on Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, (1975) is for bringing migration flows under control. This deals with irregular migrants and also calls for sanctions against traffickers. It reiterates general obligation to respect the human rights of all migrant workers and calls for not only equal treatment, but also to equality of opportunity with regard to access to employment, trade union rights, cultural rights and individual and collective freedoms to protect workers. Only one or two countries in the region have ratified these two important conventions. Intensified campaign for ratification and application in the countries in the region is needed to
demonstrate trade unions resolve in improving conditions of work and life of migrant workers.

The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) is the first-ever UN global agreement on a common approach to international migration in all its dimensions. The GCM is a non-legally binding one. It is grounded in values of state sovereignty, responsibility-sharing, non-discrimination and human rights; and recognises that a cooperative approach is needed to optimise the overall benefits of migration, while addressing the risks and challenges for individuals and communities in countries of origin, transit and destination.

The GCM aims to mitigate the adverse drivers and structural factors that hinder people from building and maintaining sustainable livelihoods in their countries of origin; intends to reduce the risks and vulnerabilities migrants face at different stages of migration by respecting, protecting and fulfilling their human rights, and providing them with care and assistance; seeks to address the legitimate concerns of states and communities while recognising that societies are undergoing demographic, economic, social and environmental changes at different scales that may have implications for and result from migration; strives to create conditions that enable all migrants to enrich our societies through their human, economic and social capacities, and thus facilitate their contributions to sustainable development at the local, national, regional and global levels.

Union movement has now recognised the role of trade unions in improving the lot of migrant workers. Many of them have established migrant labour desks in their offices specially to cater to the migrant worker in need. In order to fully serve the migrant workers, unions need to be involved in all discussions in designing, developing and implementing policies and programmes for the migrant workers.

The Arab TUC, the SARTUC and the ASEAN TUC signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to set up a migrant resource centre in Amman, Jordan. Later on, the ITUC Africa and the TUCA (Trade Union Confederation of the Americas), along with the above three sub-regional structures signed the MOU in the presence of the ILO Director-General, Guy Ryder, in June 2018. Accordingly, the ITUC-AP facilitated and supported the establishment of the Joint Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) in Amman, Jordan. It aims to provide information services to empower vulnerable migrant labour, in particular migrant domestic workers who face the greatest risk of exploitation, harassment and physical and sexual violence; campaigns to realise migrant workers decent work condition such as social protection, minimum wages, health and safety, etc.; legal assistance to migrant workers, in particular migrant domestic workers; and research and publication of violation of migrant workers’ rights and handling of cases. The MRC started its operations on 1 July 2018. It will initially help the domestic workers from Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Indonesia and the Philippines and later will be expanded to migrant workers from other countries. Our affiliates in many countries have activities for helping migrant labour.

Trade unions have an important role to play in protecting and promoting migrant workers’ interests. Migrant workers should be brought under the protective umbrella of trade unions through intensive organising and recruiting. Organising could be done both at the origin and destination countries. Unions should strive to establish an international policy framework capable of ensuring respect for migrant workers’ fundamental rights and offering them decent work opportunities. Union protection should be for all migrant workers regardless of their legal status in the host country. Special attention should be paid to the vulnerable situation of women migrants.

In a welcome development, the Qatar government abolished the Khafala system including the need for exit permit for leaving the country in August 2018. This is a victory
for the trade union movement through its consistent campaign in the background of the 2022 Football World Cup scheduled in that country. But the Khafala system continues in other Gulf countries.

Proposed Actions:
- Campaign against racism and xenophobia for awareness raising and providing union members and the public with information on the positive contribution that migrant workers make;
- Campaign for abolition of Khafala system in all its forms, including disguised forms such as partial immobility of migrant worker from one employer to another, obliged to stay at least one year with original employer, etc.;
- Continue to support the Joint Migrant Resource Centre in Amman, Jordan and extend its coverage of beneficiaries;
- Encourage establishment of migrant resource centres at sub-regional and national levels;
- Encourage, promote and facilitate partnership agreements between unions in origin and destination countries. They are meant to: promote, protect and defend the rights of migrant workers; encourage labour and social integration of migrant workers, secure equal rights for migrant workers and strengthen bilateral relations and trade union solidarity;
- Collect and disseminate information on good practices of unions collaborating across national borders to protect the labour rights and organise migrant workers;
- Campaign for ratification and effective implementation of the relevant ILO Conventions, i.e. No. 97 and No. 143;
- Campaign and promote organising migrant workers – either join existing unions or form migrant workers unions;
- Campaign for coverage of national labour laws for migrant labour;
- Encourage and assist unions to organise pre-departure training programmes for migrant labour on the conditions in the destination country – rights, labour laws, culture, language, etc.;
- Campaign for adoption of model employment contracts with minimum standards on wages, working hours, holiday, overtime pay, leave, medical benefits; and
- Lobby sub-regional / inter-regional governmental bodies to take up issues of labour migration in their policy agenda.

5. Informal Economy: Transition from Informal to Formal Economy

One of the main ramifications of globalisation since 1990's is the growing informal economy. While globalisation did create jobs, they were almost entirely in informal sector. In many countries, globalisation has caused shrinkage in the formal sector. When the enterprises are downsized or shut down, the workers who are laid-off and cannot find alternative formal jobs often end up being pushed to join the informal economy for sheer survival. Even the formal enterprises tend to hire all but few core workers under formal arrangements or to outsource the production and goods and services to other firms and even other countries. Globalisation has led to increased flexibility in their labour market, converting “formal employment” into “informal employment”.

In the Asia-Pacific region, majority of the working people are engaged by informal economy. It is estimated that about 68.2 per cent of workers are in the informal
economy that is about 1.3 billion workers\textsuperscript{12}. In rural areas, informal economy engages 85.2 per cent of workers while in urban areas it is 47.4 per cent. In South Asia, informal economy workers are between 85 - 92 per cent. What is of more concern is the informalisation of formal sector. Miserable working and living conditions prevail in informal economy. They work for long hours for low wages, mostly much below living wages. Social protection is unheard of in most cases. Hence, overwhelming majority of workers are engaged in informal economy contributing significantly to the national economy, while remaining outside the protection and regulation of the State. While many of the governments now express increased concern for these workers, their conditions remain most oppressive and exploitative.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 1: Informal Economy</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Informal economy, according to the ILO Recommendation No.204 are:</strong> All economic activities by worker and economic units that are - in law and practice – not covered or insufficiently covered by formal arrangement; Activities carried out across all sectors of the economy both in public and private spaces – but not illicit activities; units that employ hired labour; units that are owned by individuals working on account either alone or with the help of unpaid or underpaid family members; and cooperatives and social solidarity economic units. Those who are included are on account workers, employers employed in their own informal sector enterprises, contributing family workers, members of cooperatives and social solidarity economic units, employees holding informal jobs in formal enterprises including sub-contracting, supply chains, paid domestic workers employed by household, and workers in recognised or regulated employment relations.</td>
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There has been significant “deregulation” of economic activities in recent years, both in financial markets and also in labour markets. Deregulation of labour markets is associated with the rise of informalisation or flexible labour markets. The twin effect of this phenomenon is that workers are caught between two contradictory trends: rapid flexibilisation of the employment relationship (making it easy for employers to sub-contract and expand their workforce as needed) and slow liberalisation of labour mobility (making it difficult for labour to move easily and quickly across borders). In both cases workers are the victims.

Women constitute a dominant segment of the informal economy mainly because they are unable to find jobs in the formal sector. Child labour is also found in informal sector. In fact, almost all working children in the region are found in the informal sector.

Decent work deficits are rampant in the informal economy. These include inability to find work or conduct business in the formal economy, poor labour standards, unprotected by labour legislation, job and income insecurity, absence or low coverage of social security, disrespect for occupational safety and health standards, lack of representative, independent and democratic organisations, weak voice to pursue economic and social concerns, etc.

Transition from informality to formal economy for workers should mean obtaining a formal job or formalising their current job, with a secure contract, worker benefits, social protection and most important, freedom of association and collective bargaining. To reduce decent work deficits, in the immediate term, we must ensure that those currently in the informal economy are recognised and have improved labour rights, social protection, and representation and voice. In the short and medium term, to promote conducive legal and policy frameworks to upgrade jobs and enhance the capacity of workers and enterprises to move along the continuum from informal to formal decent

\textsuperscript{12} ILO.
work. In the long term, efforts should be to create jobs that are protected, recognised and decent for all workers.

While informal economy is surging in developing countries in the region, atypical/irregular work is growing in fast developing countries. Atypical/irregular employment is linked to employment arrangements that have tenuous connection between the worker and formal structures and little, if any, access to fundamental labour rights and protection and employment based social protection. Atypical/irregular employment includes: part-time employment in formal enterprises, temporary employment in formal enterprise, self-employment, in particular own account workers with employees, contract/subcontracted work, industrial outsourcing including homework, despatched workers/agency, special employment arrangements like commission, sweatshop work, day labour.

The ILO Recommendation No. 204 of 2015 concerning the Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy is quite significant for the informal economy. Though it is only a Recommendation, it is the first ever international instrument specifically for the informal economy. This was adopted recognising “that the high incidence of informal economy in all its aspects is a major challenge for the rights of workers, including the fundamental principles and rights at work, social protection and decent working conditions, inclusive development and the rule of law, and has a negative impact on the development of sustainable enterprises, public avenues and governments’ scope of action, particularly with regard to economic, social and environmental policies, soundness of institutions and fair competition in national and international markets”. This also recognises that most people enter the informal economy not by choice but as a consequence of a lack of opportunities in the formal economy and in the absence of other means of livelihood.

The ILO Recommendation covers legal and policy frameworks, employment policies, rights and social protection, incentives, compliance and enforcement, freedom of association, social dialogue and role of employers and workers organisations, data collection and monitoring, implementation. It specifically asserts that informal economy workers are ensured of freedom of association and right to collective bargaining, including the right to establish and join organisations, federations and confederations of their own choosing.

This instrument provides guidance to the States to facilitate the transition of workers and economic units from the informal to the formal economy, while respecting workers' fundamental rights and ensuring opportunities for income securities, livelihoods and entrepreneurship.

Transition from the informal economy to the formal economy is an important target for the Decent Work Agenda, as the four strategic objectives are valid for all workers, women and men, in both formal and informal economies. The issue of formalisation of informal economy has taken an added urgency in the current context of global economic crisis. However, despite pronouncements by many, few countries have yet developed a comprehensive and integrated approach to stem the tide of informalisation and promote formalisation through coherence between the different policy measures.

Most of the SDGs 2030 Agenda directly targets informal economy. Poverty, hunger, employment and decent work, social protection, gender equality, etc. are most relevant to the informal economy. People under the poverty line, working poor are all relevant to the informal economy. Hence, the answer for achieving SDGs relates to the emancipation of workers engaged in the informal economy.

As shown above, formalisation of the informal economy should involve different forms, including: shifting informal workers to formal jobs, registering and taxing informal enterprises, providing business incentives and support services to informal enterprises;
securing legal and social protection for the informal workforce; recognising the organisations of informal workers; and allowing their representatives to take part in rule-setting, policy making and collective bargaining processes.

Box 2: Formalisation of the Informal Economy

1. Formalisation of Informal jobs
   - Legal recognition and protection as workers
   - Rights and benefits being formally employed:
     - Right to organise and bargain collectively
     - Minimum living wage
     - Occupational health and safety measures
     - Employer contribution to health and pensions
     - Freedom from discrimination

2. Formalisation of informal enterprises
   - Registration and taxation
     - Simplification of registration procedures
     - Progressive registration fees
   - Appropriate legal and regulatory frameworks, including:
     - Enforceable commercial contracts
     - Private property rights
     - Use of public space
     - Occupational health and safety regulation
   - Benefits of operating formally
     - Access to finance and market information
     - Access to public infrastructure and services
     - Enforceable commercial contracts
     - Limited liability
     - Clear bankruptcy and default rules
     - Access to government subsidies and incentives, including procurement bids and export promotion packages
     - Membership to formal business associations
     - Access to formal system of social security

Any approach towards formalisation of informal economy should, first and foremost, aim at creation of decent jobs. Development policies should target the working people, especially in support of the working poor who should comprise the majority of the informal workforce. Social protection should be accorded high priority on the development agenda since lack of it undermines the livelihoods of many working poor in the informal economy. The ILO Recommendation for a Global Social Protection Floor should cover all workers, including informal economy, and should combine cash transfers and access to affordable social services, especially health care. This should envisage prioritise extension of social protection coverage to excluded groups like informal economy workers, adapt both social and private insurance to incorporate informal workers by providing fiscal and other incentives for their affiliation and coordinate diverse forms of protection.

Organising informal economy is a major challenge for the trade union movement. Unfortunately, traditionally trade union movement has been concentrating on formal sector. There is already a realisation that survival of trade union movement as a representative organisation and an effective voice of working people would be tested by its capacity to embrace informal economy. Of course, there are sound reasons for this like scattered nature, job insecurity, lack of resources, lack of political will, lack of
adequate number of trained organisers, and general ignorance about unions, etc. But trade unions can ignore this sector only at its own peril. In this connection, the resounding and unprecedented magnitude of results of the organising drive in the informal sector accomplished by the INTUC, the HMS and the SEWA is internationally praised.

**Proposed Actions:**
- Organise regional, sub-regional and national programmes for publicising the ILO Recommendation No. 204 on Transition from Informal to Formal Economy;
- Campaign for adoption and implementation of the ILO Recommendation No. 204 on Formalisation of Informal Economy;
- Campaign for a national minimum living wage for all workers, including informal economy workers;
- Targeted organising campaign for informal economy;
- Assist affiliates to launch pilot projects for organising informal economy workers in identified areas/sectors;
- Campaign for extending coverage of social protection programmes to informal economy;
- Campaign for undertaking rural employment guarantee schemes for informal economy workers;
- Campaign for labour reforms for extending coverage to informal economy; and
- Conduct survey on the magnitude, condition and nature of work, home-based workers, etc.

6. **Peace and Democracy: Prerequisite for Development**

Peace is a prerequisite for development. Without development peace is not sustainable. For sustainable peace democracy is required. Democracy encourages and promotes peaceful interaction among states. Democracy provides avenues to prevent and manage conflicts peacefully by allowing different voices to chime in areas of conflict. Peace is an essential precondition for economic progress and social justice.

There is increasing strain on democratic functioning in many countries. Free and fair elections are part of democracy. But there is no guarantee that elections will lead to sustainable democracy. There are many instances in our region when governments democratically elected turn undemocratic or even autocratic later curtailing fundamental rights of people including freedom of expression and right to organise. Virtues of democracy make it the best form of governance.

The 4th ITUC World Congress in Copenhagen in 2018 noted that “armed conflicts, increasing range of hybrid conflicts, the militarisation of societies and the weakening of democracy undermine freedom of association, endanger the physical integrity of union organisers and leaders and ultimately affect the power and strength of the trade union movement. With fewer than 12 countries not involved in conflict either directly, in alliance, through the arms trade or in military operations or peacekeeping, it is clear that the prevailing leadership of countries is biased towards conflict and exclusion.”

Alarmingly, however, the global expenditure on armaments is increasing (Figure 3). Total world military expenditure rose to US$1.8 trillion in 2018\textsuperscript{13} an increase of 2.6 per cent in real terms from 2017, according to new figures from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). World military spending in 2018 represented 2.1 per cent of global gross domestic product or US$ 239 per person. The five biggest spenders

in 2018 were the United States, China, Saudi Arabia, India and France, which together accounted for 60 per cent of global military spending. While spending continues high world military expenditure is a cause of serious concern. It undermines the research for peaceful solutions to conflicts around the world. It further states that the increases in world military expenditure in recent years have been largely due to the substantial growth in spending in countries in Asia and the Pacific. Six of the 10 countries with the highest military burden (military spending as a proportion of GDP) are in the Middle East (8.8 per cent of GDP). Seven of the 10 countries with the highest military expenditures are in the Middle East with Saudi Arabia spending 10 per cent of GDP on military. These huge expenditures, besides depriving needy people of basic necessities, also give a distorted national and international economic development. Youth, children and women are always victims of war.

![Figure 3: World Military Expenditure, 1988 - 2018*](image)

Violent events that cause economic destruction and paralysis result in massive loss of employment and relegation of workers to a situation of want and despair. The internationally agreed target to allocate 0.7 per cent of GDP for Development Assistance was met only by 7 countries. Transfer of the expenditure on arms race to social and economic development is an urgent need of the time. We will continue to demand major cuts in military expenditure and insist that the transition from military to socially useful production to protect the livelihoods of the workers be effected.

Trade union movement is greatly concerned about continued armed conflicts in the region, leaving appalling toll of death, injury and disease. The ITUC-AP also condemns terrorism in all its forms under whatever pretext, as well as the policies of ‘preventive war’ resorted to by certain governments.

Nuclear weapons pose a particularly destructive threat. Prevention of the proliferation and use of nuclear weapons is urgently important. After the end of the cold war era, hopes were raised for some concrete action in this matter. But the hopes were belied. The trade union movement has been most visible in the campaign for control of nuclear and conventional production.

The UN system needs drastic structural improvements in order to be an effective organisation to prevent conflicts and war. The present composition of the Security Council with five permanent members with veto power is hardly positioned to play an
effective role in maintaining peace. This organisation needs to be restructured and expanded to reflect wider security interests of both nuclear and non-nuclear countries.

We welcome several initiatives aimed at forging international frameworks of disarmament including reduction of stockpile of nuclear weapons. But these attempts have been slow to make much impact. The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) has failed to bring in some major players, thus depressing its scope. All nuclear possessing states should be party to the NPT.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the treaty that bans all nuclear explosions in all environments for military or civilian purposes adopted by the UN General Assembly two decades ago has not yet entered into force. Sub-critical test should be also banned by the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).

It is to be underlined that the roles of the United Nations and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) are important to secure and to promote peaceful usage of nuclear energy for national development, especially in developing countries. All states should be part of the IAEA and should be in compliance with its procedural requirements to be benefited by nuclear energy separated from nuclear armament. All kinds of nuclear development should be under the international surveillance system of the IAEA. The international controlling system of nuclear arms and substances should be strengthened.

Proposed Actions:
- Pursue the ITUC’s commitments in achieving a peaceful, democratic, secure and stable world where people are free from threat of armed conflict, terrorism or other forms of violence and occupation;
- Reaffirms condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and under whatever pretext as well as policies violating individual and collective human rights under the cover of fighting terrorism;
- The ITUC-AP, along with the ITUC, will continue to raise its voice in solidarity for peace, disarmament, democracy and rights everywhere;
- Campaign for strengthening of the United Nations and a new democratic structure, especially that of the Security Council so that it can effectively advance nuclear and conventional disarmament and intervene in political or arisen conflicts and disputes. Pursuit of peace should have priority over all political objectives;
- Promote effective international regulation of the production and trading of arms, the non-proliferation of all armaments including nuclear weapons, and in particular elimination of all weapons of mass destruction;
- Campaign for making all countries signatories to treaties like the NPT, CTBT;
- Promote peaceful usage of energy under an effective international control of nuclear fuel cycle; and
- Assist affiliates in campaigning for genuine democracy.

7. Modern Day Slavery: Human Trafficking, Forced Labour, Child Labour
There has been tremendous rise in labour trafficking. Human trafficking is one of the worst forms of exploitation where the workers’ dignity, helplessness and deprivation plunge to their nadir. Every year reports suggest more than 200,000 women and children are trafficked. Major centres are countries in South East Asia and South Asia. With growing unemployment and increasing poverty, the pools of potential victims are growing.
The term forced labour means all work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person not offered him/her voluntarily. The root causes of trafficking in persons are the socio economic, political and environmental factors that pose a threat to people’s lives and exacerbate their vulnerability. Corruption is one of the root causes of human trafficking. Traffickers indulge in their activities with immunity because of bureaucratic patronage.

Box 3: What is Trafficking?

United Nations defines trafficking as “the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation for prostitution or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs”.

Systematic persecution has driven over 140,000 Rohingya people from their homes, making them easy prey for traffickers who lure them with promises of safety and jobs in Malaysia, for a price, or simply kidnap them with a view to selling them to slavery or extorting ransom from their families. In 2015, thousands of migrants fearing persecution in Myanmar and poverty in Bangladesh had taken to the Andaman Sea, west of Thailand and Malaysia in a desperate search for some to take them in. Some 8,000 had been abandoned. Their plight, coupled with grim tales of abuse emerging from makeshift camps in jungles of Thailand and Malaysia, paint a horrific picture of a region wide network of human trafficking.

There is also smuggling of migrants. Smuggling is done when the method of migration is irregular and may be assisted by a smuggler who will facilitate illegal entry into a country for a fee. Smugglers take exorbitant fees and may expose the migrants to serious dangers in the course of their own way and normally do not see the smuggler again.

The phenomenon of refugees is emerging as yet another dimension of cross border flow of people. War and famine have also prompted growing numbers of people to take to the road. According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, a record number of 65.6 million people are either refugees, asylum seekers or internally displaced across the globe. The Asian region accounts for 7.7 million refugees.

Trade unions should campaign and use established tripartite bodies and procedures to place ratification and implementation of the ILO Conventions No. 29 and No. 105 at the top of the legislative and political agenda. There is need for clear legal definitions so that those responsible for exploitation and abuse can be brought to justice. Unions should develop a policy on forced labour trafficking, designate officials to deal with it and place forced labour on the agenda. Trade union action should also include pressurising employers and employment agencies to respect fundamental labour standards. Providing direct support to establish contact with victims, inform them of their rights and help rehabilitate them, through trade union media and mass media, helplines, etc., in the relevant languages will go a long way in tackling trafficking. Labour unions should also bring cases to light and report them to the authorities without endangering the victims and document the incidence of forced labour to support pressure on governments to act and to communicate information to relevant international trade unions or friendly organisations especially in countries of destination or origin.

Women are particularly vulnerable to trafficking and forced labour. It is estimated that in forced economic exploitation women and girls represent 56 per cent of the victims and regarding forced commercial and sexual exploitation, an overwhelming majority of 98
per cent women and girls. Women are preferred targets of unscrupulous employers, who view them as cheap, easily controllable and easily abused labour. Ironically, well intentioned legislations in some countries barring women migration for certain categories of labour like domestic work inadvertently become causes of trafficking.

Sex trafficking is the worst form of modern slavery that exists throughout the globe. Sex traffickers use violence, threats, lies, debt bondage and other forms of coercion to compel adults and children to engage in commercial sex acts against their will. Girls are lured in with false promises of a job, such as modelling or dancing.

Model employment contacts are one of the tools that should be used by recruiters to ensure that the rights of the migrant worker are respected and that situations of trafficking and forced labour are avoided. Model employment contracts should be skills-specific and country specific, based on a proper understanding and in-depth knowledge of the working and living conditions of migrant workers, as well as the culture, traditions and legislations of the destination country.

The most effective way of preventing trafficking in human beings is for governments to establish a mainstream of legal and legitimate migration flows. Getting most migrants to go through legal channels will help governments to better identify, isolate and combat illegal practices.

Child labour is one of the worst forms of human exploitation, preventing children from having access to education and growing as normal human beings. Child labour continues to be an important workplace issue which the trade union movement will have to seriously attempt to tackle. According to an ILO report, despite significant progress in efforts to reduce child labour, an alarming number of children are trapped in its worst forms. The latest ILO estimates indicate that 152 million children – 64 million girls and 88 million boys – are in child labour globally, accounting for almost one in ten of all children worldwide. Asia and the Pacific account for 62.1 million in child labour and 28.5 million children in hazardous work. After Africa, our region has the dubious distinction of having the largest concentration of child labour.14

The latest ILO Global report on Child Labour found that the number of working children under the age of 15 years in Asia and the Pacific declined by 5 million to 122.3 million from 2000 to 2004. Despite this positive development, the region still faces major challenges. The number of working children in Asia-Pacific is by far the largest in the world and represents 18.8 per cent of the 650 million 5 - 14 year-olds in the region. Furthermore, progress in eliminating child labour is still modest compared to progress in Latin America and the Caribbean.

While it is gratifying to note that there is a declining trend in respect of incidence of child labour, it is still a shameful aspersion on humanity that such a large number of children are engaged in making a living instead of going to school and thus getting deprived of their child-hood. The ITUC-AP and the affiliates have been quite active in the campaign for eradication of child labour and have achieved success in varying degrees.

Although a large number of countries have ratified the ILO Conventions on child labour – No. 138 on Minimum Age for Employment, 171 ratifications (in Asia-Pacific 29 countries), and No. 182 on Immediate Abolition of Worst forms of Child Labour, 182 ratifications (in Asia-Pacific 37 countries) – the implementation part is still far from satisfactory as evidenced by the existence of the scourge of child labour in large numbers.

**Proposed Actions:**
- Along with the ITUC campaign against human trafficking and forced labour;
- Expose cases of human trafficking and forced labour;

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14 ILO Global report on Child Labour, 2017
• Promote free and compulsory education for all children as essential part of social nets;
• Continue campaign for ratification and implementation of the ILO Conventions regarding the Minimum Wage for Employment (No. 138), the Worst Forms of Child Labour (No. 182) and Forced Labour (No. 29 and No. 105), Forced Labour Protocol No. 29 and their effective implementation;
• Campaign for effective implementation of existing national legislations for eradication of child labour;
• Coordinate with the ITUC and the GUFs in the campaign for elimination of slave labour in supply chains;
• Intensively campaign against child labour in all its manifestation in line with the ILO Conventions, the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Convention on the Right of the Child;
• Strengthen interaction and cooperation with international agencies such as the ILO and the UNICEF and other relevant organisations with the United Nations; and
• Intensive campaign to integrate child labour issues into National Decent Work Programme.

8. Social Protection and Fair Taxation: Building Universal Social Protection for ALL
Social security is the fundamental human right and most of the countries in the globe are under constitutional obligation to provide adequate social protection to their people. Social protection is also a necessity for social justice as well as sustainable and inclusive development by eradicating poverty and vulnerability, redressing inequality, ensuring decent work for all, furthering just transition, enhancing economic resilience and so on.

Therefore, it is obvious that the Sustainable Development Goals and Targets (Goal 1: Target 1.3, Goal 3: Target 3.8, Goal 5: Target 5.4, Goal 10: Target 10.4) directly refer to social protection including universal health coverage. Moreover, social protection is one of 4 pillars of the Decent Work Agenda of the ILO.

Figure 4: SDG Indicator 1.3.1: Percentage of the Total Population covered by at least one Social Protection Benefit (effective coverage), 2015

![Bar chart showing percentage of the total population covered by at least one social protection benefit in different regions and the world, with Europe and Central Asia at 84.1%, Northern America at 78.5%, Americas at 67.6%, Latin America and the Caribbean at 61.4%, Northern Africa at 39.2%, Asia and the Pacific at 38.9%, Africa at 17.8%, Sub-Saharan Africa at 12.9%, and World at 45.2%]

Nevertheless, despite some progress made in terms of social protection provision, there are persistently high deficits in social protection especially in Asia and the Pacific as depicted in Figure 4; 61.1 per cent of its total population in the region has no access to social protection at all, 6.3 percentage points higher than the world average. If social protection is disaggregated by population group as shown in Figure 5, the effective social protection coverage in Asia and the Pacific for mothers with new-borns, disabled persons, the elderly and vulnerable people lags behind the average of world coverage; the data of the coverage for children is even not available and the coverage for the unemployed in the region is just marginally, by 0.7 percentage point, higher than the world coverage. These deficits are a major cause of the upward trend in income inequality in the region, comparing with the world and the other regions, which threatens social justice, political stability and sustainable growth.


![Figure 6: Social Insurance Coverage Rate by Employment Status in Korea](source: http://www.hankookilbo.com/v_print.aspx?id=f7261923da7343c7b66f92e0f37319f9)

The social protection gap has been further exacerbated by labour market deficits with the growing prevalence of vulnerability, informality and precarity in employment with poverty or low wages in Asia and the Pacific as workers in those employment arrangements are likely to be excluded from a social protection system, mainly
comprised of social assistance, social insurance and active labour market policies. For example, as shown in Figure 6, the coverage rate of social insurance schemes for non-regular workers in Korea is just half of the rate for regular workers. Eventually, increasing non-standard forms of employment makes a social protection system more inadequate and unsustainable as tax revenue including social contributions decline.

Figure 7 illustrates the exclusion of workers in informal sector or in non-standard forms of employment, together with their families, from social protection. They are likely affected disproportionately by any economic shock. Adverse impacts of transformation of the world of work without any social buffer to mitigate those adverse impacts. Hence, they are vulnerable to falling into poverty and, in turn, the level of economic activities, especially private consumption, may fall to worsen the situation. This vicious circle is certainly a great threat to social and economic sustainability. Therefore, it is urgently needed to build social protection system for all, including social protection floors, as stipulated in the ILO Recommendation No. 202, in order for states to fulfil its duty to respect human and fundamental workers’ rights as well as its commitment to sustainable development in the globe.

Figure 7: Social Protection Floor

Moreover, as the Asian and Pacific region is most vulnerable to climate change and has undergone industrial transformation with technological advancement, the region should adapt to such changes and try to mitigate its impact. In this regard, adequate social protection is vital to the process of just transition and fair transformation.

In order to provide adequate social protection with universal provision including social protection floors, it is important to ensure a fiscal space\textsuperscript{15} to finance it, which is a great challenge to many governments in Asia and the Pacific with wide discrepancies in the region. Especially, low/low-middle income countries have faced enormous difficulty to mobilise domestic resources including very low level of tax revenue collection stemming from inefficient tax governance with high tax evasion and avoidance. Moreover, the

\textsuperscript{15} ‘Fiscal Space’ can be defined as room in a government’s budget that allows it to provide resources for a desired purpose without jeopardising the sustainability of its financial position or the stability of the economy.
income tax base is narrow with a large number of low waged workers including workers in the informal economy. In addition, many governments of low/low-middle income countries have faced a lack of administrative capacity and resources for an effective as well as efficient tax system. Further, governments have been competing to attract foreign capital by lowering the corporate tax rate.

**Box 4: ILO Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202)**

Social protection floors are nationally-defined sets of basic social security guarantees which secure protection aimed at preventing or alleviating poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion. These guarantees should ensure at a minimum that, over the life cycle, all in need have access to essential health care and basic income security.

National social protection floors should comprise at least the following four social security guarantees, as defined at the national level:

1. access to essential health care, including maternity care;
2. basic income security for children, providing access to nutrition, education, care and any other necessary goods and services;
3. basic income security for persons in active age who are unable to earn sufficient income, in particular in cases of sickness, unemployment, maternity and disability; and
4. basic income security for older persons.

Such guarantees should be provided to all residents and all children, as defined in national laws and regulations, and subject to existing international obligations.

Many people have misconception that financing universal social protection is too expensive to afford it. However, according to the ILO study, for example, in order to implement universal social protection floors as prescribed in Table 1 below with 5 cash benefit schemes, total cost, as a percentage of GDP, needed in Cambodia, Indonesia, Mongolia, Myanmar and Philippines is only 3.4 per cent, 1 per cent, 0.3 per cent, 6 per cent and 0.9 per cent respectively. This calculation is mainly focusing on the universal coverage. After achieving universality of social protection, the level of protection should be improved.

**Table 1: Total Cost of Universal Social Protection Floors, Cash Benefits by Region**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>East Asia and Pacific</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cost of a child benefit of 25% of the poverty line to all children (less than 5 years old)</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of a benefit of 100% of the poverty line to all orphans</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of a benefit of 100% of the poverty line to all mothers with newborns</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of a benefit of 100% of the poverty line to all persons with severe disabilities</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of a benefit of 100% of the poverty line to all persons aged 65 and more</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of a benefit of 100% of the poverty line to all persons aged 65 and more</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of a benefit of 100% of the poverty line to all persons aged 65 and more</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of a benefit of 100% of the poverty line to all persons aged 65 and more</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Universal Social Protection Floors: Costing Estimates and Affordability in 57 Lower Income Countries, ILO, 2017

Even though the cost of universal social protection floors cash benefits may not be high as perceived, still some countries face financial constraints. For example, the tax
revenue of Myanmar as a percentage of GDP in 2017 is 6.02 per cent. Therefore, it may not be feasible for the government of Myanmar to finance it with its own tax revenue.

In this regard, the ILO proposes 8 options to increase fiscal space for social protection as follows\

1. Reallocation of Public Expenditure
2. Increasing Tax Revenue
3. Expansion of Social Security Contributions
4. Reducing Debt/Debt Service
5. Curtailing Illicit Financial Flows
6. Increasing Aid
7. Tapping into Fiscal Reserves
8. More Accommodative Macroeconomic Framework

A survey was conducted with 21 responses from our affiliates to cover 16 countries in Asia and the Pacific. Participating affiliates were asked to choose 3 options to increase fiscal space in the order of feasibility and affordability. The survey identified ‘increasing tax revenue’ as the most feasible and affordable option, followed by ‘expansion of social security contribution’ as displayed in Figure 8 below. This can be also interpreted that, from trade union perspective, increasing tax revenue and expanding a social security contribution system are most urgently improved.

![Figure 8: Options to Expand Fiscal Space for Social Protection](https://www.social-protection.org/gimi/RessourcePDF.action?ressource.ressourceId=51537)

Source: ITUC-AP Review Conference on Fiscal Policy with Fair Taxation for Social Development towards Inclusive Growth, 16 - 17 November 2015, Bangkok, Thailand

In this regard, workers and trade unions, as a tax payer as well as a current or potential contributor to contributory schemes of social protection, should take a leading role in facilitating social dialogue for increasing fiscal space for universal social protection for all workers including non-members. Especially, a tax system should be reformed in

accordance with the principles in Box 5 to promote fair taxation for social development towards inclusive growth.

### Box 5: Principles on Taxation
- **Taxes need to be sufficient to fund proper social economic roles of a government.**
- **Tax system should be fair as well as efficient.**
  - Taxes should be progressive.
  - Tax avoidance and evasion should be minimised as much as possible.
  - Taxes should tackle black market and black money.
- **Tax administration and collection should be efficient and sufficiently resourced.**
- **Government should not engage with harmful tax competition, a race to the bottom on taxes as well as a race to the bottom on wages, which is eventually harmful to workers and inclusive growth.**
- **There is no one size to fit all ideal tax system. Each country needs a system tailored in individual circumstances.**

Social protection for all is feasible only based on social solidarity between classes and generations. As the largest organised people’s movement in the globe and the region, it is imperative for the trade union movement to exert every effort to build universal social protection which is also prerequisite for sustainable and inclusive future and for fair as well as cohesion in the “seamless world”.

**Proposed Actions:**
- Regional and national campaigns for establishing, promoting and improving universal social protection for all including social protection floors as defined in the ILO Recommendation No. 202;
- Regional and national campaigns for ratification of the ILO Convention No. 102;
- Regional and national campaigns for ensuring finance for universal social protection including social protection floors sustainably by a tax and fiscal policy reform leading to fair taxation and adequate fiscal space as well as to equitable income and wealth re-distribution and social solidarity;
- Regional and national activities to build up trade union capacity in social policies including social protection schemes (social assistance and social insurance) and fiscal and tax issues in order to respond to government’s policies and institutional changes; and
- Engage international institutions including IFIs to develop and implement social protection schemes as well as a fair international taxation system, applicable to a new business model including a platform economy, with workers’ voices being heard.

9. **OHS is NOT an Option: Decent OHS Standards for all Workers**

Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) is a fundamental human and workers’ right, which is clearly declared in international instruments\(^\text{17}\). The ILO has adopted more than 40 Standards specifically dealing with OHS as well as over 40 Codes of Practice. Nearly half of ILO instruments deal either fully or partly concerned with issues related to OHS. Needless to say, OHS is not an option. However, there was an estimated 2.78 million fatalities compared to 2.33 million estimated in 2011. For fatal occupational injuries, there were 380,500 deaths, an increase of 8 per cent in 2014 compared to 2010. In

\(^{17}\) Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 23), International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Article 7) and ILO Instruments (in particular C.155, C.161 and C.187).
2015, there were 2.40 million deaths due to fatal work-related illness, an increase of 0.4 million compared to 2011. In total, it is estimated that more than 7,500 people die every day. The case of Asia is much worse than other regions. The fatality rate of Asia is 4 times higher than that of Europe. 65 per cent of work-related mortality came from Asia (Figure 9). For example, asbestos, a fatal substance, about 125 million people are still exposed to asbestos at the workplace. Approximately half of the deaths related to occupational cancer are estimated to be caused by asbestos. At least 107,000 people die every year because of asbestos-related lung cancer. By the end of 2013, more than 50 countries including all member states of the European Union have banned the use of all forms of Asbestos including Chrysotile. However, in the Asian Pacific region, the production or use of Chrysotile is prominently increased. So, our workers are still exposed to the risks of asbestos-related cancer.

Figure 9: Distribution of Work-Related Mortality by UN Geographical Region

Inadequacy and ineffectiveness of national and/or local OHS legislations are one of the biggest challenges in the Asian Pacific Region. These are highly influenced by the level of development in countries. However, adequate penalties, fair compensation and coverage of compensation of OHS legislations are commonly lacking and affecting workers’ lives in this region. Most of OHS legislations are not enough to ensure participation of workers and trade unions. Some of them are outdated and have not been revised for many decades. Also, in many cases, workers in the informal economy, migrant workers and domestic workers are not covered by OHS legislations, in particular local legislations, which should be in compliance with international standards.

Enforcement of OHS legislations is also of serious concern. There are huge gaps between OHS standards of countries and practices and realities of workplaces. Those gaps are caused by weak regulatory frameworks and monitoring systems, inadequate number of labour inspectors, lack of financial resources, unreliable date and lack of tripartism among others. To enforce OHS legislation, capacity building and representation of trade union in labour inspections are essential. Also, proposals to

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include OHS provisions in collective agreement should be advanced from trade unions to comply with OHS standards at workplace. The stronger trade union involvement makes the better workplace. Trade unions are now demanding to play more critical roles to make decent OHS conditions for all workers.

Partnership and alliance building is an important strategy to effectively take actions and achieve our goals on OHS. In fact, we received reports of good practices of trade unions successfully engaging together with employers, governments and other stakeholders to improve working conditions and OHS at the workplace. For example, some affiliates signed a MOU with employers’ group and chambers of commerce for the implementation of OHS standards, practices and programmes. Also, we received some reports on partnership agreements at sub-regional level to protect worker’s rights including OHS and welfare of migrant workers. Hence, social dialogues are essential keys to promote better working conditions and OHS standards for all workers.

Moreover, after the tragic accident of the Rana Plaza, UNI/IndustriAll/ITUC, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and consumers came together to establish “the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh” and called for EU based brands and retailers to join the programme of labour inspection to save workers’ lives. The Accord is a model OHS project learning from Rana Plaza tragedy which occurred in 2013 killing 1136 workers.

Needless to say, safety of workers’ lives comes first. In short, prevention is the most effective and practical way to save workers’ lives. However, in reality, many lives were lost because of lack of preventive measures. In economic terms, the ILO has estimated that 4 per cent of the world’s annual GDP is lost as a consequence of occupational accidents and diseases. Many tragedies could have been prevented and employers would not have had to face costly early retirements, loss of skilled staff, absenteeism, and high insurance premiums due to work-related accidents and diseases, if appropriate prevention and inspection practices had been implemented, or more importantly if the full-fledged trade union operations had been allowed. The ILO adopted a global strategy in 2003 to improve OHS which included the introduction of a preventive safety and health culture, still the number of work-related accidents and diseases are increasing. Stress at work is also related to OHS. Work-related pressures such as limited time, long working hours, performing tasks and overwork etc., may harm mental health. Supports at early stage are essential keys to prevent from mental disease and accidents.

Now is the time for us to urge the government and legislative bodies to formulate national policies and legislations based on serious discussions of tripartite mechanism. Addressing the importance of OHS is the fundamental role of trade unions. International Solidarity is our strength and the ILO instruments provide us favourable opportunities and support us to establish the better OHS standards for all workers. The first step is ratification and the second step is implementation of the ILO instruments on OHS. Let trade unions be the lifesavers for workers!

Proposed Actions:

- Conduct National and/or Regional Survey on OHS to identify causes, issues and problems;
- Share challenges and good practices and study from each other through the ITUC-AP OHS Network;
- Establish partnerships, alliances and/or committees on OHS at all levels to promote better OHS standards;
- Promote social dialogues on OHS at international, national and local levels;
- Use the challenges of OHS as the opportunities for organising workers;
Promote ratification and enforcement of OHS related ILO Conventions including No. 155 (Occupational Safety and Health), No. 187 (Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health) and No. 81 (Labour Inspection);

Conduct solidarity campaigns when major industrial accidents or diseases occur;

Develop the capacity for education and training on OHS for all workers in particular targeting precarious workers, young workers and women workers; and

Promote the world-wide recognition of 28th April as the International Workers’ Memorial Day for Dead and Injured.

II. REGULATING ECONOMIC POWER

1. Multinationals: Taming Corporate Power

Governments are increasingly influenced and controlled by corporations who dictate policies and regulations. The power of big business dominates trade policy and financial product markets with 80 per cent of the value of global trade including 60 per cent of production now dependent on supply chains. Multinationals and their global supply chains are key drivers of globalisation, through foreign direct investments (FDIs), through the pressure they exert on policy makers for liberalisation, deregulation and privatisation.

Poverty wages and insecure or precarious work, too often unsafe work, dominate global trade. It is a model that ruthlessly exploits people with slavery and informal work now prevalent in supply chains. The integration of supply, production, transport, logistics and services means all corporations are involved. Yet, despite world GDP increasing three-fold in three decades, the model is responsible for generating greater inequality along with massive in-work poverty and stagnating economy. While the GDP having trebled in just 30 years and major corporations commanding such high share of global production, transport and services through their supply chains, the respect of rights, the guarantee of minimum wages and collective bargaining for a fair share of the profits through higher wages with safe, secure and skilled work should be the norm, but unfortunately missing.

There has been tremendous surge in the spread and strength of multinational corporations in recent times. There are over 63,000 multinational corporations in the world with 700,000 foreign affiliates and between them they are responsible for two thirds of global trade and 80 per cent of investment. Multinational Corporations (MNCs) are estimated to engage more than 80 million workers. When we add the supply chains it would be a staggering number. Up to 94 per cent of workers in the supply chains comprise hidden workforce – a workforce that for corporate leaders is one of faceless men and women because employment is outsourced, and responsibility is therefore outsourced to layers of contractors. But these workers who are instrumental in the tremendous GDP growth in the world do not get a fair share of the profits which goes to fill in the coffers of these corporates.

Half of the largest world economies is that of MNCs. While 90 per cent of the companies originate from OECD countries, China is also emerging as a leading player in the multinational investment. The rise of corporate power and the decline in workers’ rights, wages and secure work are directly correlated. Governments are controlled and may be captured by these corporations who dictate policy and regulation on nearly every aspect of our lives. Corporate greed is growing and working people are the victims of poor education and health, pensions and other areas of social protection, and fair distribution of wealth for a living minimum wage and a share of productivity through collective bargaining. They have the power to disrupt collective bargaining agreements. With the
present threat of relocation to countries with low wages, low standards and low degree of organisation, the MNCs are in a strong position to put pressure on trade unions and workers as well as on their governments. This corporate power along with their global supply chains ruthlessly exploits the labour of women and migrants and other vulnerable workers. Productions are made in slavery conditions and sweatshop working environment.

Governments also fail to provide laws to protect workers fundamental rights or establish standards on wages, working hours and health and safety. Where there are laws, enforcement when companies fail to respect them is weak. Meanwhile, companies are usually immune from legal action by workers, as host country tribunals are weak and ineffective and courts in their home countries often have no jurisdiction when the violation is caused by a supplier in another country.

Multinationals do bring in funds initially. But later, they resort to borrowings from the local financial institutions thus diverting away local funds which could have been used by local investors or others to meet their local needs. Practices like transfer pricing are resorted to by MNCs to enhance their profits but at the cost of the host countries and they are uncontrollable by the hosts in terms of the price manipulations of the MNCs. They borrow from the local financial institutions depriving the domestic companies of finances. MNCs also impact a crushing effect on growth of local industries in the same industry. National companies can hardly compete with MNCs in respect of funds, land, power, etc. Many countries vie with each other in offering incentives to MNCs including tax exemption for attracting multinationals.

Adherence to fundamental labour, social and environmental standards is crucial to make MNCs and supply chains sustainable and contribute to both economic growth and social justice. They cover the globe and have enormous influences over government mandates. Deregulation of corporate power and powerlessness of governments bestow on trade unions greater responsibilities and opportunities to rebuild social dialogue or governance to make business work for decent work for all.

Under the campaign to regulate corporate power, unions are organising for minimum wages and collective bargaining, some secure and safe employment relations, formalising informal work in supply chains, purging supply chain slavery and universal social protection.

Organising workers in the multinationals and their global supply chains in cooperation with different countries would go a long way in protecting and promoting workers’ rights in these enterprises. Trade union movement at the global and regional levels should pressure the MNCs to discuss their global supply chains and recognise their hidden workforce. Unions should actively campaign to create awareness of the global framework agreements and monitor their effective implementation. Also, intensive campaigns are needed for extending coverage of labour laws and regulations to multinationals and their global supply chains in their whole structures, for protection of workers’ rights in these enterprises. Organising their headquarters, though challenging, is the perquisite for organising their downstream subsidiaries

**Proposed Actions:**

- Intensive campaign for coverage of labour laws in the MNCs and GSCs;
- Campaign with affiliates for giving priority to organise workers in MNCs and supply chains;
- Along with the ITUC and the GUFs, identify and expose slave labour in MNCs and GSCs;
- Launch regional/international campaigns where the companies/supply chains have wider geographical coverage;
• Campaign for implementation of the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises and the ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy and other global instruments for protecting workers rights. The unions need to give wider publicity to the existence of these tools as there is lack of awareness among unions in these enterprises;

• Encourage the unions to make best use of global framework agreements; and

• Along with the ITUC, conduct a survey on Chinese investments in Asia and the Pacific.

2. Economic Integration: Rule Based and Democratic International Economic Order to Benefit All

The Asian and Pacific economy is significantly interlinked with the global economy as well as intra-connected within itself. The rapid process of globalisation with increasing power of MNEs throughout global value chains, continued trade expansion and technological changes has brought an enormous impact on working people as well as society in general.

With increasing threats to international multilateralism and the failure of reforms in the WTO, there have been increasing tensions in trade among major economies while the nexus between the global trade and the economic growth as well as poverty reduction has continued to be undermined.

Furthermore, despite significant impacts of trade and investment on livelihood of people, the negotiations are rigorously pursued without transparency and democratic process such as social dialogue. The Asia-Pacific region is indeed the centre of the global multilateral trade negotiations. After withdrawal of the U.S. from the original TPP (Trans-Pacific Partnership), the CPTPP (Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership) was signed by remaining 11 countries, accounting for 13.4 per cent of the global GDP (Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, Vietnam), and came into force on 30 December 2018, 2 months after the 6th country, Australia, ratified it. The RCEP (Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership), since the negotiation was launched in 2012, seems to move to the concluding phase but with many hurdles to do it by this year. Once it is signed, it will create the world’s largest economic bloc, accounting for around 40 per cent of the global GDP.

The Asian and Pacific region has also been engaging in various international, (sub) regional and inter-regional economic bodies and fora, such as APEC, ASEM, G20, ASEAN, SAARC and so on. The ITUC-AP, in cooperation with the ITUC, has been working to put forth workers’ demands to those bodies and fora.

There will be growing influence of international financial institutions (World Bank, IMF and ADB) on labour market policies in recipient countries where industrial relations, freedom of association and collective bargaining rights are seriously undermined through conditionalities for their loan and project implementation. Since the global financial crisis in 2008, followed by continued economic sluggishness, they have been focusing more on inequality and social protection issues but there is still a serious contradiction between their rhetoric and actual policy recommendations in many countries where fundamental workers’ rights are continuously violated, public services become privatised, social welfare continues to be diminished, to name a few.

Since 2001, the international trade union movement has had dialogue with the IFIs at the international and regional levels. There is a high level meeting among the ITUC, Global Unions, the IMF and the World Bank every other year. Analogously, the ITUC-AP
continues dialogue with the ADB, based on our shared concerns, reducing poverty and redressing inequality for sustainable development, to demand the incorporation of the Decent Work Agenda into ADB’s operation, including an introduction of a labour safeguard. Further, the ITUC-AP has been working together with its affiliates to promote trade union engagement with the IFIs at national level. Our engagement with the IFIs has brought a positive outcome such as a labour safeguard adopted by the World Bank, which became effective from October this year. The ADB has included ‘core labour standards’ in its new long-term strategy, ‘Strategy 2030’. However, the ground reality in their operation at the national level is far from realising fundamental workers’ rights and decent work, which the ITUC-AP, together with its affiliates, continues to struggle for.

Regarding trade agreements and labour provision, as depicted in Figure 19 below, more and more trade agreements are being signed and so are agreements containing labour provisions. According to the ILO, the number of trade agreements with labour provisions has grown from 3 in 1995 (7.3 per cent) to 77 in 2016 (28.8 per cent). Moreover, 65 per cent of the agreements with labour provisions include a reference to the 1998 Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and 13 per cent refers to the ILO Decent Work Agenda.

![Figure 10: Number of Trade Agreements Notified to the WTO, by year](image)

However, despite more trade agreements with labour provisions as well as international commitments to address adverse impacts of trade, the process of negotiation is undemocratic for the best interest of capital, in particular for MNEs, with trade unions and other stakeholders being excluded. This means that adequate impact assessments and remedial measures cannot be produced. As a result, trade and financial openness results in the fact that income inequality remains high and is increasing in many countries, precariousness and informality in employment persists, violation of workers’ rights continues and working conditions are often further deteriorated. Therefore, it is important to reverse this trend to a rule-based international trade system so that the world trade contributes to the fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Furthermore, many countries in the region have been facing weakening of labour market institutions, governing income distribution and redistribution, industrial relations, and participation of social partners and civil society organisations in designing, negotiating and implementing social as well labour provisions in trade agreements. There should be more coordinated actions to strengthen labour market institutions at the national level in line with the regional campaign to ensure that the world trade benefits all.
Proposed Actions:
- Regional and national campaigns for recognition of trade unions as counterpart of business groups in the process of international trade negotiation and regional/inter-regional/sub-regional economic integration processes;
- Participation in international fora for lobbying;
- Promotion as well as utilisation of international instruments including the ILO standards, the UN Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights, the OECD Guidelines on MNEs, and so on;
- Monitoring implementation and adverse impacts on the labour market;
- Promotion of dialogue with the IFIs at the regional and national levels;
- Capacity building for affiliates to engage with the IFIs at the national level, and to use their grievance mechanisms; and
- Cooperation and Engagement with civil society groups.

3. Employment/Labour Market Policies
Even though the Asian and Pacific region continues to deliver strong economic growth, more than one billion workers remain in vulnerable employment. Vulnerable employment, i.e., non-regular, part-time, temporary and contract employment, both in developing and industrialised economies is on the rise. Women, youth and migrants are over-represented in non-standard forms of employment and more vulnerable to discrimination. The ILO projections indicate that 72 per cent of workers in South Asia, 46 per cent in South East Asia and the Pacific and 31 per cent in East Asia will be in vulnerable employment by 2019. The vulnerable employment rate for the Asian Pacific region is higher than the global rate.

Informal employment is the reality for the majority of workers worldwide. The prevalence of informality in the region remains the highest globally, affecting close to 70 per cent of all workers. Among the sub regions, South Asia has the highest share of informal employment (about 90 per cent). The informality is characterised by lower and less regular incomes, long working hours and commonly lack representation. They are also often physically and financially vulnerable because their work is either excluded from or effectively outside labour protection and social protection, including social security. In addition, their nature constitutes a barrier to the creation of democratic independent workers’ organisations and sometimes not allowed under national or local legislation to pursue and defend their collective interests. Furthermore, the majority of informal economy workers, particularly women, have precarious livelihoods and many face extreme poverty.

Migrant workers are vulnerable in both sending and receiving countries. They often found in non-standard forms of work and face multiple levels of discrimination. There is a general lack of knowledge of relevant international legal standards and in many instances, a lack of political will or institutional capacity to apply these standards to laws, policy and practice. The situation of migrant workers should be addressed through the principles of international trade union solidarity, social justice, equal treatment, equal opportunity and gender equity.

Multinational companies have imposed a supply chain model which generated precarious work. The increasing trend of shorter product cycles is also resulting in downstream consequences for workers. The current business model, including the use of EPZs is highly flawed and characterised by low wages, insecure and unsafe work. Social protection is lacking while tax avoidance and evasion are widespread and
employment adjustment is normally made only from the business perspective not in compliance with the ILO Convention No. 158 and Recommendation No. 166 concerning Termination of Employment. The share of value created is distributed extremely unevenly due to unequal bargaining power in supply chains. Collective bargaining holds the key to ensuring that wages and other working conditions of irregular workers are equal to those of regular workers.

The current technological revolution such as increasing automation and digitalisation, which some consider to be fourth industrial revolution are having profound and transformative impact on employment relation. The rise of the “gig” economy in recent years, whereby work is mediated through online web platforms or applications has blurred the contours of the employment relationship, based on which social dialogue and labour-management have been built and operated. These forms of employment are not formally part of an employment relationship, in which workers do not benefit from the protection offered by labour laws, including minimum wage rates, social security coverage and paid sick leave. Moreover, workers in many cases risk being denied the full exercise of fundamental rights at work such as freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining, since many jurisdictions restrict these rights to wage employees. This situation raises fundamental question as to how to ensure that social dialogue’s actors and institutions are relevant to, and representative of, their constituents.

Unionisation rate and bargaining power in many countries in the Asian and Pacific region have been declining. The increasing global economic competition and capital mobility, rapid pace of technological innovations in production, privatisation of public services, rise of contingent employment arrangements and mounting resistance of employers to unionisation have all replaced a large number of permanent workers who were members of trade unions and this has undermined the bargaining power of the trade unions. Organising traditional labour force including the MNCs and EPZs, workers in precarious employment, informal economy and migrant workers including domestic workers is the only way to change the current situation. Trade union law reform in compliance with the ILO Core Conventions is the key to successful organising actions. Thus, corporate power can be balanced.

Social dialogue is lagging and far from being fully utilised in the region. Constructive industrial relations must be established through social dialogue. Sound industrial relations are indispensable for maintaining and expanding quality employment and fair distribution of profit. Labour inspection and monitoring compliance also must be strengthened. The labour inspector must put emphasis on the importance of minimum wages, work conditions, social security, freedom of association, and rights to collective bargaining for informal, contract and outsourced workers.

Trade unions must make fundamental changes to the current course of globalisation that is causing serious employment deficits. Full and productive employment, investment in green job promotion, reducing precarious work and ensuring a living wage as well as complying with international labour rights for all workers and gender equality at the workplace are key elements of employment protection.

Proposed Actions:

- Campaigns to promote decent and secured jobs opportunities with the principle of equal conditions and remuneration for work of equal value in all types of employment;

- Campaigns against unjustifiable employment adjustment in the light of ILO Convention No. 158 and Recommendation No. 166 concerning Termination of Employment;
• Develop or improve the capacity of trade unions to deal with technological advances and their implication on the world of work;
• Assist affiliates to enforce the respect for labour rights and enable all platform workers to organise and collective bargaining;
• Campaigns to promote the ratification and implementation of the ILO Conventions No. 97 on Migration for Employment and No. 143 on Migrant Workers; and
• Support the affiliates to strengthen social dialogue based on full respect for freedom of association and collective bargaining with special emphasis on vulnerable employment in the areas of legislative protection and working conditions.

4. **Decent Work**: Decent Wages and Working Hours for All Workers

The regional economy has been the main power to tow the global economic growth. The share of the Asian and Pacific economy in the global production grows from 22 per cent in 2000 to 33 per cent. Even it is expected that the regional economy would account for more than half of the global production by 2050. In line with the significant economic expansion of the region, the average real wage growth rate in Asia and the Pacific outpaced the global average between 2006 and 2017, mainly led by China as illustrated in Figure 11.

**Figure 11: Annual Average Real Wage Growth in Asia and the Pacific, 2006 - 2017**

![Graph showing annual average real wage growth in Asia and the Pacific, 2006-2017.](image)


However, the wage level in many countries in Asia and the Pacific is still extremely low and the real wage growth has been lagging behind productivity growth in Asia-Pacific as the labour income share continues to fall (Figure 12 and Figure 13) with the income inequality being persistently high in many countries in the region.

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20 According to the ILO, decent work refers to opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organise and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men.
With the labour income share being declining, as proven by various studies, the income inequality continues to rise. This becomes exacerbated by increasing non-standard forms of employment with weakening of labour market institutions; 900 million working men and women are in vulnerable employment; informality is pervasively high but still on an upward trend with huge disadvantage in wages; 1 in 5 workers (around 400 million) is living in poverty (Figure 14), to name a few. Also, it is affected by the expansion of the GSCs which seems not to improve wages but productivity.
Figure 14: Working Poverty in Asia and the Pacific, percentage

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<td>9.3</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Extreme poverty, $1.90 per person per day, Modest poverty, between $1.90 and $3.10 per person per day

Source: ILO, World Employment and Social Outlook, 2019

More importantly, this phenomenon can be attributed to weakening of labour market institutions with declining trade union power. The IMF study has shown that declining trade union density is highly correlated to the rise of income shares at the top. Labour market flexibility under neo-liberal dominance has been continuously pursued to weaken collective bargaining and minimum wage setting mechanism, which are the main wage policy tools while a national bargaining mechanism does not exist in most countries or has been decentralised in a few countries.

Minimum wages are adopted widely by the ILO member states. However, the level of minimum wage in almost all the countries in the region is not sufficient for workers and their family to live with dignity. Further, the most vulnerable group of workers – informal workers including domestic workers, precarious as well as underemployed workers, women and youth – are excluded from the protection of minimum wages while non-compliance of minimum wage is rampant. It is also seriously concerned that trade union engagement in minimum wage setting has been constantly deteriorated and restricted.

There are strong opposition forces against increasing minimum wages on the pretext of protecting employment. However, there is no single study to show the negative impact of minimum wage increase on employment. Rather, the beneficiaries of minimum wages, in general, have higher propensity to consume, which means the amount of increase in wages is likely to be spent for the domestic economy by private consumption. Further, adequate and sufficient minimum wages can strengthen the supply side economy.

In this regard, the ITUC-AP promotes living wages based on a strong and broad collective bargaining system with sufficient levels of a minimum wage as a floor, defined as follows;

**Minimum Wages** refer to a statutorily guaranteed sum of payment for work performed or services without any abatement by individual or collective bargaining as a minimum floor of income. The level should be determined by tripartite mechanisms based on socially acceptable minimum needs of workers and their families to live with dignity in reference to economic and industrial conditions; however, the level must be fixed above the national poverty line; and
**Living Wages** refer to a sufficient level of wage that enables workers and their families to live with dignity and to participate as active citizens in society. The levels of living wage shall be fixed for difference family/age/career groups through collective bargaining on the basis of the cost of living which should include various expenses necessary for educational, social, cultural activities in addition to basic human needs calculated on reliable statistical data. The living wage must be above the minimum wage.

With poor observance of the freedom of association and declining union density, it is obvious, that collective bargaining coverage in Asia and the Pacific remains very low. The average rate of collective bargaining coverage in the developing Asia is around 1 - 2 per cent. Under these circumstances, the fundamental principle of 'Equal Pay for Work of Equal Value' has been too far from reality. Therefore, the ITUC-AP advocates the principle together with a clear wage policy to ensure that **wage growth should reflect the cost of living but also ensure workers’ share in the benefits of productivity growth in specific national contexts so that the labour income share should recover to a more equitable level.**

Without redress the failure of income distribution by strengthening labour market institutions, high income inequality will persist, and the poverty reduction will be slowed down. Many studies prove that high income inequality undermines sustainable economic growth. Indeed, in order to ensure sustainability in our economic, social and political domains, inclusiveness based on strengthening trade union power with collective bargaining is prerequisite.

With the increasing prevalence of non-standard forms of employment, strongly associated with poverty or low wages as well as poor working conditions, many workers are either vulnerable to long working hours or involuntarily have to accept precarious part-time works to maintain a certain level of consumption for their survival.

On average, as illustrated in Figure 15, most countries in the region have the average weekly working hours per worker, not more than 48 hours. However, the share of workers working more than 48 hours in Figure 16 demonstrates a different story of long working hours in Asia and the Pacific; in 13 out of 19 sample countries, more than 25% of workers are working longer than 48 hours per week. More than half of workers in Bangladesh, Cambodia and Myanmar are exposed to excessive working hours.

**Figure 15: Mean Weekly Hours Actually Worked, per employed person**

![Chart](source: ILOSTAT, ILO)
According to the ILO study, it becomes more evident that the region has longer working hours as compared with other regions. In Figure 17, Asia and the Pacific has the highest rate of excessive working hours (45.8 per cent of workers). Especially South Asia (54.5 per cent) and East Asia (44.9 per cent) have highest rates among sub-regions.

The same ILO study also shows that 18.8 per cent of workers in the globe (15.7 per cent in Asia and the Pacific) are in part-time work with short work hours (less than 35 hours a week). Especially, 5.1 per cent of global workers (4.9 per cent in Asia and the Pacific) are in serious under-employment to work less than 15 hours per week. A main concern with regard to part-time as well as under employment is under-utilisation of the labour force and exploitive practices such as zero-hour contract. Also another worrying issue of shorter hours of work is gender difference as women workers are disproportionately concentrated on works with short hours or very short hours of part-time work. This may stem not only from a lack of decent job opportunity for women as well as discrimination, but also high burden of unpaid works on women. Gender equality and work-life balance
should be promoted. One of policy measures to do so might be the increase in investment in care economy together with accurate and fair valuation of unpaid works.

**Figure 18: Proportion of Workers Working More Than 48 Hours, by employment**

The employment nature also causes working hour difference. As displayed in Figure 18, workers in informal employment are likely to work excessive hours. 51.8 per cent of workers in informal employment in Asia and the Pacific are working more than 48 hours per week. Even workers in formal employment in the region are also vulnerable to longer working hours.

Another aspect related to longer working hours is income inequality as the labour market deficits is a main force behind it. Using OECD data sets, it can be shown that a country with higher income inequality could expect to have longer annual working hours per worker (Figure 19).

**Figure 19: Working Hours and Income Inequality (37 countries)**
Technological progress, ICT in particular, has been transforming the world of work including working time arrangement. Working time flexibility together with the increase accessibility to work via ICT devises, in fact, results in a vague distinction between working time and personal time. Further, workers in a gig economy or a platform economy face increasing uncertainty. Even though workers need to be disconnected from their work for personal time for themselves or their family, the digitalisation and the ICD technology seem to weaken worker’s ability to control their time.

Long working hours are associated with physical and mental health issues of workers. Also, it causes work-life imbalance which deteriorates quality of the worker’s life with more stress and anxiety, which, in turn, affects their works. It is obvious that longer working hours lower productivity and undermine performance, which not only affects workers but also businesses.

In regard to the working hour issues highlighted above, the ILO, in its report on the future of work, recommends to expand time sovereignty based on ‘measures that create working time autonomy that meets the needs of both workers and enterprises’. The measures should include equal treatment for all types of workers, strong legal instruments with effective inspectorate to regulate long working hours, social supports including a social protection measure to help workers in underemployment or part-time to move to formal and secure jobs.

For decent wages and working hours for all workers, as the ILO recommended in the report, a Universal Labour Guarantee ‘including fundamental workers’ rights, an “adequate living age”, limits on hours of work and ensuring safe and healthy workplaces’ should be established and applied to workers in all types of employment.

Proposed Actions:

- Regional and national campaigns for promoting strong national minimum wage setting institutions based on constructive social dialogue with full participation of tripartite bodies with the aim to fix minimum wages at realistic and adequate level;
- Regional and national campaigns for legislation and strong labour inspection to expand the coverage of minimum wages and its compliance as well as to regulate working hours for expanding time sovereignty;
- Regional and national campaigns for ratification of relevant ILO Conventions including No. 95, No. 100, No. 131, No. 144 and No. 81;
- Regional and national campaigns for establishing Universal Labour Guarantee applicable to all workers; and
- Capacity building for trade unions in research and data collection to strengthen their stance on wage negotiations including minimum wages and working schedule arrangements.

5. Income-led Growth: Towards Sustainable and Inclusive Growth

Income inequality in Asia and the Pacific, comparing with the world as well as other regions, has an upward trend as the maximum, the minimum and the mean Gini indexes have been rising for the last 20 years as shown in Figure 20 below. Many studies prove that income inequality is a major obstacle to sustainable economic growth. In order to ensure sustainable growth, this problem should be redressed.
Income inequality is a result of failure in income distributive and re-distributive mechanisms. Especially, the labour market is the main channel through which income inequality becomes aggravated with weakening of labour market institutions; workers’ rights, freedom of association and collective bargaining right in particular, are undermined, non-standard forms of employment are prevailing and social protection deficits persist, to name a few. This means that redressing income inequality is a policy choice. The government should strengthen labour market institutions with fundamental workers’ rights being respected. Fiscal policy for adequate social spending for universal social protection based on improvement of domestic mobilisation including fair taxation should be implemented. A systematic social spending in case of an economic shock or crisis can be recommendable in order to inject social spending to an economic system in a timely manner to maintain a certain level of domestic consumption.

Especially in Asia and the Pacific, private consumption is the major economic activity which all economies disproportionately rely on. Workers and their families are the principle force of private consumption with higher propensity to consume and the world economy as a whole is a closed economy. Therefore, the growth, based on debt-driven and labour exploitation, cannot sustain. Many researches have already proven that the coordinated increase in the share of wages would increase the global economic growth. Indeed, income equality is essential in achieving sustainable economic growth.

Further, domestic demand is closely related to employment. As depicted in Figure 21, the ADB study has shown that the major share of employment in many countries in the Asia-Pacific region is dependent on domestic final demand. According to the study, more than 82 per cent employment in the Developing Asia, composing of 12 economies, depend on domestic final demand. Around or more than 70 per cent of employment in 10 individual countries (Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mongolia, Philippines, PRC, Korea, Sri Lanka, Thailand) are dependent on domestic final demand. This implies that it is necessary to shift our focus from the export-led growth to the growth based on domestic consumption.
Therefore, having considered the unjust, unstable and unsustainable current growth regime with declining of the labour income share and rising income inequality, it is necessary to shift the growth paradigm from the current market and debt-driven growth to an income-led growth, which is a growth model based on high-income and pro-labour distributional policies, accompanied by legislative and structural policies aiming at building strong labour market institutions, that generates, by boosting domestic demand, an equitable, stable and inclusive growth regime for the sustainable future. The income-led growth is not just simply pursuing the increases in wages. It is a structural and institutional change to ensure fair distribution of fruits of economic growth, including economic democratisation. Further, this growth regime can be compatible with supply side economy to boost productivity growth.

However, most importantly, this growth model should be in line with wage policy rules to guarantee that wage growth should reflect the cost of living but also ensure workers’ share in the benefits of productivity growth in specific national context so that the labour income share should recover to a more equitable level alongside reduction of working hours to the level of international standards (40 hours per week) without any abatement of income level.

Proposed Actions:
- Regional and national campaigns for high-income and pro-labour distributional policies, accompanied by legislative and structural policies aiming at building strong labour market institutions; and
- Regional and national campaigns to urge governments to establish or improve a system to collect statistical data such as wage trends and relevant socio-economic factors including productivity under trade union governance to formulate better and fair wage policy aiming to move towards income-led growth.
III. GLOBAL SHIFTS

1. Just Transition: No Jobs in the Dead Planet

Climate change affects all of us today, not tomorrow. Environmental degradation has been accelerating with natural disasters being more frequent and intensified as illustrated in Figure 22.

Figure 22: Natural Disasters and Damages in Asia and the Pacific

![Graph showing natural disasters and damages in Asia and the Pacific](image)

Note: Sum of data for ILO member States in Asia-Pacific region (data from Emergency Events Database)

Source: ILO, Just Transition, Decent Work, and Climate Resilience, 2018

The Asian and Pacific region is the most affected region in the globe. It was found that the region was hit by around half of all recorded natural events - cyclones, tropical storms, floods and other extreme weather events – in 2016, which resulted in the displacements of more than 250 million people. Among the top ten countries with the newest displacements of people due to the sudden onset of natural disaster in 2016, 8 countries are in the Asian and Pacific region as depicted in Figure 23. In addition, most of around 800 million people at risk of coastal flooding by 2025 are from the region.

Figure 23: Countries with the Most New Displacements by Disasters, 2016

![Bar chart showing countries with the most new displacements](image)

Source: Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), 2017
Unfortunately, its adverse impacts on the livelihood of workers and their families, especially those who are vulnerable already, are acute. Climate change makes them more vulnerable to poverty and income deprivation. Furthermore, workers have been faced with enormous transformation of the world of work such as employment, production and so on. For example, 70.7 per cent of 1.2 billion jobs, 848 million, directly or heavily relying on ecosystem services resided in Asia and the Pacific. This number was almost half of total employment in the region in 2014. It is, therefore, imperative and urgent for the trade union movement to take climate actions to protect our planet, people and jobs.

A just transition should be the goal of our actions as well as the process to realise the goal. By the restless effort of the trade union movement, the just transition has been recognised as a key requirement of the Paris Agreement, as defined by the ILO global guidelines for Just Transition. The Paris Agreement, adopted in 2015 and signed by 195 countries as of November 2017, with an objective to limit the increase in global temperature compared to pre-industrial levels well below 2 degrees Celsius, aiming at limiting it to 1.5 degrees Celsius, stipulates ‘a just transition of the workforce and the creation of decent work and quality jobs in accordance with nationally defined development priorities’. In addition, the just transition is also essential in realising the Sustainable Development Goals.

Given the importance of the just transition to tackle climate change towards sustainable, inclusive and climate resilient development, “Solidarity and Just Transition Silesia Declaration” was adopted by 53 countries and the European Commission, including 8 countries from Asia and the Pacific in December 2018 at the COP 24 in Katowice, Poland. Furthermore, in November 2018, the Heads of 10 ASEAN States and Governments adopted “ASEAN Declaration on Promoting Green Jobs for Equity and Inclusive Growth of ASEAN Community” to ‘promote equity and inclusiveness by encouraging ASEAN Member States to cooperate with tripartite members, dialogue partners,….., in the implementation of this Declaration’. These global and regional commitments will become an important avenue for trade unions’ engagement with the other social partners for preparing and implementing national plans or strategies towards green and sustainable economy, including nationally determined contributions.

On a national or regional scale, the just transition is an economy-wide process that produces the plans, policies and investments towards a future where all jobs are green and decent, emission is at net zero, poverty is eradicated, and communities are resilient. Just transition measures should be discussed based on social dialogue. On the enterprise level, a company can also plan and implement its emissions reduction efforts based on dialogue between workers and employers.

According to the New Climate Economy Report 2018, by the Global Commission on the Economy and Climate, a green economy could deliver economic benefits of US$26.00 trillion and create 65 million new jobs by 2030. Similarly, as illustrated in Figure 24, the ILO also estimated that climate mitigation action to limit average global temperature increase by 2 degrees Celsius would result in a net addition of 18 million jobs worldwide.

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21 ILO, World Employment and Social Outlook 2018: Greening with Jobs, 2018
22 Fiji, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Mongolia, Nepal, New Zealand, Thailand.
23 The declaration encourages, ‘taking into consideration the issue of just transition of workforce and the creation of decent work and quality jobs, while preparing and implementing nationally determined contributions, national adaptation plans and national long-term low greenhouse gas emission development strategies.
24 The declaration defines green jobs as decent jobs in economic sectors which reduce negative environmental impacts.
25 The new or revised national determined contributions (NDCs), according to the Paris Agreement, should be submitted in 2020.
by 2030, comparing with business-as-usual scenario. The new jobs would be concentrated in Asia and the Pacific (79 per cent - 14.2 million jobs).

**Figure 24: Net Change in Employment in the Climate Mitigation Scenario, 2030**

![Figure 24](image)

In order to ensure the just transition, there should be a framework for (1) macroeconomic, sectoral and enterprise policies ensuring jobs and decent work; (2) rights and occupational safety and health; (3) social protection; (4) skills development; (5) active labour market policies; and (6) social dialogue and tripartism. However, it seems that the framework is not in place in Asia and the Pacific.

Therefore, it is urgently needed for the trade union movement in the region to endeavour to build and implement the framework to ensure the just transition, a cross-cutting issue, in Asia and the Pacific. Especially, the just transition should be incorporated into every trade union agenda and activity.

In the process of the just transition, the contribution of conventional emission producing industries to today's economic development should be recognised. The just transition cannot be realised without unity in the trade union movement.

In addition, importance or necessity of nuclear energy for economic development is widely recognised. However, we have also had a series of major accidents that occurred in the past with a few decades or more being required to quell accidents, control radiation and recover from disastrous damages. There should be a transition period to phase out the use of such energy that would also narrow the possible avenue of misuse of atomic energy. The international community should intensify investment on greener energy towards sustainable economic and social development.

**Proposed Actions:**
- Regional and national campaigns to design and implement a just transition based on social dialogue;

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26 ILO Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all, 2015.
• Lobbying and engagement with governments, regional/inter-regional governmental bodies and the IFIs\textsuperscript{27} to promote green jobs and a just transition;
• Establishment of a regional network on climate actions among affiliates, and active participation in the COP process;
• Regional and national campaigns for ratification of the ILO Convention No. 158; and
• Promotion and facilitation of international solidarity among affiliates for the rehabilitation of victims of the adverse impacts of climate change.


The ILO defines social dialogue as “all types of negotiation, consultation or simply exchange of information between, or among, representatives of workers, governments and employers, on issues of common interest relating to economic and social policy. As defined, it takes various forms, but it has a clear goal to promote consensus building and democratic involvement among the main stakeholders in the world of work”.

Collective bargaining is inseparable from social dialogue and, in fact, the most important form of social dialogue. Further, social dialogue is a democratic institution to ensure sustainability and inclusiveness in socio-economic development with accountability and transparency being strengthened among social partners. It is not just a process or tool but a social contract as real and genuine social dialogue is only realised based on full respect for freedom of association and right to collective bargaining.

It is obvious, as explained above, social dialogue is an integral part of the Decent Work Agenda with better wages and working conditions being promoted, sustainable enterprises being facilitated, and social peace and justice being upheld. Also, social dialogue is related to the Sustainable Development Goals; Goal 8 on decent work and economic growth, Goal 10 on reduced inequality and Goal 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions.

However, effective social dialogue does not seem to be in place in Asia and the Pacific where fundamental workers’ rights have been violated or restricted rampantly. Indeed, Asia and the Pacific is the region with the fewest number of ratification of ILO Convention No. 87 and No. 98; No. 87 has been ratified by 18 countries and No. 98 has been ratified by 21 countries only in Asia and the Pacific. Consequently, low union density, various restrictions on trade unions even complete denial of trade union rights are pervasive in the region. Moreover, divisions among trade unions are also attributable. Under a lack of social dialogue with weakening of labour market institutions, industrial relations in the region are confrontational.

In addition, as shown in the Figure 25, Asia and the Pacific is the region with the lowest percentage, 55 per cent, of countries having ratified the ILO Convention No. 144 (Tripartite Consultation).\textsuperscript{28}

\textsuperscript{27} The Asian Development Bank makes a target that at least 75 per cent of the number of its committed operations (on a 3-year rolling average, including sovereign and non-sovereign operations) will be supporting climate change mitigation and adaptation by 2030 in its new long-term strategy, Strategy 2030. Further, the ADB is also committed that climate finance from ADB’s own resources will reach $80 billion for the period 2019 - 2030.

\textsuperscript{28} Europe and Central Asia: 88 per cent, Americas and the Caribbean: 86 per cent, Africa: 74 per cent
Genuine, constructive and effective social dialogue benefits all stakeholders including communities. It would create an environment for decent work and common welfare, and a stable political climate for solidarity and democratic participation.

Social partnership backed by constructive industrial relations evolves, at national, industrial and company levels, based on recognition of the trade union where firm institutional frameworks of bipartism and tripartism should function properly and effectively. In this connection, neutrality and speedy dispute settlement is essential. Productivity, a contentious issue in industrial relations in a confrontational climate of industrial relations, should be taken up by such a forum in pursuit of the principles of employment promotion, consultation with unions and fair distribution of gained profit to stakeholders.

The ITUC-AP promotes regional social dialogue with Confederation of Asian and Pacific Employers (CAPE), which is functioning as a unique platform to facilitate social dialogue and constructive industrial relations at the national level.

It should be noted that CSR is different from the constructive industrial relations; CSR cannot substitute to the function of industrial relations. Full recognition and operations of trade unions in compliance with the ILO Conventions No. 87 and No. 98 in pursuit of decent work is a necessary condition of properly functioning UN Global Compact and ISO.

Proposed Actions:
- Regional and national campaigns for fundamental workers’ rights including ratification of the ILO Convention No. 87 and No. 98;
- Promotion of ratification of the ILO Convention No. 144 (Tripartite Consultation);
- Regional and national campaigns for effective social dialogue and constructive industrial relations by developing or implementing institutions including effective dispute settlement mechanisms;
- Dialogues with employers’ organisations including the Confederation of Asia-Pacific Employers (CAPE); and
- Engagement with international institutions including the IFIs.
3. **Sustainable Development Goals**

By signing the UN Sustainable Development Goals in September 2015 with the title “Transforming our World”, the governments of the member states are committed to changing course and leaving the path of “business as usual”. They are committed to follow a more holistic approach to development marked by the 17 SDGs, their 169 integrated and indivisible targets and 232 indicators. The trade union movement led by the ITUC had identified six trade union priority SDGs - 1 (Poverty), 5 (Gender equality), 8 (Decent work and economic growth), 10 (Reduce inequalities), 13 (Climate action) and 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions). The SDGs represent the political response to daunting global economic, social and environmental crises.

At the time of the adoption of the SDGs, the world was in the midst of unfettered neoliberal economic policies characterised by a fixation on economic growth, accumulation and wealth concentration which increased social and economic inequalities, persistent poverty, unemployment, social exclusion and higher levels of insecurity, which have been threatening care systems and social cohesion and political stability. Unsustainable production and consumption patterns have accelerated global warming, depleted the ozone layer, saturated land with nitrogen and poisons, created plastic waste dumps even in the most isolated places. Disrespect to decent work and discrimination against women were the hallmarks of this order.

The 2030 Agenda admits that enormous disparities of opportunities, wealth and power exist which pose one of the immense challenges to sustainable development. It recognises that sustainable and inclusive economic growth will only be possible if wealth is shared and income inequality is addressed. Inequality is mainly a result of market concentration and accumulation of wealth and economic power in the hands of a relatively small number of multinational corporations and filthy rich individuals. Immense concentration of wealth and power is inimical to progress across the entire 2030 Agenda. Growing inequality is the result of deliberate policy choices. In many countries, fiscal and regulatory policies have not only led to the weakening of public sector but have also enabled the unprecedented accumulation of individual wealth and increasing market concentration. Therefore, inclusion of a goal to reduce inequalities is one of the major strengths of the SDGs. According to estimates, the bottom half of the global population own less than 1 per cent of total wealth. The richest 10 per cent hold 88 per cent of the world’s wealth, and the top 1 per cent alone account for 50 per cent of global assets.

While the growing inequality increases the ability of corporations and rich elites to influence policy-making to protect their wealth and privileges, the power of trade unions is increasingly eroded. This extreme inequality is inimical to the 2030 Agenda. Concentration of wealth directly or indirectly affects all elements of the 2030 Agenda. Extreme economic inequality is, for instance linked with persistent and chronic poverty. Such concentration of wealth threatens the achievement of the 2030 Agenda by fundamentally affecting the amount of resources that are available to be spent on sustainable development.

The adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals provides an agenda for development with decent work at its heart. The SDGs must not remain simply an inspiration – they provide an important universal framework for decisions about the future of work, and in particular the role of government, are integrated.

A unique feature of the SDG 2030 Agenda is the provision for National Voluntary Review by the governments at the annual UN High Level Political Forum. But this would be effective only if all stakeholders including trade unions are involved in the development and presentation of the report. Otherwise it will remain a bureaucratic rhetoric not exactly reflecting the ground realities.
Although there are welcome initiatives in many countries for realisation of the SDGs, most governments in the region have failed to translate the transformational vision of the 2030 Agenda into the effective policies and programmes. Many of the governments are actually choosing the opposite direction thus spawning apprehensions of failure.

Goal 8 is the most critical one for trade unions. This is the first time that an international development instrument specifically mentions decent work as one of its goals. The Goal 8 seeks to promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth coupled with full and productive employment and decent work for all. It embraces the ILO’s decent work agenda and its four strategic pillars namely, fundamental workers' rights, employment, social protection and social dialogue. It makes a link between the pursuit of economic growth and that of decent work for all.

It is an established fact that sustained economic growth is necessary but an insufficient condition for poverty reduction. Quality growth is needed to reduce poverty but essentially, to do it through the creation of full employment and decent work for all. The Goal stresses a pattern of growth that is sustained over a long period; one that is inclusive by tackling structural inequalities and ensuring that the rewards of growth are fairly shared so that growth works for all, not just for a few; finally a pattern of growth that is sustainable – in other words, one that does not compromise the welfare of future generations simply for short term gain, and one that reconciles the environmental, social and economic dimensions of development. Finally, this Goal rejects jobless growth, and calls for a pattern of economic growth that is labour intensive and leads to the creation of full employment and decent work for all.

It is to be noted that since the financial crisis, the global economy is yet to recover fully. It is still trapped in a cycle of low growth which is adversely affecting the creation of jobs and poverty reduction. Weak global growth coupled with financialisation of the global economy and high levels of inequality are having devastating employment and social consequences.

To achieve the objective, decent work must be placed at the heart of microeconomic policies of countries. The creation of decent jobs cannot be seen simply as a by-product of growth but must rather be one of the economic growth strategies. Creation of decent jobs must be a central preoccupation of macroeconomic policy alongside fiscal and monetary policy concerns. According to the ILO’s Social Justice Declaration, “The four strategic objectives are inseparable, interrelated and mutually supportive. The failure to promote any one of them would harm progress towards the others. To optimise their impact, efforts to promote them should be part of a global and integrated strategy.” Trade unions must therefore ensure that national SDG policies aimed at implementing Goal 8 are not limited to only employment policies or social protection policies but include all the four dimensions of Decent Work.

Adoption of the SDG 2030 Agenda envisages a revitalised global partnership between States which would accord a vital role for public finance in achieving the SDGs. But the implementation phase, at least initially, gave marked emphasis on private sector engagement, investment and resources. Policies still seem to be heavily in favour of private financing and private sector partnerships as the primary means of implementation which based on the wrong notion that relying on private sector is the more affordable and efficient option. This increased reliance on private sector will lead to job cuts and lower labour costs just contrary to the SDG No. 8 on Decent work, economic growth and employment. Privatisation has often led to denial of collective agreements, drive down wages and working conditions, introduce precarious work and threaten women’s rights and gender equality.

Trade union involvement in the SDG implementation shall be based on the experiences in the previous global development frameworks. These would help trade unions to
engage more effectively in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The more successful unions in the past programmes were those that were able to make a connection between their everyday and traditional concerns on the one hand, with the national planning process on the other hand. Making this link helped the unions to internalise the demands of participating in these national development plans and gave meaning to their participation.

Proposed Actions:

- Campaign for inclusion of trade unions in the implementation of SDGs;
- Campaign for involvement of trade unions in the preparation of national voluntary reviews;
- Encourage trade union monitoring of SDG implementation;
- Campaign for a national minimum wage; and
- Activities on monitoring and follow-up of Goal 8 Decent Work and Economic growth and Employment.

IV. EQUALITY

1. Advancing Women’s Rights and Equality for All

Trade unions have led the struggle to achieve gender equality in the workplace, in their policies, in their own structures and in society. Gender equality provides an essential context and pre-condition for building a strong, democratic, future-ready trade union movement and fairer, prosperous and equal societies.

The ITUC-AP and affiliates set out its vision and explicit commitment to the achievement of gender equality and women’s empowerment in all aspects of its work through the Platform of Action for Gender Equality (PAGE). Renewed every four years, the Platform which forms part of the ITUC-AP Policies and Action Programme, lays the foundation for the organisation’s wider policy and action towards achieving gender equality, women’s empowerment and contributions to sustainable development.

Gender equality has been better embedded in the activities, policies and agenda of unions more than ever before. A quick review of programmes, activities and lessons learned showed important, considerable and concrete progress, often as a result of women-led campaigns, advocacy and representation. A few examples of these efforts include:

- improved participation and representation of women in leadership and decision-making in unions;
- increased affiliates’ attention to mainstreaming and allocation of resources to gender equality and women’s empowerment initiatives;
- more collective bargaining agreements and workplace policies have incorporated the principles of gender equality;
- improved delivery and provision of services to women members and their families;
- affiliates, working with others, secured passage of several new or strengthened laws, legal precedents or policies on gender equality and non-discrimination; and
- increased use by affiliates of litigation and other related avenues to address pay and other forms of discrimination.

These are encouraging, long overdue steps forward in our fight for gender equality, women’s empowerment and equal rights for all in the region. The benefits of narrowing gender gaps in the form of social and economic impact, millions of lives transformed and progress in many areas has long been established. The McKinsey Global Institute (MGI) estimated that advancing gender equality could add $12 trillion per year to the world
economy by 2025. In the Asia-Pacific region alone, getting more women into full-time employment in higher-paid, higher-productivity sectors could add $4.5 trillion per year to Gross Domestic Product (GDP), 12 per cent above the current trajectory. The opportunity is especially large for India, where GDP would grow by as much as 18 per cent.

Critical gender gaps persist both in work and society and continue to prevent this huge economic potential from being realised. Startling numbers of women and other marginalised groups are still denied many of their basic rights, discriminated against and systematically prevented from fully contributing to the economy, the workplace, their homes and communities. The following data are revealing:

- women’s labour force participation has either dropped or stagnated, contributing just 36 per cent of the $26 trillion in GDP;
- the percentage of women trapped in vulnerable employment is high across sub regions – 68 per cent in South Asia, 45 per cent in North and Central Asia, 42 per cent in East Asia, 31 per cent in South-East Asia and 21 per cent in the Pacific;
- in 2015, the gender pay gap in the region as a whole reached an astounding 20 per cent;
- women spend four times the amount of time as men on unpaid care which would conservatively be valued at $3.7 trillion of economic output;
- there are fewer than 25 women for every 100 (or 1 in 4) men in leadership positions (including in politics); and
- in East Asia and the Pacific, approximately half of the examined economies still do not have laws prohibiting sexual harassment in employment.

Given the magnitude of inequalities that remain and opportunities for implementing the ITUC-AP’s commitments to gender equality and women’s empowerment, the trade union movement is challenged to keep the level of engagement high, accelerate focus on priority areas where they can make more, substantive and transformative progress and close the critical gaps that remain.

Drawing on the progress made, on what worked, and key lessons learned within and across countries in the region over the last four years, ITUC-AP’s continued work on gender equality will pay particular attention to four (4) areas – identified as having the largest concentrations of gender gaps – that need to be addressed:

1. **Count us in the TRADE UNION MOVEMENT** - building an inclusive trade union movement
2. **Count us in LEADERSHIP, POLICY and DECISION-MAKING** – building women’s leadership for future-ready trade union movement
3. **Count us in the ECONOMY** – removing barriers to women’s economic empowerment

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29 The Power of Parity: Advancing Women’s Equality in Asia-Pacific, McKinsey Global Institute, April 2018
30 The Women at Work Initiative: The Push For Equality, ILO, 2018
31 United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)
32 Ibid.
33 Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work, ILO, 2018
35 Ibid.
36 World Bank’s Women, Business and the Law 2018
(4) *Count EVERYBODY IN* – addressing the impact of multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination

The key challenges are – (1) *how do we cement and protect progress made against any deterioration or backlash from forces that seek to undermine our gains and efforts; and (2) how can we accelerate the women’s rights and agenda faster and higher?*

As an integral component of the new and updated Platform, concerted effort was made to ensure its coherence with the ITUC Strategic Framework; Conclusions and Commitments from the 3rd ITUC Women’s Organising Assembly (11 - 13 October 2017, San Jose, Costa Rica); and ITUC-AP priorities and various resolutions on gender equality.

Proposed key actions around the above-mentioned four thematic areas are enumerated in the Annexure: ITUC-AP PLATFORM OF ACTION FOR GENDER EQUALITY (2019 - 2023).

2. **More Youth in the Mainstream of Trade Union Movement**

   According to United Nations World Population Prospects in 2017, there are 750 million young people (aged 15 to 24) living in Asia-Pacific, comprising 60 per cent of the world’s youth. India alone has 234 million young people. It comes up about 19 per cent of the regional total population. Moreover, youth aged 15 to 34 come up around 30 per cent of total population and 48 per cent of total working age population (aged 15 to 64) in this region. Definitely youth is not minority in number.

   However, it is hard to say that their voices are heard enough in economy, society, politics and even trade unions. As a result, they are still struggling and facing difficulties and challenges such as unemployment, poverty, informal economy, NEET (young people not in employment, education or training), transition from school to work among others. These challenges are not only for youth, but they are affected more seriously. Youth is last-in and can be the first-out at their workplaces. Practical and effective measures for youth employment are definitely required but still left behind in the shadows of the changing world. Moreover, those challenges are affecting union density among youth. Because of negative impacts such as unfair labour practices at workplace, short-term contracts or lack of awareness/knowledge on trade unions, organising young workers is not succeeded yet in many unions. Needless to say, this will gravely affect the future of trade unions and it’s desperate and urgent to get more youth in the mainstream of Trade Union Movement for our success in the future.

   The average rate of youth unemployment in Asia-Pacific is around 11 per cent, which is slightly lower than other OECD areas. In fact, because of absence of unemployment benefits and other support measures, youth of this region cannot afford being unemployed. Also, the working poverty rate of young workers (aged 15 to 24) is higher than adult population (aged 25 to 64). In emerging and developing countries, 16.7 per cent of young workers live on income below the extreme poverty threshold (US$1.90 per day). 54 per cent of employed youth in South Asia and 28 per cent in South East Asia are below working poverty (less than US$3.10 per day). Globally, more than three of four (76.7 per cent) employed youth are in informal economy. In developing countries, 96.8 per cent of young workers are affected by informality37. However, even if they can find full time jobs in formal economy, still they tend to be suffering from worse working conditions including extreme long working hours and quite low wages less than minimum living wages. Young people are crucially struggling after entering the job market.

37 Global Employment Trends For Youth 2017
On the other hand, NEET still remains high and the rate is globally 21 per cent. It can be called “hidden unemployment” which isn’t counted in any categories and seldom come up in the public. Reducing this rate is one of the primary targets in the 2030 agenda for SDGs. Ironically, the rate is lower in developing countries, because of the absence of social protection mechanisms. They cannot afford being NEET. Also, another feature is that the female NEET rate is 34.4 per cent compared to 9.8 per cent for males. This is very similar to the trend of the gender gaps in youth labour participation. The gender gap in South Asia is 32.8 per cent, South East Asia and the Pacific is 14.6 per cent and East Asia is 2.6 per cent. Still gender norms rooted in cultural and social traditions remain as an instrumental factor behind these trends.

Quality education is the key to get quality job, but there are many challenges such as gender inequality, income gaps, rural-urban disparity, transition between secondary and tertiary education in this area. Transition from school to work is one of serious concerns for young people. Because the transition into the labour market is shaped not only by the personal characteristics but also depends on the number and kind of jobs in the market, mismatches are caused. Globally, the average time for the full transition to a stable and satisfactory job was 13.8 months.

The discussions on Future of Work should be led by youth, because their lives are directly and significantly influenced by the new technologies and the transformation of industries. Nowadays, more young people are stating their working lives with short-term work arrangements in the platform and gig economies. This trend creates job opportunities, but leads to more casual wage employment, insecure and temporary jobs and fewer accesses to social protection and other work-related benefits. Youth values flexibility, however, job security comes first. As stated in Goal 8 of the SDGs, full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for youth is what youth demands. For achieving the goal, clear policies and strategies are required.

Those challenges are not caused because young people do not have voice. They have clear voices and political will to achieve a favourable future of work for all. Youth must be involved in the decision-making processes to shape the future. Youth wants to build a future valuing peace, harmony, democracy, solidarity and social justice and believe it would become a reality. To realise the future, they want to change internally and externally the “stereotype” of trade unions, extend collaboration and cooperation, strengthen national and international solidarity and activate youth power in and out of trade unions. The ITUC-AP Youth Charter 2015 - 2019, which was developed by the ITUC-AP Youth Committee, expresses serious concern and forcefully urged trade union attention and assistance to the issues faced by young people. This is the youth voice. Along with the Charter, young union members are taking actions and conducting campaigns to achieve decent work for all young workers, to realise social protections for workers in informal economy and gig economy, to protest workers’ rights of short-term employment and also organise youth events to nurture friendship and build strong solidarity.

According to the ITUC-AP Survey on youth activities, which was conducted in April 2018, 21 out of 23 (91 per cent) who had responded have youth structures. It looked very positive and progressive outcome, however, the rest of our 59 affiliates are still unsure. And even if national centres have youth structures, it doesn’t mean all their affiliates, in particular, local unions have youth structures or representatives aged 35 or below. Therefore, sometimes it is very difficult to hear the real voices of youth and reflect them into the policies of trade unions. Establishment of youth structure is essentially required. Positive and youth-oriented youth structures can be the engine to activate trade unions and promote our trade union movement ahead.
Also, 17 out of 21 (81 per cent) responded affiliates have youth representatives or youth members aged 35 or below in their governing bodies. The number is still limited, but it shows important and concrete progress our affiliates have made for the last 6 years, since it was 63 per cent (12 out of 19 respondents) in 2012. Mainstreaming and ensuring youth ownership in trade union movement and maximising youth power are crucial for developing effective trade union structures, policies and activities. A bright future of trade unions comes together with active young stars. Let’s get more youth in the mainstream of Trade Union Movement!
Annexure I

ITUC-AP PLATFORM OF ACTION FOR GENDER EQUALITY (2019 - 2023)

Women Leading the Trade Union Movement for Change:
Advancing Women’s Rights and Equality For All in Asia-Pacific

I. CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

1. Important, considerable and concrete progress has been made on realising rights and equal opportunities for women and other marginalised groups in the region. In the 2018 report of the World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap Index, several countries in Asia, including the Philippines, Bangladesh, Mongolia, Lao PDR, Singapore, Vietnam, Thailand, Myanmar, Indonesia and Cambodia, reported progress in women’s economic, education, health and political opportunities.

2. This is an encouraging, long overdue step forward in the struggle for gender equality and women’s empowerment in the region. The benefits of narrowing gender gaps in the form of social and economic impact, millions of lives transformed and progress in many areas has long been established. The McKinsey Global Institute (MGI) estimated that advancing gender equality could add $12 trillion per year to the world economy by 2025. In the Asia-Pacific region alone, getting more women into full-time employment in higher-paid, higher-productivity sectors could add $4.5 trillion per year to Gross Domestic Product (GDP), 12 per cent above the current trajectory. The opportunity is especially large for India, where GDP would grow by as much as 18 per cent.

3. Critical gender gaps persist both in work and society and continue to prevent this huge economic potential from being realised. Startling numbers of women and other marginalised groups are still denied many of their basic rights, discriminated against and systematically prevented from fully contributing to the economy, the workplace, their homes and communities. The following data are revealing:

- women’s labour force participation has either dropped or stagnated, contributing just 36 per cent of the $26 trillion in GDP;
- the percentage of women trapped in vulnerable employment is high across sub regions – 68 per cent in South Asia, 45 per cent in North and Central Asia, 42 per cent in East Asia, 31 per cent in South-East Asia and 21 per cent in the Pacific;
- in 2015, the gender pay gap in the region as a whole reached an astounding 20 per cent;
- women spend four times the amount of time as men on unpaid care which would conservatively be valued at $3.7 trillion of economic output;
- there are fewer than 25 women for every 100 (or 1 in 4) men in leadership positions (including in politics); and

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41 The Power of Parity: Advancing Women’s Equality in Asia-Pacific, McKinsey Global Institute, April 2018
42 The Women at Work Initiative: The Push For Equality, ILO, 2018
43 United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)
44 Ibid.
45 Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work, ILO, 2018
46 https://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2018/06/28/commentary/world-commentary/asia-pacific-regions-gender-parity-imperative/#.W5eEHc4za4Q
• in East Asia and the Pacific, approximately half of the examined economies still do not have laws prohibiting sexual harassment in employment\textsuperscript{48}.

4. United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) estimates that at the current rate of women’s advancement, South Asia would achieve gender equality in 60 years, Central Asia in 130 and East Asia and the Pacific in 160. With these sobering statistics and with so much at stake, not only for women, but for everyone, narrowing, and ultimately closing gender gaps throughout their life course is urgent, immediate and essential to building sustainable and inclusive future.

5. Despite all these, there has never been a better, great time to be a woman in Asia and the Pacific region. Fast forward to 23 years later since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action in 1995, and we are talking about women’s equal rights and empowerment, equal pay for work of equal value, women’s equitable participation and leadership, ending all forms of discrimination against women and marginalised groups and the scourge of gender-based violence (GBV).

6. The key challenges are – (1) how do we cement and protect these against any deterioration or backlash from forces that seek to undermine our gains and efforts; and (2) how can we accelerate the women’s rights and agenda faster and higher in the changing world of work?

II. AN ITUC-AP THAT WORKS FOR WOMEN AND THEIR FAMILIES

7. Realising gender equality, the promotion of women’s rights and empowerment is an important goal for ITUC and ITUC-AP. Gender equality provides an essential context and pre-condition for building a strong, democratic, future-ready trade union movement and fairer, prosperous and equal societies. Specifically, the ITUC-AP Constitution expressly guarantees the full integration of women in trade unions and the promotion of full gender parity in leadership bodies and in activities at all levels.

8. ITUC-AP sets out its vision and explicit commitment to the achievement of gender equality and women’s empowerment in all aspects of its work through the Platform of Action for Gender Equality (PAGE). Renewed every four years, the Platform which forms part of the ITUC-AP Policies and Action Programme, lays the foundation for the organisation’s wider policy and action towards achieving gender equality and contributions to sustainable development.

9. ITUC-AP actions and strategies on gender equality strategies are firmly anchored in many related UN instruments, conventions, recommendations and decisions such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1979), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPIA, 1995), the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1999), the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, ILO Conventions and Recommendations (Nos. 100, 111, 156, 183, 189), agreed conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), including regional instruments and conventions on the rights of women, among others.

10. Gender equality has been better embedded in the activities of unions more than ever before. A quick review of programmes, activities and lessons learned showed visible progress, often as a result of women-led campaigns, advocacy and representation. A few examples of these efforts include:

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{48} World Bank’s Women, Business and the Law 2018
• Improved participation and representation of women in leadership and decision-making – setting up of women’s caucus/platform/gender equality committees (e.g., Australia, Bahrain, Fiji, Indonesia, Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Taiwan); yearly/periodic audits on women’s representation (e.g., Australia, Indonesia, Japan, Mongolia, South Korea, Turkey); provisions for women’s representation/quota in leadership positions (e.g., Cambodia, Fiji, Singapore49, South Korea); more women taking up leadership including as CBA negotiators (e.g., Fiji, India, Myanmar, Turkey)

• Increased institutional attention to mainstreaming and allocation of resources to gender equality and women’s empowerment initiatives – dedicated measures to organise women (e.g., Bahrain, Fiji, Israel, Japan, Myanmar, South Korea, Turkey); migrant/domestic workers (e.g., Malaysia, Indonesia, India, Myanmar, Philippines, Nepal); evidence-informed work on gender-based violence (e.g., Australia, Israel, Mongolia, New Zealand, Philippines, South Korea, Taiwan); campaigns to recognise the value of care work (e.g., Australia, Israel, Singapore); increased participation of men in gender equality programmes (e.g., India, Indonesia, Japan); allocation of public funds for women programmes (e.g., Vanuatu)

• More collective bargaining agreements and workplace policies incorporating the principles of gender equality - provisions for breastfeeding breaks and lactation rooms including in CBAs (e.g., Australia, Philippines, Singapore); gender-based violence/domestic violence (e.g., Australia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Turkey); equal pay/maternity/parental and other leaves (e.g., Indonesia, Myanmar, Singapore); equal remuneration (e.g., Indonesia, Singapore)

• Improved delivery and provision of services to women members and their families – dedicated hotlines for women’s concerns (e.g., Indonesia, Japan); support for single parents/re-employment (e.g., Singapore); mentorship programme (e.g., Australia, Singapore); campaigns against gender-based violence (e.g., Bangladesh, Cambodia, Fiji, India, Mongolia); self-help groups/help desks against discrimination (e.g., India, Nepal)

• Helped secure passage of new or strengthened laws, legal precedents or policies on gender equality and non-discrimination – gender-based violence (e.g., Israel, New Zealand, Pakistan); informal economy/home-based workers (e.g., Pakistan); expanded care and maternity benefits (e.g., India, Israel, Japan, Philippines); equal pay for work of equal value and paid parental leave (e.g., Israel, New Zealand); gendering labour law reforms and CBAs (e.g., Indonesia, Mongolia, Nepal); anti-age discrimination (e.g., Philippines) and integration of people with disabilities into the labour market (e.g., Israel); domestic workers (e.g., Bangladesh, Pakistan); against casualisation (e.g., Israel, Philippines); quota for women in local government bodies (e.g., Sri Lanka)

• Increased use of litigation and other related avenues to address pay and other forms of discrimination – pay equity claims (e.g., New Zealand); against casualisation (e.g., Australia); violation of women’s rights (e.g., Israel, Philippines)

III. STRATEGIC ACTIONS 2019 - 2023

11. Many of the issues and actions in the 2011 - 2015 edition of the PAGE still resonate strongly within the region. Given the magnitude of challenges that remain and opportunities for implementing the ITUC-AP’s commitments to gender equality and women’s empowerment, it is critically important to keep the level of engagement high and accelerate focus on priority areas where trade unions could make significant, meaningful and substantive progress.

49 3rd representative for unions to nominate women members and activists below age 40 years as observer in the Women’s Committee
12. This policy revises and updates the Platform of Action for Gender Equality 2015 - 2019. Building on the experiences and lessons learnt within and across countries in the region over the last four years, the ITUC-AP will pay particular attention to four (4) areas – identified as having the largest concentrations of gender gaps – that need to be addressed:

- Count us in the **TRADE UNION MOVEMENT**
- Count us in the **LEADERSHIP, POLICY** and **DECISION-MAKING**
- Count us in the **ECONOMY**
- Count **EVERYBODY IN**

13. Each of the priority area provides a significant platform for the promotion of women’s rights and equality for all. The framework is categorised into two complementary and strategic objectives: (1) increasing women’s organisng, leadership and representation (**internal**); and (2) improving outcomes for broader women’s rights and equality for all (**external**).

14. This policy utilises a human rights-based approach recognising that women and other marginalised groups’ unequal access to basic needs, services, resources and opportunities in all areas (political, economic, social) are all indicative of their continuing lack of rights and these would limit their full and active participation in society. The heart of our strategy is combining the strength of a rights-based approach and gender mainstreaming to realise true gender equality and women’s empowerment.

15. Just like its predecessor, PAGE 2019 - 2023 features increased focus on strategic priorities, defined sets of key performance indicators and results-oriented actions to operationalise the framework. It also describes the accountability mechanisms and processes that will help the ITUC-AP and affiliates bring results over time.

16. A number of cross-cutting strategies and approaches to operationalise the framework run throughout the proposed key actions:

- Placing the realisation of fundamental human rights of women, girls and marginalised groups at the centre of gender equality work
- Mainstreaming gender in all aspects of policy, programmes and projects planning, design and implementation, monitoring and evaluation
- Empowering women and building on their strengths and experiences as a key instrument in reducing their vulnerability
- Mobilising sustained and targeted resources to gender equality and women’s empowerment activities and initiatives
- Challenging underlying gender discriminatory attitudes, socio-cultural norms which support and perpetuate inequalities and power imbalances between men and women
- Improving institutional capacity development, monitoring of the follow up and capturing learning and experiences
- Maximising existing resources, expertise, experiences and wealth of knowledge
- Improving knowledge and information management and sharing of experiences and best practices
- Building and strengthening strategic partnerships, cooperation and dialogue with key international/regional/national partners and like-minded institutions
- Engaging men and boys as partners and advocates in achieving gender equality and women’s empowerment
- Developing gender-responsive, tailored training/meeting content and materials
- Collecting, analysing and using gender disaggregated data and information to inform decision-making and monitoring the impact of policies and programmes
- Using gender audits and related tools to document, compile lessons learned and assess the level of integration of gender equality

IV. KEY ACTION AREAS

(1) Count us in the TRADE UNION MOVEMENT - building an inclusive trade union movement

The participation of women in the labour market in the region continues to grow in the economy and society that is being transformed by digital technologies. A significant proportion of them form part of the growing atypical workers or remain outside the scope and protection of labour laws, often working as contributing family or own-account workers, in informal-based activities including domestic work which lacks security and benefits and often subjected to poor and abusive working conditions akin to slavery.

The ITUC and the ITUC-AP have long taken the political decision to organise workers in these sectors. Given the current anti-workers and anti-union movement, strengthening the political power, influence and relevance of the labour movement requires unions to organise workers more strongly than ever. Informal, migrant/domestic, precarious workers and young people constitute a huge, unorganised workforce with great potential for membership. The surge in workplace diversity will require trade unions to demonstrate better leadership in protecting and promoting the rights and interests of women wherever they are.

Table A1: Count us in the Trade Union Movement: Performance Indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance Indicators</th>
<th>Key Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Increased membership of women in unions</td>
<td>• Improve union organising strategies that pay more attention to the whole lives of women, their needs and issues that women and working families care about</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Mainstream the ITUC Labour Rights for Women, Decisions for Life, 12 by 12 campaign and ITUC Global Organising Academy methods in organising women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Intensify in-country and cross-border solidarity and alliances to organise migrant/domestic workers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

50 The campaign sought to empower women to defend their rights in the workplace through organising, strengthening women’s participation and leadership in collective bargaining and social dialogue, and raising public awareness of the issues that are affecting women the most.

51 Supports and empowers young women to make well-informed decisions about work, career and family, have access to secure jobs, earnings and social benefits, demand equal opportunities at work, and improve their leadership and negotiation skills.

52 A worldwide campaign on getting countries to ratify ILO Convention No. 189.

53 Provides organising training for union organisers and national lead organisers from ITUC affiliates and Global Union Federations which commit politically and through their own resources to a focused organising agenda.
2. Improved implementation of national, regional and international legal frameworks and instruments on informal economy, migrant/domestic and precarious workers

- Promote the ratification of ILO Conventions No. 177 and No. 189 on homeworkers and domestic workers, respectively and full implementation of the ILO Recommendation No. 204 on Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy
- Campaign against casualisation at work
- Work closely with organisations that are active in the area of informal economy and migrant/domestic workers
- Push for the improvement of social protection that responds to changes in the world of work and provides greater protection for workers, and women and other marginalised groups in particular
- Promote the inclusion of labour education in career guidance and employment facilitation programmes

3. Increase allocation of resources and capacity for organising informal, migrant/domestic and precarious workers

- Commit adequate and targeted resources for organising women
- Strengthen the capacity of union organisers to reach out to women workers
- Improve inclusion of women’s concerns in the negotiating agenda, and enhance women’s representation as union educators, organisers and CBA negotiators

(2) **Count us in LEADERSHIP, POLICY and DECISION-MAKING – building women’s leadership for future-ready trade union movement**

Women’s participation and representation in politics, public and private spaces and elsewhere remain limited. Women continue to dominate lower levels of leadership and roles where they have the least influence or have limited access to voicing their concerns, shaping and implementing policies and decisions that affect their lives and their families.

This particular challenge concerns unions as well. In the region, despite increasing membership, women remain a minority (5 per cent) in top decision-making bodies (*presidents, general secretaries*). Increase in representation in other elected leadership positions (*presidents, vice presidents, general secretaries, deputy general secretaries, treasurers*) now stand at 27.3 per cent (from just 13 per cent in 2011) is an indication that progress is possible. Unions could do more and much more is expected from unions. Greater diversity in leadership encourages new and innovative thinking and leads to better outcomes, decisions and governance. Removing direct and indirect barriers to and establishing enabling environments for women’s full and equitable representation will be key.
Table A2: **Count us in Leadership: Performance Indicators**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance Indicators</th>
<th>Key Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Increased compliance with the constitutional provision on women’s representation (starting at 30 per cent\(^{54}\)) in leadership and decision-making positions | • Effectively implement a policy on women’s equitable representation in leadership, policy and decision-making processes  
• Implement gender-sensitive policies and practices in the political and electoral processes of the union  
• Establish targets, reserved seats, quotas and other affirmative measures as appropriate  
• Create/strengthen women/gender equality and other related structures with decision-making authority |
| 2. Increased participation of women in programmes (particularly in non-gender-related) at all levels | • Develop second liners of leaders by maintaining a pool of trained women  
• Develop mentoring/sponsorship/leadership/skills building programmes and support networks for young women  
• Ensure equal participation of women and men in training, meetings, programmes and activities at all levels |
| 3. Increased recognition of women as agents of change and development | • Address social, economic and political barriers that limit women’s capacity to cope with the challenges of climate change  
• Take active measures to include women in climate mitigation and adaptation, prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace and nation building processes  
• Campaign for the strengthening of women’s voice in decisions over the planning, management and preservation of natural resources  
• Push for legal reforms aimed at ensuring women’s participation in politics and public spaces and to influence policy-making |

(3) **Count us in the ECONOMY – removing barriers to women’s economic empowerment**

While progress has been made in closing the gender gaps in many areas, including in education, this has not translated into comparable improvements in women’s full and effective participation and prospects for career advancement in the labour market. This despite scores of evidences showing that investing in and supporting women with all their lived realities will benefit not just themselves but also their families, workplaces,

\(^{54}\) Note: The ITUC Congress Statement calls on all affiliates to commit to achieving a minimum of 40 per cent.
societies and the broader economy at a time when ageing population and skills shortages are already weighing on economic growth.

The prevalence of discrimination in various forms remains within and across countries in the region, in places where many women work, in sectors where they are regarded as minority, in different work settings, even in the new forms of crowd work, digital platforms and in the broader gig economy. Discrimination manifests itself in multiple ways – limited access to decent work and opportunities to advance and progress in their careers, underrepresentation in certain industries and occupations, the persistent pay gap between women and men, challenges to combing aspirations for work and family, difficulties women face in accessing adequate social protection, including essential maternal health and income security around childbirth and nursing and publicly-funded care services (including child and elderly care), escalating occurrence and threat of gender-based violence (GBV), just to name a few.

The workplace offers a particularly critical setting for facilitating a gender-inclusive, family-friendly and violence and harassment-free environment. Workers, supported by unions, can be powerful agents in driving and influencing decisions towards that direction and facilitate full integration of women into the workforce. Challenging harmful, deeply- ingrained and unequal gender norms, roles and relations that impact negatively on gender equality at work, in the family and in society are fundamental elements in making and improving progress on gender equality.

Table A3: Count us in Economy: Performance Indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance Indicators</th>
<th>Key Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Number of new or strengthened laws and policies on gender equality and non-discrimination</td>
<td>• Push for policies and programmes that promote women's empowerment throughout their life cycle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Advocate for public policies and regulatory measures that facilitate women's equal rights and access to labour market information, decent jobs, skills training, lifelong learning and social services including universal healthcare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Push for laws, policies and programmes to recognise, reduce and redistribute unpaid care work and value women's work and skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Push for pay equity policies, including mandatory reporting of gender pay gaps and actions taken to address gaps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Contribute to ending the gender technology gap by helping women and girls access training and educational opportunities in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) and IT (information technology)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Develop a better understanding of the changing nature and dynamics of work, workers and workplaces and its implications for women workers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 2. Number of new ratifications of relevant ILO and other related instruments (e.g., ILO Conventions Nos. 100, 111, 156, 177, 183, 189) | • Develop targeted campaigns to promote the ratification and implementation of relevant international instruments |
|                                                                                       | • Push for national policies and strategies as |
necessary steps towards their ratification
- Align gender equality-related national laws and policies with international standards

| 3. Number of policies and measures against gender-based violence | Sustain the campaign for gender-based violence-free workplaces and communities
- Encourage employers and unions to commit to zero tolerance against GBV
- Fully engage male workers and members in the prevention of GBV, in pushing for more equitable workplaces and in challenging discriminatory social norms
- Push for setting up and effective implementation of accessible complaints mechanisms against GBV
- Advocate for gender-sensitive, rights-based protection and measures against GBV and support for survivors of violence, including domestic violence |

| 4. Increase in the number of workplace policies and CBAs integrating gender-equality clauses | Harness the power of collective bargaining to promote gender equality including equal pay for work of equal value, access to sexual and reproductive health rights and services, elimination of discrimination at all stages of employment among others
- Bargain for family-friendly policies, support and arrangements that address specific needs and [balancing work, life, parenthood and family care] constraints of women and other workers with family responsibilities including maternity, paternity, parental leaves, return-to-work support and flexible work arrangements
- Advocate for breastfeeding education interventions and provision of nursing breaks, arrangements and facilities to express and store breastmilk
- Tackle stigma surrounding women’s specific and wide range health needs, including reproductive and gynaecological conditions, as part of a broader, integrated approach to women’s health at work |

| 5. Increased engagement of affiliates in gender equality and women’s empowerment | Improve worker’s education programmes by training gender-sensitive educators and designing gender-inclusive and equitable curriculum
- Support regular gender audits to identify good practices/progress and areas for further improvement
- Build the capacity of workplace representatives to recognise and report discrimination
- Develop targeted campaigns on equal pay for work of equal value, creation of decent jobs in the care economy sector and on sharing family |
(4) Count EVERYBODY IN – addressing the impact of multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights to the Convention spells it out clearly: That all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights; and that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms without discrimination of any kind. Given that non-discrimination is a fundamental principle in the realisation of human rights, this is far from being realised. Women and men suffer from varied forms of stigma, violence and multiple forms of discrimination in all areas of life due to the intersection of multi-faceted identity dimensions such as gender, sexual orientation, age, and a long list of other characteristics including, but not limited, to race, caste, disability, ethnicity, HIV, refugee and migrant status.

For example, according to a new UNDP/ILO study, high levels of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people – 21 per cent of respondents in China, 30 per cent in the Philippines and 23 per cent in Thailand – reported a range of negative experiences in the workplace because of their sexual orientation, gender identity, expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC)\(^55\).

The same study shows that more open, inclusive and affirming workplaces have seen positive impact in terms of greater satisfaction and loyalty among employees and lead to greater productivity. The struggle towards intersectionalism, diversity and inclusiveness can be a great collectiviser and this provides trade unions another opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to the principles of equity and respect for human rights and resolve to eliminate all forms of discrimination on whatever grounds.

Table A4: Count Everybody in: Performance Indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance Indicators</th>
<th>Key Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An inclusive trade union movement that cares for all workers</td>
<td>• Fully integrate intersectionality into the development, implementation and evaluation of union programmes</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Deepen knowledge and understanding about the differences in experience among people with overlapping identities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Create supportive spaces for people with intersecting identities to share the fullness and intersectionality of their experiences</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>• Work with like-minded organisations and human rights groups in challenging stereotypes against people with intersecting identities</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Include in the union struggle efforts against discrimination, stigma, marginalisation, exclusion of marginalised groups at work, including, but not limited to LGBTQI+ workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Organise for equality, equity and an end to</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{55}\) LGBTI People and Employment: Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics in China, the Philippines and Thailand, 2018
| Improved support for all workers, including but not limited to LGBTQI+ people and other marginalised groups | • Support efforts to promote diversity and human rights of all workers, regardless of gender or identity  
• Support empowerment of marginalised workers to claim their equal rights to education, health, care services and protection from violence at work and elsewhere  
• Campaign against systemic misogyny\(^{56}\), biases toward older and people with disabilities and ageism at work  
• Push for laws, policies and affirmative measures to promote and integrate persons with disabilities into the labour market |

## V. IMPLEMENTATION MODALITIES

At the regional level, PAGE will be primarily implemented through the activities of the Gender Equality Department. Gender perspective will be tackled as a cross cutting issues in all activities and aspects of ITUC-AP policies, work, and mandate. The ITUC-AP Women’s Committee will assist with monitoring, reviewing, document best practices and analysing progress towards implementation of the Framework.

The ITUC-AP Secretariat will facilitate the achievement of desired outcomes through a mix of two complementary approaches:

- Explicit integration of gender equality in policies, programmes and projects (*gender mainstreaming*); and
- Support affiliates’ actions and solutions grounded in national realities, experiences and priorities which specifically target the promotion of gender equality (*targeted measures for women’s empowerment*).

The Secretariat will support affiliates by:

- Providing advice and technical assistance in the development of gender equality policies and programmes;  
- Developing relevant and responsive training programmes and resource materials on gender equality, as appropriate;  
- Facilitating the sharing and exchange of experiences and best practices; and  
- Promoting, strengthening and expanding women’s participation in ITUC-AP programmes and related activities at all levels.

At the national level, affiliates will be encouraged to align their on-going work towards achieving gender equality with the shared priorities identified in the Platform and to take progressive steps to implement them. Monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of PAGE will be continuous at all levels, through periodic audits, linkages with affiliates’ gender focal points and/or gender equality structures, among others.

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\(^{56}\) is the hatred of, contempt for, or prejudice against women or girls
“Get Organised” Young Workers in Trade Union Movement

There are 750 million young people (aged 15 to 24) living in the Asia-Pacific which make up about 19 per cent of the total population\(^{57}\). Moreover, youth aged 15 to 34 make up over 30 per cent of total population and around 50 per cent of the workforce (aged 15 to 64) in this region. In most Asia-Pacific countries, the youth population is still growing: youth are not minority in number.

Steady and concrete progress and achievement have been made in solidarity with the ITUC-AP and its affiliates to support young workers. According to the ITUC-AP Survey\(^{56}\), 91 per cent of respondents have youth structures at national level, 82 per cent of them have annual youth activities and 82 per cent have organised youth-related campaigns in 2017. More youth structures have been set up and more efforts and contributions have been made to attract and organise young workers for the last 4 years.

Youth are struggling and facing challenges, however, such as insecure work, unemployment, poverty, informal economy, NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training), short term work arrangements among others. Youth is last-in and can be the first-out at their workplace.

Practical and effective measures to protect young people are urgently required. Moreover, the crisis of youth is gravely affecting the union density and the future of trade unions. We are desperate to get more youth in the mainstream of Trade Union Movement.

Youth must be involved in the decision-making processes to shape a favourable future of work. They want to build a future valuing peace, harmony, democracy, solidarity and social justice - youth are the key to creating a bright future in favor of all workers in community, society, country and the world.

ITUC-AP Youth Charter is the voice of young workers and their decisions. The following thematic areas consist of key issues, priorities and action plans for young workers.

I. More Youth in the Mainstream of Trade Union Movement

Mainstreaming and ensuring youth autonomy in trade union movement: Youth are the future and the key to advancing the trade union movement and enhancing the quality of workers’ lives. Building young workers’ power is essential for developing effective trade union structures, policies and actions and increasing trade union membership. Likewise, young workers need trade unions to raise their voices and attain decent lives, as they are one of the most vulnerable groups in society.

Therefore, the ITUC-AP Youth propose the following Policy Priorities & Trade Union Actions:

i. Participation in Decision-Making Processes:
   a. To provide data on the percentage of youth among their total membership and members of governing bodies.

\(^{57}\) United Nations World Population Prospects in 2017
\(^{56}\) Survey on Youth Activities (April 2018): 23 out of 56 affiliates responded
b. To elect youth representative(s) to the unions’ governing bodies with voting rights. Such representative(s) should also be invited to participate in collective bargaining processes and tripartite meetings.

c. To stipulate youth representation in the rules of the organisation. National Centres are encouraged to develop a system to assist youth and to include in their constitutions a minimum percentage of youth participation at all levels of decision-making processes.

ii. Youth Oriented Organising:

a. To encourage trade unions to hire young organisers and/or attract volunteers to recruit and organise youth.

b. To conduct training sessions on organising for young members to enable them to organise young people at their workplaces.

c. To establish a Young Workers Resource Centre run mainly by young trade unionists, which provides drop-in service for young people regardless of membership to get advice and learn about unions.

d. To introduce flexible membership fee structures such as student membership and membership for workers under fixed-term contracts.

e. To consider easier and more accessible ways to sign-up membership for young people, including the ability to join online.

f. To create an online youth forum to bring young people together to share information and success stories of organising youth.

g. To ensure youth structures take a leading role to plan, develop and implement youth dedicated step-by-step organising activities, including the following:

   - Research and mapping
     - To conduct a quick survey of young people’s perception towards trade unions and their main concerns regarding social, economic and labour issues.
     - To conduct research and identify sectors/workplaces/employment patterns which heavily rely on young workers.

   - Strategic planning
     - To identify young worker-relevant ways to get connected such as using social media and attractive materials.
     - To develop relevant organising strategies in the light of findings from Research and Mapping.

   - Mobilising
     - Talking to young people and involving wider range of youth into running campaigns on young workers’ issues and concerns in the workplace and the public.
     - Working with educational institutions and training providers to conduct trainings for young people before their entry to workplaces and subsequently to enable them to join the union at the training stage.

iii. Functioning Youth Structures and Ensuring Youth Autonomy:

a. To set up functioning youth structures at all levels of the organisation:

   - With decision-making autonomy;
   - With gender parity and age limits; and
   - Observing mix of education levels and other demographics.

b. To secure a budget for conducting regular committee meetings and other activities.

c. To assign a young officer(s) whose primary responsibility is organising young workers and developing youth structures.

iv. Mainstreaming Youth:

a. To develop the youth policy of national centres under the lead of youth structures.

b. To encourage the youth structure to review all policy papers ahead of a congress, to ensure that youth voices are properly included. Follow-up evaluation of congress or
policy adoption is to be done by youth structures to reflect on whether their input was followed through.

c. To ensure national centres are regularly coordinating and consulting with youth structures.

d. To set up an evaluation and reporting system of youth action plans at national centres in order to share common challenges and good practices for youth.

v. Leadership Development
a. To ensure that trade unions and national centres conduct capacity building and leadership development programmes for young members at all levels in conformity with the principle of gender parity.

b. To implement appropriate follow-up trainings and mentoring programmes to support young people in their progression through trade union movement.

c. To organise joint women and youth training programmes, activities and initiatives.

d. To promote gender equality in youth structures and set up a progressive target starting at 30 per cent for minimum women’s membership to be able to achieve the goal of fifty-fifty participation.

II. Increase Young People's Access to Quality Jobs

Youth is still invisible in society: Sound data and analysis on youth is vital for analysing youth employment issues. It works as a basis and drive for effective employment policy making, corresponding activity planning and advocacy work focusing on youth. However, we still have difficulties gathering relevant data on youth.

Youth unemployment – reality beyond statistics: The world youth unemployment rate in 2018 was 13.1 per cent. Youth are three times as likely as adults to be unemployed. However, this is just the tip of the iceberg, as there could be a number of youth who might not be covered by official statistics.

Casualisation hits young workers: More young people are starting their working lives with short-term work arrangements in the platform and gig economies. New technologies create more jobs but also eliminate some jobs, and moreover, erode wages and working conditions and destroy standard forms of employment. Youth in casual work are at risk of low income, instability, longer working hours, lack of social security and work-related benefits, and no opportunity for skills development.

Skills mismatch & School-to-Work Transition: Skills mismatch is widespread among young people in the region. While growing number of youth are not able to find jobs that enable them to exercise qualifications they possess, youth are struggling to find ways to compete with experienced workers for limited job opportunities. As a result, young people end up unemployed or in unsatisfying jobs with low wages, or migrating to other countries to find job opportunities.

Therefore, the ITUC-AP Youth propose the following Policy Priorities & Trade Union Actions:

i. Participation in Decision-Making Processes:
   a. Trade unions to include representatives of youth structures in relevant national committees, consultations and dialogues.

ii. National / International Statistics Focusing on Youth:
   a. To advocate for the development of employment statistics by age category.
   b. To work toward realising alternative statistical measures to capture the real extent of youth unemployment, that is currently outside of the coverage of official statistics.
iii. Youth Organising:
   a. To use information and data collected to create campaigns and strategies that increase engagement of casualised and gig economy young workers in the union movement.

iv. Addressing Skills Mismatch and Smooth School-to-Work Transition:
   a. Trade unions to develop a multi-stakeholder partnership with governments, educational institutes, employers and other relevant community based organisations throughout budgeting, designing, implementation, and governance of public vocational training and job-placement schemes including apprenticeships.
   b. To negotiate with employer organisations to develop joint agreements for opening up new skilled job opportunities for young people, accompanied with relevant on-the-job training (OJT) and dissemination of job opening information.

v. Employment Creation and Legislative Measures:
   a. To actively campaign and lobby governments to develop economic and industrial policies that put generation of decent work at the centre of the growth of new industries and the transformation from the old to the new economy.
   b. To actively campaign and lobby governments to develop industrial policies that ensure young working people engaged in casual or insecure work have similar labour rights as their peers in permanent employment.
   c. To work towards equal employment opportunities for all workers including youth and people with disabilities.
   d. To lobby for legislation that prevents outsourcing and casual employment, and campaign for the transition of workers from temporary to permanent employment, and from the informal to the formal sector.
   e. To lobby governments to support youth entrepreneurship through training, tangible supports including mentoring programmes and financial assistance including interest free loans.

vi. Wider Support and Cooperation for Young Workers in casual work
   a. To lobby government for legislation to secure social protection and workers’ rights for casual workers.
   b. Trade Unions to dedicate funding for youth engagement within union structures outside of social media.
   c. To assess if union structures are limiting the engagement of youth in the movement and develop strategies to better engage youth in union structures.

III. Promote Decent Working Conditions for Young Workers

Decent job deficit for youth: Young people are especially vulnerable to lower wages, long working hours without any compensations and/or taking 2 or more jobs, and occupational hazards including sexual and power harassments at workplace. In emerging and developing countries, 16.7 per cent of young workers live on income below the extreme poverty threshold (US$1.90 per day) and 54.2 per cent of employed youth in South Asia and 28 per cent of that in South East Asia are working poverty (<US$3.10 per day)\(^59\). However, young people tend not to raise their voices due to their vulnerable employment status and/or lack of knowledge on available supports, workers’ rights and their entitlements as workers.

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\(^{59}\) Global Employment Trends For Youth 2017, International Labour Organization (ILO)
Therefore, the ITUC-AP Youth propose the following Policy Priorities & Trade Union Actions:

i. Participation in Decision - Making Processes:
   a. To survey and audit young workers and members on working conditions, social situations, union membership and attitudes to unions to adequately represent young people.
   b. To include representatives of youth structures in national policy and decision-making processes relevant to working conditions of youth.
   c. To include youth in collective bargaining delegations and various workplace committees especially those for occupational health and safety (OHS).
   d. To establish a female workers’ committee or develop specific measures to encourage young women’s participation in workplace committees and collective bargaining delegation, enabling them to address their specific concerns and issues at workplaces.

ii. Workplace Organising and Collective bargaining:
   a. To identify obstacles to organising young people in the workplace and develop strategies for removing them.
   b. To strengthen collective bargaining power and extend it to workers and/or sectors who are currently outside of trade union coverage.
   c. Trade Unions, to ensure the opportunities for young workers to build their capacity and raise awareness on workers’ issues, organising, collective bargaining among others by holding education programmes for youth.
   d. Trade Unions, to ensure the opportunities for youth representatives to be involved in collective bargaining and social dialogues.

iii. Realising Just Wages and Proper Working Hours:
   a. To ensure that minimum wages set well above the national poverty line, meet socially acceptable minimum needs of young workers.
   b. To campaign for statutory application of minimum wages to all workers including those in informal economy.
   c. To campaign and work towards equal pay for equal value of work and abolition of youth minimum wages.
   d. To work towards having adequate amount of leave for all workers, including those in informal economy:
      - Maternity leave
      - Paternity leave
      - Annual leaves
      - Child Care leaves
   e. To campaign for adequate working hours for shift workers in essential services including those in informal economy.
   f. To work for realisation of living wage through conducting public campaigns, having social dialogue and collective bargaining at workplaces.
   g. To work for legislation and strong labour inspection for promoting proper working hours.
   h. To campaign for strict compliance with labour and industrial laws and severe penalties for employer violations.

iv. Safe Workplaces:
   a. To conduct public and workers’ awareness raising campaigns on OHS issues including harassment, bullying and discrimination at workplaces.
   b. To campaign for ratification of the ILO Conventions No. 155, No. 187 and No. 183.
   c. To work towards full implementation of / compliance with the ratified ILO Conventions at national and workplace level.
d. To campaign for strict compliance with occupational safety and health laws and severe penalties for employer violations.

v. Raising awareness and Empowerment:
   a. To conduct information dissemination and workshops for mobilising young workers on workers' rights, their entitlements, available supports, gender equality and OHS including mental health issues in a participatory and empowering approach.
   b. Working with educational institutions, conduct attractive trainings and information dissemination to students on trade unions, workers’ rights and situation of the labour market.

vi. Approach to Wider Public:
   a. To develop easy to access consultation and grievance handling services for young people regardless their trade union membership.
   b. To conduct public campaigns in the community on young workers’ issues.
   c. To conduct campaigns to raise public awareness of gender equality in youth structures.

IV. Empowering Marginalised Youth

We have reached a historical level of inequality within and between countries since World War II. The great failure of the reigning hegemony of “trickle-down” economics to provide for people’s needs and aspirations has led to the worsening of working and living conditions; unemployment, underemployment, and immense competition rob the youth of self-confidence, sense of security, and hopes for the future.

The crisis of neoliberal globalisation and patriarchy forces young people into conditions of risk such as poverty, drug abuse, sexual abuse, mental distress, and HIV among others. The need for this system to ostracise particular social groups so that others may stay on top has atrociously allowed gender inequity to persist; young people feel alienated by the ‘political elite’ as manifested in the relentless spread of nationalism, racism, xenophobia, misogyny, homophobia, transphobia, and other forms of discrimination. In effect, young migrants, refugees, indigenous peoples, women, and gender non-binary persons are further disenfranchised by society.

Therefore, the ITUC-AP Youth propose the following Policy Priorities & Trade Union Actions:

i. Participation in Decision - Making Processes:
   a. Trade unions to develop their policies and corresponding measures on marginalised youth in consultation with their youth structures.
   b. Trade unions to participate in tripartite discussions on marginalised youth.
   c. To ensure the voices of workers from marginalised groups are included in decision making structures.

ii. Focused Organising and empowerment:
   a. Together with youth structures, to form networks or cooperate with existing networks to organise, support and empower marginalised youth.
   b. To focus on organising disadvantaged areas to improve working conditions and to boost job opportunities to reduce poverty and social isolation.
   c. To rightly recognise young migrant workers and refugees, identify them in community and extend supports for their languages, cultural backgrounds among others.
   d. To develop member-networks, such as women, LGBTIQ and indigenous, to empower these workers.
iii. Building Inclusive Society:
  a. To create a support mechanism to help young people in partnership with youth movement and youth organisations in community through interesting and easy access to education, training and social gathering activities for young people, regardless of their trade union membership both in urban and rural area.
  b. To ensure governments and trade unions to conduct training for young people in NEET, not only develop skills for employment but also to avoid social isolation.
  c. To strongly campaign against all forms of discrimination in the workplace and community.

iv. Social Safety Nets and Targeted Social Protection:
  a. To campaign for a strong social safety net to support disadvantaged and marginalised youth.
  b. To advocate and promote social protection schemes for youth including financial support for studying, unemployment insurance, provision of internship, benefits for single parent family and supports for people with disability.
  c. Trade unions, to lobby the governments for a range of benefits to help young people with cost of living and welfare.

V. Claiming our future: The Road to a Sustainable and Democratic World

Young people today join the workforce without the guarantee of stable, secure work that pays a living wage. The growing divide between rich and poor has accelerated and deepened the trend towards low-paid, insecure jobs in ways previous generations haven’t experienced. We are seeing historic levels of inequality: new technology, free trade agreements, deregulation, privatisation, and the neoliberal orthodoxy of trickle-down economics, have tragically failed the majority.

Young workers now face a world of work characterised by low pay and insecure jobs, and we feel its impact extending beyond the workplace: young workers are threatened by housing instability due to lack of affordable housing close to the workplace, high levels of personal debt from tertiary education, high rate of school drop-outs, and poor access to welfare and consequent homelessness. On top of everything, young workers are inheriting the climate change crisis, the burden of which will be experienced most by workers and the poor in developing countries in our region. Furthermore, young people are largely left behind by traditional politics – they feel alienated and do not have a voice in the political process.

In order to achieve the first four areas in the ITUC-AP Youth Charter, trade unions must engage with young workers around the issues they are facing beyond the workplace:

- Climate change;
- Erosion of the social safety net through cuts and privatisation of public services, and inadequate welfare;
- Lack of stable and affordable housing;
- Expensive education that leaves young workers and their families in debt;
- Free trade agreements that lock in privatisation and deregulation, threaten local industries and jobs, and do not provide training opportunities for young workers;
- Political alienation and disengagement.

Therefore, the ITUC-AP Youth propose the following policy priorities and trade union actions:

i. Just transition and energy democracy:
   a. To play a leading role in the movement for a just transition and energy democracy in order to avert climate change disaster.
   b. To campaign for a just transition for workers in fossil fuel industries to sustainable
industries with decent jobs, and a rapid and radical transition away from fossil fuels and towards a sustainable energy system.

c. To advocate, campaign and provide education and engagement with workers to strengthen public participation and democracy in energy policy.

d. To campaign for governments to take the lead in investing in publicly owned and run renewable energy, green technologies, public transport and sustainable communities.

ii. Quality public services owned and run by the government, and accessible and adequate welfare:

a. To campaign for quality public services to be accessible to all, and to be owned and run by the government;

b. To campaign for accessible and liveable welfare;

c. To campaign for governments to take back control of privatised or outsourced public services; and

d. To campaign for tax justice: corporations and the rich must pay their fair share of tax in order for governments to fund quality public services and welfare now and into the future.

iii. Affordable and secure housing:

a. To engage with young workers about housing issues and campaign for accessible and affordable housing for all, including advocating for governments to build more public housing, regulate for more affordable housing close to employment centres, and stronger rights for tenants; and

b. To seek to form alliances with community organisations campaigning on these issues.

iv. Universal, quality education:

a. To campaign for education as a right not a privilege, to prevent young people to go into debt before entering workforce;

b. To campaign for free tertiary education, and form alliances with student groups campaigning on education issues; and

c. To seek to build a presence on university and technical college campuses to engage with students on these issues and build awareness of trade unions among young people.

v. Fair trade that prioritises the needs of workers and our communities:

a. To campaign against damaging clauses in free trade agreements that give unfettered rights to corporations at our expense;

b. To campaign for fair trade agreements that ensure local jobs and training for young workers, and protect the ability of governments to regulate in the public interest; and

c. To engage with the newly formed organisation Unions for Trade Justice formed by GUFs in the Asia-Pacific region to share campaign strategies and resources.

vi. Build the voice of young workers in society:

a. To develop the leadership capacity and capabilities of young workers to campaign in their workplace and in the community on all the issues outlined in this charter; and

b. To develop young members to have a voice on all issues, not just ‘youth’ issues, and educate young workers in public speaking skills and community campaigning skills.
Implementation Method

At the regional level, the ITUC-AP Youth Committee will take a leading role to implement the ITUC-AP Youth Charter 2019 - 2023.

At the national level, the secretariat will assist affiliates to:
• Build up the youth structure with periodic election of youth committee;
• Provide technical assistance in the development of youth structure, policies and activities;
• Develop resource materials and supporting tools for implementing the Youth Charter 2019 - 2023; and
• Facilitate the sharing of experiences and good practices on the promotion of youth trade union movement.

At the regional level, the Secretariat will assist the ITUC-AP Youth Committee to:
• Input youth perspectives into ITUC-AP policies, programmes and projects;
• Form the task group on each thematic area for discuss the detail of implementation in deferent areas;
• Launch the solidarity action to protest those issues in the Youth Charter;
• Develop platform(s) regionally across nations for the sharing of experiences and good practice to preserve and build on our wisdom and valuable learning; and
• Conduct Youth Audit to review progress in implementation of the Charter.