

## Information Note

### Research Conference: Green Jobs for Asia and the Pacific

Hotel Okura, Niigata, Japan  
21-23 April 2008

#### *Background*

Over the last three decades the Asia-Pacific region has experienced unprecedented economic growth, associated with rapid industrialization and a profound restructuring of its economies. The region looks set to remain one of the fastest growing parts of the global economy.

The impressive growth record notwithstanding, there are major threats to the social and environmental sustainability of development in the region. The labour market continues to be dominated by workers in the informal economy which harbors most of the over 1 billion poor in the region. While the population in some countries is ageing, many countries continue to experience major pressure to create more and better jobs for young job seekers and for workers leaving the agricultural and rural sectors as part of a sweeping urbanization across most of Asia.

The sustainability of economic growth and the prospects for achieving social development and for overcoming poverty could be severely compromised by mounting environmental pressures in the region. These range from climate change to growing pollution of water, air and land to an increasing scarcity of natural resources and raw materials. The cost of environmental degradation is wiping out a rising share of the gains from economic growth.

There is growing acknowledgement among governments and businesses throughout the region that business as usual based on the strategy “grow first, clean up later” is not sustainable, neither economically, nor socially and environmentally. The growing awareness and willingness to act is reflected in the ASEAN Vision 2020 of a ‘clean and green ASEAN’ as well as in the promotion of green growth and the adoption of an implementation plan for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific 2006-2010 by UN-ESCAP member countries.

The drive for green growth requires a second great transformation of economies and societies towards sustainable production and consumption patterns with profound repercussions for the way people work and earn a living. These labour and social dimensions of green growth and of the response to climate change have so far received little attention in research and policy debates.

The urgency of the shift to clean development and the magnitude of the task globally and in Asia as the world’s most populous and fastest growing region has been underscored by the

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decisions of the G8 + 5 summit in Germany in 2007 as well as by the climate change negotiations in Bali in December 2007.

It is also reflected in the priorities for the United Nations system established by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. As part of the UN system response to climate change, the ILO Director-General presented a report on 'Decent work for sustainable development' to the International Labour Conference in 2007. Jointly with UNEP, the ILO has launched a 'Green Jobs Initiative' at its Governing Body session in November 2007. One of the first outputs of the Initiative will be a major report on Green Jobs, highlighting the potential benefits for employment, incomes and poverty reduction from the promotion of decent, green jobs and the critical role of workers, employers organizations and trade unions in bringing about a swift as well as a just transition to green growth and eco-effectiveness. The Conference will also highlight the unique role of the ILO constituents can play through tripartism and social dialogue at the national, sectoral and enterprise levels.

The Conference is part of a series of periodic research conferences bringing together researchers, policymakers and practitioners from different disciplines and from different institutions as well as ILO constituents and staff. It is organized jointly by the ILO's International Institute for Labour Studies (IILS), the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP) and the Policy Integration Department of the ILO.

### ***Aims and expected outcomes of the Conference***

The ILO Conference aims at exploring new concepts and approaches, at extracting lessons for policies and programmes, at identifying priorities for action and at building partnerships for future work.

The Research Conference on Green Jobs for Asia is expected to:

***1. Raise awareness for the critical role of green jobs in the transformation of Asian economies and for their potential contribution to sustainable development***

In this respect the Conference will help to clarify the notion of green jobs as it applies to the region, the relationship between concepts of green jobs and decent work, the potential for the creation of new jobs, the role of new and redefined jobs in bringing about the transformation of economies and in improving welfare and reducing poverty.

***2. Draw lessons for use in policy and operational programmes***

The Conference will share research results from the region and exchange experience from i) government policy reforms, including in the area of tax policy, financial support and market-based instruments; and ii) case studies, field projects and programmes in a range of countries, sectors and enterprises. It will distill lessons for government policies and programmes, in particular concerning the role of the ILO constituents (Ministries of Labour, Employers' and Workers' Organizations) for further consideration through tripartite dialogue.

***3. Identify the potential for the ILO to add value to and be a partner in the efforts to promote green growth in the region***

The lessons emerging from the presentations and discussions with researchers and resource persons will also help to identify future opportunities for policy advice and operational work as part of the ILO Decent Work Country Programmes. This will include

possible partnerships under the UN ‘delivering as one’ as well as other national and development partners.

**4. *Draw up an agenda for future research and explore potential for a research network***

In addition to mapping the main issues and priorities for research, the Conference will provide on suitable research methods and consider possible arrangements for building a research and knowledge sharing network on Green Jobs in the region.

**5. *Provide input to the ILO contribution to the G8 Meeting***

Green jobs will be on the agenda of the G8 Labour Ministers Meeting 2008, hosted by the Government of Japan. The conclusions of the Research Conference will provide input to the ILO contribution to the G8 Labour Ministers Meeting, scheduled for 10-13 May 2008.

### ***Format and technical themes of the Conference***

The major themes to be discussed in plenary sessions include Green Jobs and Decent Work in relation to:

- The role of government policies: social impacts of environment-friendly tax policies, government support measures and market-based instruments
- Low Carbon Economies and the Labour Market: Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy
- Employment in a Circular Economy: Waste Management and Recycling.
- Green Jobs in Natural Resource Management and Environment Protection

Each session will feature an overview presentation of 20 minutes followed by a panel discussion of 30 minutes and plenary discussion. Participants will then have the opportunity to share ideas in group work on the most promising lines of work and partnerships at regional level and as part of ILO Decent Work Country Programmes in the field as well as identify research priorities or knowledge gaps to be filled. The results of the group work will feed into recommendations for the closing session on the way forward.

Background documents will include a paper entitled, “Green Jobs for Asia and the Pacific” which will serve as an introduction to the technical areas to be covered in the workshop. Plenary sessions and group discussions will be facilitated by knowledgeable experts on the respective topics. Each of the overview presentations which introduce the four plenary sessions will be supported by a 2-3 page note and a set of PowerPoint slides.

### ***Participants***

The Conference is designed for researchers, policymakers and practitioners, drawn for example from academia, relevant government agencies, workers’ and employers’ think-tanks, and regional and international organizations. Representatives of the donor community will also be invited.

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***Conference venue and timing***

The Conference will take place from 21 to 23 April 2008 at the Hotel Okura in Niigata, Japan.