



हिन्द मजदूर सभा

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11TH ASIA EUROPE LABOUR FORUM (AELF 11) 16-17 OCTOBER 2018, BRUSSELS, BELGIUM

The labour and Employment Agenda in ASEM

Dear Colleagues,

The 11th Asia Europe Labour Forum is the first one to be held after the institutional recognition granted by ASEM leaders in ASEM 11 held at Mongolia in 2016 (15-16 July). Trade unions have shown their faith, commitment and sincerity for the ASEM and it's goal for 22 years since it's inception in 1996. Lack of institutional recognition could not discourage trade unions from making robust contributions on ASEM Agenda. The most important contribution to AELF was it's advocacy role played in introducing ASEM Labour and Employment Ministers Conference and policies on social justice issues including social protection, supply chains and youth employment. AELF is now an official ASEM forum.

ASEM meeting is a group of 53 countries of the world.. Recognition of AELF would make dialogue more inclusive and would also increase relevant experience specially on the issues of employment and social affairs, ownership of ASEM's work by being included in ASEM meetings and by being directly involved in leaders summits together with Asia Europe Business Forum (AEBF), Asia Europe Parliamentary Partnership meeting (ASEP) and Asia Europe People Forum (AEPF).

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ASEM partners represent 55% of global trade, 60% of world's population, 65% of global GDP, 75% of global tourism. It has 53 partners including European union, 30 European countries (28 EU member states plus Norway and Switzerland) 21 Asian countries, the ASEN Secretariat, ASEM summit is organized every two years to set out the priorities of the partnership. Summit are held alternatively in Asia and Europe. ASEM day is celebrated every year on 1st March

Trade unions are convinced that social dialogue plays very vital role to ensure balanced policy making and social policy.

Liberalization of trade and investment has created growth which is largely captured by only 1% rich and has increased inequality, the contractualisation of labour relations and the feminization of precarious work. Trade agreement between Europe and Asia are being assessed before negotiations commence as to whether they contribute positively to workers income, reduce inequality with realistic modeling. Assessment should also be made to find out the impact of trade agreement on countries ability to promote the ILO Decent Work Agenda and also to achieve UN Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development Goals. Measures should be taken to ensure that International labour standards and Domestic laws in Global Supply chains are respected and followed.

Global supply chains have important role to play in present economic scenario. About half of the workers in some Asian countries and around one third of workers in Europe hold job linked to Global Supply chains. Global supply chains are often associated with infringement of ILO core labour standards, as well as unregulated or unsafe work environment, wages below poverty level, Poor industrial relations, compromised workers rights which hinder sustainable economic and social development. Women in global supply chain face discrimination regarding access to decent work, wage and career opportunities. These deficiencies are mainly because of limitation in implementation and enforcement of labour and work related health and safety rules which may be the result of insufficient human, administrative and business capacities,

lack of prevention, absence of awareness and transparency insufficient due diligence business, limited access to remedy, lack of adequate social dialogue or of involvement of and partnership between stake holders, including state authorities; business, workers and civil society or lack of gender mainstreaming. Despite best efforts to eliminate or minimise the above by several International forum like UNO, ILO, G-20, BRICS, ASEM, ITUC, ITUC-AP, International financial institutions like World Bank, IMF, Asia Development Bank etc. There is no check on these indicators. One important reason may be the dual strategies adopted by certain nations. On all international forums they show their unconditional commitment to all instruments but back home they follow the policies quite contrary to what they have committed at global level,. India is one of such country which even after ratification of ILO Convention 144 on Tripartite Consultation and despite the fact that India has its apex tripartite mechanism in the name of Indian Labour Conference but the Government does not consult stake holders before taking any decision on labour related issues or ignore their suggestions and act arbitrarily.

Informality is one more concern, it gives rise to serious Decent Work and labour rights deficits . It is one of the priorities of G-20, ILO has adopted recommendation 204 (2015) on transition from informal to formal economy. Some countries including India have ratified the Recommendation and also introduced fixed term Employment” which is quite contrary to the spirit of ILO Recommendation. How inclusive growth, meaningful social dialogue, effective collective bargaining, what to say of decent work can be achieved under such environment.

Concrete measures are to be taken to motivate large firms, multinational companies as well as SMEs to respect UN guiding principles on Business and Human Rights. The OECD guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, the ILO tripartite declaration on Multinational Enterprises and social policy.

The issue of supply chain sustainability goes beyond the national context and requires coordinated action at Regional, International and Multilateral level.

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Asia's economic development is unprecedented in human history. The region has gone from accounting for 16.8% of the world economy in 1960 to 45.4% in 2015. According to data compiled by the World Economic Journal. Despite Global economic slowdown the region remains fastest growing region.

In Asia the focus of workers struggle is minimum wage. In most of the country such as India, Indonesia, China there is no single minimum wage. Globally 80 to 85% of the countries which have a minimum wage have a single minimum wage or a few rates.

Informality rate is also very high in the region. In India around 93% of total work force is engaged in informal sector. 74% in Pakistan 63% in Thailand and 60% in Indonesia, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal are no better.

Protection of labour rights and Human rights is critical for achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We request ASEM through AELF to review the recommendations of 4th Asia Europe Labour and Employment Ministers Conference held at Hanoi in 2012. 9th AELF 5th ASEM Labour and Employment Ministers Conference held at Sofia in 2015. International Labour Conference in 2016 on global supply chains, Asia Europe Labour Forum (AELF 10) at Mongolia 15-16 July 2016 etc and find out to what extent the recommendations have been implemented by the partnership, the obstacles if any, concrete remedial action and after achieving the result we should move forward. No use of deciding and not ensuring compliance.

ASEM in its labour and Employment agenda should stress on generation of Decent Job to combat rising unemployment among Educated youth should also suggest measures to be taken to ensure that young workers are not compelled to work on low paid precarious work under unhygienic, unhealthy, unsafe working environment,. The Agenda should also stress that in all trade agreements protection of labour rights be not only included but effectively monitored specially in informal economy.

New Forms of work organization:

There is no single or universally used definition of "New forms of work organization". It has been defined differently in different situations. The approach that is appropriate for any specific organization will depend on its sector, size, strategy and culture.

The terms "New forms of work Organisation" is used to encourage a wide range of organizational changes which reflects wide range of circumstances in which they are used.

New forms of work organizations are most effective when linked together as part of a "System" a group interrelated and internally consistent work practices and Human resource Management policies.

A system helps on organization achieving "Complimentarily" when all different elements of new organization fit together and reinforce each other. In absence of a system some work practices or Human Resource policies can undermine the effectiveness of others.

The organizational system fits with the overall strategy of the business. Researches have shown that companies that establish a system of interrelated working practices, policies and methods achieving higher return than the organizations that use the individual work practices.

A study of 1300 manufacturers of investment goods in Germany noted that companies which implement group of complimentary work practices generate the higher levels of improvement in labor productivity from organizational changes.

The above was supported by findings from an analysis of innovative work organization in 90 Auto assembly plants worldwide and a study of work system in 35 steel plants in USA.

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We may identify three principal dimensions of a New Forms of work organization system these may be.

- The way in which work is organized within operational activities.
- The way in which work is coordinated across the organization and
- The supporting Human Resource Management policies.

Within each we can identify the minimum components of a "High performance work system" i.e those components which if absent mean that a system is unlikely to exist.

Harbhajan Singh Sidhu
General Secretary