



**Ninth ASEAN Regional Tripartite Social Dialogue Conference
Strengthening Social Partnership in the Digital Era
9 – 10 October 2018, Singapore.**

CONFERENCE CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Embracing Change,
Building Up Partnerships**

The 9th ASEAN Regional Tripartite Social Dialogue Conference (ARTSDC) was convened on 9-10 October 2018 in Singapore. The Conference with the theme of “Strengthening Social Partnership in the Digital Era” was organised by the ASEAN Employees Trade Union Council (ASETUC), in cooperation with the ASEAN Confederation of Employers (ACE), ASEAN Secretariat and the ASEAN Senior Labour Officials Meeting (SLOM) group, and with the support of the Ministry of Manpower, Singapore (MOM) and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) Germany.

The Conference noted the 2018 theme of ASEAN, “Innovation and Resilience”. According to the ASEAN Secretary-General Dato Lim Jock Hoi: resilience¹ means the collective ASEAN will to stay undivided, agile and responsive in “addressing short-term shocks” while innovation means the ASEAN capacity to tackle non-traditional issues and tap on technological changes to solve common challenges facing the community. ASEAN must be able to ride the wave of digital transformation inclusively and sustainably, which means “the sharing of information, experiences and best practices, and cooperation” in dealing with a complex world that is increasingly affected by digitisation

The Conference acknowledged the depth of the technological revolution that is shaping the world of work and world of business in each ASEAN country and across the region. The revolution, while unleashing disruptive changes in some industries, is also creating opportunities in connecting people and businesses, producing innovations and new jobs, and building the skills and know-how needed for a progressive, cohesive and competitive society.

The Conference emphasised the need for ASEAN and the tripartite social partners of the ASEAN Member States to come up with measures to minimise the pains of disruptions, maximise the gains from technological advances, and share the benefits from such advances for the good of the whole community.

¹ Dato Lim Jock Hoi, 2018 (ASEAN ECONOMIC INTEGRATION BRIEF NO. 3)



The Conference noted that the most successful corporations are those where all the stakeholders sit down together, in particular, the employers/managers and the workers/trade unions, in sorting out and strategising win-win adjustment tasks.

These include information sharing and consultation, cooperation in the crafting and implementation of business and work adjustment, and formulation of job-preservation and job-creation programs for all those affected.

The Conference agreed to recommend the following actions for ASEAN and the tripartite social partners of the ASEAN Member States to minimise the disruptions and maximise the gains for the people of ASEAN in embracing the technological revolution:

1. Enhance social partnership, in facing the multi-faceted challenges of the technological revolution. All sectors of society are stakeholders and have a stake in making innovations work not only for the captains of industry but also for the workers and their trade unions, and the citizenry in general.
2. Maximise the role of workers and trade unions in making adjustments work and succeed. The Conference has an abundant harvest of good practices in the enlistment of unions and workers as active participants in the adoption of technological changes and needed business and work adjustments. Often, workers and trade unions have ideas that even improve and enhance such changes and modifications.
3. Encourage governments to take a leadership role in making cooperation on technology adjustment work. They should be there to provide dialogue facilitation, support training collaboration, and research and advisory assistance on adjustment. Governments must also strive to ensure free universal access to the internet for the workers and the citizenry.
4. Strengthen the cooperation between and among the government, industry and the trade unions to develop and strengthen the supporting institutions and programs. Such programs are needed to develop the skills and capacities of the workers as they adjust to the skills and knowledge challenges of technological adjustments and as they move in and out of work arrangements affected by technological changes.
5. Consider the expansion of the ASEAN Qualifications Referencing Framework to include a comprehensive education-skilling program that promotes life-long learning for the workers in the region. The point is that a seamless regional economy requires seamless and continuous learning for all, especially in the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution



that is characterised by numerous and endless innovations in various areas of business and work.

6. Encourage sustained dialogue between and among the social partners. The ongoing and virtually ceaseless technological revolution means sustained and secured information data sharing, sustained consultation and sustained discussion on what is best for the industry, for workers and for society and what is the right and balanced approach in all of this.
7. Encourage the institutionalisation of policy for partnership and social dialogue at all levels – enterprise, industry, national and regional. Subjects for dialogue and collaboration are unlimited; but in particular, they should cover job enrichment and redesign, skilling and re-skilling, job placement and job creation, productivity improvements and gains/pains sharing. The government have to adopt policy regulation framework on Industry 4.0 anchored on relevant international labour standards.

The participants agree to be committed more than ever to the ASEAN goal of a people-centred regional community. To build a caring and sharing society, we likewise commit ourselves to promote economic and technological adjustments that will not leave anyone behind.

Strengthening social partnership in the digital era is central in building a people-centred ASEAN.