Meeting Report
ASEAN Meeting of Skills Focal Points
In Collaboration with the Department of Skill Development
Ministry of Labour of Thailand

The Pullman King Power Hotel, Bangkok Thailand
10-11 August 2015

Background information:

In close collaboration with ASEAN Secretariat, the International Labour Organization (ILO) has initiated the implementation of Mutual Recognition of Skills (MRS) to assist ASEAN Member States (AMS) in preparing themselves for a region with free flow of skilled labor. The MRS was initiated by the ILO as a key mobility tool for technical/vocational skills (level 1-4) within the framework of the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRF). It aims to smooth out the path in the negotiation between nations and facilitate the free movement and employment of qualified and certified personnel.

Since 2012, ILO has facilitated a series of regional and national consultation meetings to push forward the implementation of MRS. These meetings were attended by Senior Labour Officials Meeting (SLOM) focal points, skills focal points, employers and trade unions. Through these meetings, the role of MRS in recognizing technical/vocational skills (AQRF level 1-4) has been significantly recognized and emphasized. Through the MRS process, the workers with a modest skill set can have their skills recognized within the AQRF.

The AMS have identified target member states to which they would like to have further collaboration on MRS implementation. An Action Plan was also developed in this regard. It was envisaged by all AMS that the implementation process will take time and therefore will require long-term and consistent commitment at national level. As such, it is critical to establish a mechanism to ensure that the Action Plan is implemented, the follow-up activities are conducted, and the MRS process moved forward in a coherent and efficient manner.

In 2014, 7 out of 10 ASEAN member countries nominated national skills focal points to support the implementation of Mutual Recognition of Skills among ASEAN Member State. Key responsibilities of the national focal points are to coordinate national efforts and cooperate with peer agencies in other AMS in order to ensure the implementation of the MRS within the proposed timeframe.

The ILO Regional Skills Program through its Korea-funded Project on “Towards a Mutual Recognition of Skills in CLM” Member States” and, in collaboration with the ILO ASEAN TRIANGLE Project (ATP) assisted the AMS, including the CLM countries, to select priority sectors in which they can make their first step towards the mutual recognition of skills. The CLM, phase I of the project, which is also part of the two-year CLM capacity building program on labour migration under ATP, was initiated to guide the CLM Member States in the design and implementation of the mutual recognition of skills mechanisms through policy guidelines and directions. It is expected that the CLM countries will finalize the referencing process against the AQRF in the selected sectors by 2015.

---

1 Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar.
Further, the Department of Skill Development, Ministry of Labour, Thailand has indicated their desire to provide technical assistance through capacity building activities for the CLM. Among these programmes are the training of trainers and training of assessors, which they hold in some of their vocational training institutions. They are developing a work plan in this regard, and will also share with the other AMS.

Project phase II for CLM will focus on continuing the assistance to CLM countries in establishing mutual-recognized qualifications mechanism in more industrial sectors.

The main objectives of the meeting were to bring together the Skill Focal Points of AMS and discuss on the implementation of Mutual Recognition of Skills and to: a) discuss challenges and opportunities on skills development of AEC 2015 in general and on the implementation of MRS, in particular; b) share knowledge and updates on skills and labour programme in ASEAN countries; c) provide feedback from country representatives on progress of Action Plans; d) plan strategically on way forward.

Procedure of the Meeting

The meeting was organized in collaboration with Department of Skill Development, Ministry of Labour of Thailand and the ILO Regional Skills Programme through its Korea-funded Project on “Towards a Mutual Recognition of Skills (MRS) in CLM Countries for AEC 2015 and Beyond” and the ILO ASEAN TRIANGLE project (ATP). The meeting was chaired by Ms Carmela Torres, Sr Specialist on Skills and Employability, Decent Work, ILO and co-chaired by Mr Manuel Imson, Senior Project Coordinator, ATP, ILO. The meeting brought together Skills focal points and members of Task Force on the AQRF of 8 ASEAN Member States,² skills experts and representatives from the ASEAN Secretariat and the ILO to discuss on the implementation of MRS and plan strategically on the way forward.

The meeting opened with introductory remarks from Mr Arrug Phrommanee, Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Labour, Thailand, who highlighted that ASEAN member countries will continue to improve standards for workers with the aid of the MRS, which will be beneficial for both sending and receiving countries as well as for migrants. The implementation will be the first step in moving forwards a more technical road that aims to establish a free movement of human capital within the ASEAN member countries. Mr Phrommanee supported the work being done to provide technical assistance and capacity building between Cambodia, Lao PDR, Viet Nam and Thailand. He hoped that the meeting will promote fruitful discussions and coherent action plans for the implementation of mutual recognition of skills in ASEAN.

The opening remarks were made by Mr. Maurizio Bussi, ILO Director of Decent Work, Technical Support Team for East and Southeast Asia and the Pacific, then the Officer-in-Charge for ILO ROAP, who welcomed the participants of the skills family to the first ASEAN Skills Focal points meeting. Mr Bussi thanked the Ministry of Labour of Thailand for their kind efforts in co-hosting the event and extended his warm greetings to the Deputy Permanent Secretary. In addition, he thanked the government of the Republic of Korea for their continuous technical and financial support to the Mutual Recognition of Skills Project and the Government of Canada, through the ILO ASEAN Triangle project, for their commitment and support in protecting migrant workers. He particular thanked the ASEAN Secretariat, which is the primary interface for bilateral work in the ASEAN region and recognized the two International experts, Mr David Lythe and Ms Irene Isaac, who provided their best expert advice in the region in terms of skills recognition. Mr Bussi noted that the movement of skilled workers throughout the region is a key feature of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) and it is expected to rise beyond 2015. Due to the increasing demand for skilled workers, stronger education assistance, better partnerships with employers and capacity development for policy makers and senior officials at national level are needed. Structural change as a result of the AEC is likely to increase the demand of a mix of managerial, technical/vocational and core employability skills. While the AEC provides for the free movement of some groups of highly-skilled professionals, labour migration

² Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, and Viet Nam.
within ASEAN has been mainly dominated by low- and medium-skilled workers. In particular, these are in manufacturing, construction, fishing and domestic work, a trend that is likely to continue into the medium term. It is for this reason that the ILO has initiated the implementation of MRS as a key tool for addressing the gaps in skilled labour mobility for technical and vocational skills. The ILO has also addressed the development divide among the AMS through its assistance with Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar to improve their skills systems and policies. Mr Bussi mentioned that a number of initiatives have been implemented to move forward the skills recognition process. An important outcome was action plan agreed by the AMS through tripartite discussion to identify specific skills and occupations for mutual recognition of skills of migrant workers. Multilateral recognition of skills provide better channel for the countries of origin and countries of destination and better conditions for migrant workers in general. It offers cheaper, safer, more transparent labour mobility and it covers labour market needs. Also, employment opportunities bring new skills and new ideas that provide a continuous flow of knowledge along the region. He stressed that the ILO has convened the meeting not only to discuss the progress of AMS action plans but also discuss the challenges and opportunities on skills development of AEC and to plan strategically the way forward. He thanked the participants for their continuous support of the initiative and hoped they will continue to work together in the future.

Session 1: Updates and developments on labour migration and skills programs in ASEAN and CLM

During Session 1, Ms Carmela Torres presented the developments that took place in the field of mutual recognition of skills since the last meeting that had taken place in Jakarta in September 2014. She made a brief introduction covering what are the skills focal points and their functions. She thanked the ongoing support of the international consultants, Mr David Lythe and Ms Irene Isaac in past meetings and during the implementation of the MRS in ASEAN. She recognized that this was the first meeting of ASEAN focal points including governments from 8 AMS and it was organized to ensure that AMS are able to closely coordinate the activities within ASEAN regarding MRS and skills development activities and also as a way to provide continuity as it would be beneficial to work always with the same focal points, who will coordinate the activities, continuously supporting the same action plan, activities, etc. Another purpose of the meeting was to share knowledge and updates on the skills development in ASM and to receive feedback on progress of the action plans since September 2014 and to plan strategically the way forward to see what needs to be done. Ms Torres proposed the creation of an ad hoc Regional Skills Technical Working Group (TWG) to evolve from the ASEAN focal points functions. The objectives will be to support all skills-related activities of the ILO including the ASEAN Mutual Recognition of Skills (MRS) and also to monitor the progress in the implementation of the action plans, review and address related issues and provide strategic directions. Regarding the composition of the TWG, she encouraged countries to designate a national focal point who will be the contact person for all skills related activities. The chair will rotate each year among the members. Whoever will be acting as the host will chair the meeting. The initial meeting will be convened during the first quarter of 2016 and all the meetings will have the technical and financial support and guidance of the ILO.

Relating to the more technical aspect of the work, Ms Torres referred to two skills mobility tools: (1) the 8 Mutual Recognition Arrangements (MRAs) which focused on the 8 professional skills occupations; and (2) the MRS focused on technical/vocational skills. From the ILO perspective, the focus is placed on the technical and vocational skills rather than on the high level skilled professional. Most of the migrant workers in ASEAN belong to the low to middle level skilled workers and that only about 1 per cent of total employment in the AMS belong account for the movement of higher skilled workers under the MRAs. The AQRF continues to be the overarching goal of the MRS project but it will take time for all the countries to be able to benchmark with the AQRF and allow existing frameworks and training systems at national level to be related one another. The Skills TWG will be working closely with the current Task Force on AQRF to ensure that the goals on the MRS are aligned with the AQRF. Currently the work is focused on the technical vocational skills, agreed and recognized among AMS. The action plans of the AMS developed in September 2014 identified 2 priority occupations of migrant workers. The ILO has conducted a study during 2014 of the state of the skills systems and qualifications frameworks in place in the ASM. The study
assessed the readiness of AMS for the Implementation of the Free Flow of Skilled Labour by 2015 and has identified varying levels of readiness. The countries that can be ready for recognition for many occupations are Malaysia and Philippines, for some occupations: Brunei Darussalam; Viet Nam; Singapore; Indonesia; and Thailand and countries that can be ready for recognition for key migrant worker occupations, with support, are: Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar (CLM). The CLM countries which has less developed skills frameworks and systems with be prioritized and provided the technical support and assistance by the ILO. She highlighted the ILO’s initiatives which had taken place since 2012, through a series of consultations with employers, governments and trade unions. During the tripartite Consultation/Validation workshop on the Implementation of Mutual Recognition of Skills in ASEAN Countries in Jakarta, in September 2014 and hosted by the Indonesian Ministry of Manpower, all the countries identified two priority occupations for MRS implementation with the corresponding AMS; developed detailed action plans for the MRS process; and agreed to provide technical assistance required. A specific focus was given to CLM with Thailand since these were the countries needing more technical support since they had less developed skills systems. The Korean government’s assistance focused on the CLM countries and therefore, a number of workshops were conducted at the national level as support to the CLM’s action plans. The activities, among others involved implementation of the referencing process and further action with respect to the assessment and certification and accreditation of training institutions. The Korean government will continue to support the CLM countries through the ILO. A second phase of the Project will be implemented until 2017 while at the same time other AMS will also continue to work closely with the CLM countries.

Following, Ms Torres presented the action plans that were proposed in Jakarta in 2014. The priority skills areas covered occupations/skills in: building, masonry, bricklaying and plastering, electrical wiring, welding, tourism and hospitality, domestic work, sewing machine operation, and automotive technology. She invited participants to review these action plans, provide updates and indicate whether they would like to continue with the same set of occupations or skills or revise/change them with current developments. Such changes will be taken into consideration in the action plan.

The second phase will be implemented from July 2015 to December 2017 with CLM countries and Thailand. The Project will work on the implementation of the action plans and national workshops with stakeholders. Further, the Project will continue to benchmark with the regional model competency standards (RMCS), as the instrument for the implementation of the MRS. Consisting of a set of competency skills standards which acts as a generic guide to countries developing their skills standards/competencies the RMCS covers a range of occupations across a certain industry and can be used as a regional benchmark for ASEAN/developing countries. So far, the RMCS that have been developed are: construction, manufacturing, tourism and hospitality, domestic work and welding. Thailand would like to continue providing technical support but also the assistance of other MS who would like to work with CLM is welcomed.

With regards to the linking MRS with AQRF, the focus will be on 1-4 level descriptors of the AQRF. Ms Torres highlighted that once the MRS is in place, it should be possible to expand the occupations in other priority areas to move the process forward with assistance of the ILO. AMS should inform the ILO whenever they need assistance.

After Ms Torres’ presentation, the floor was opened for Q&A. Dr Buyong Hamzah, Deputy Director General, Ministry of Human Resources of Malaysia, congratulated the group for the achievements but stressed that every time a meeting takes place, there is a change in the representative who attends the meeting and therefore, no continuity. He suggested the creation of an online platform, to allow for a regular exchange and where national developments could be uploaded. This will allow for a better awareness of current developments at the regional/national levels without having to wait for the next

---

1 The documents are available for consultation on the following website: http://apskills.ilo.org/

4 Level 1: basic general, involves simple routine actions; Level 2: is general and factual, involves use of standard actions field; Level 3: includes general principles and some conceptual aspects; and Level 4: technical and theoretical with general coverage of a field.
meeting to take place. Ms Torres suggested using the ILO’s Skills and Employability website’s which can provide forum for regularly uploading news, updates and discussions.

Both the Cambodian and the Myanmar representatives expressed their concerns about the linking between low levels with higher-level skills since the MRS focus is on levels 1-4. In response, Ms Torres indicated that the current work on the MRS is on technical/vocational skills and these are our priority. The focus of the MRAs are professionals and higher level technical skills. Ultimately, these levels will become integrated as countries develop their national qualifications frameworks (NQF). But the process we have to ensure that these all relate to the overall framework and goal—towards the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRF). That the focus on the lower levels does not mean that there is no coordination with higher level skills and that is the reason why the ILO always make sure to invite task force members of the AQRF to the MRS meetings. For reasons of limited resources and practicalities, the focus is placed on technical/vocational skills. In ASEAN, majority of the migrant workers belong to the low to medium level skills. She invited the countries to share what are the important considerations that the ILO should take into account when providing assistance on this matter. The Indonesian delegation shared their experience of how they are working to link the AQRF at the national level. In addition, Ms. Torres reminded participants that for the MRS to take place, there must be just one set of national skills standards. In some countries, there are a number of agencies at the national level developing the same set of skills standards. It is therefore necessary for the countries to first agree internally on just one set of skills standards and as to who should be responsible, for the skills recognition process to take place in a coordinated organized and timely manner.

Ms Supanavich, Senior Officer, ASEAN Secretariat thanked Ms Torres for a very insightful presentation and wanted to inquire about the composition of the TWG, especially as there are a number of institutions at country level involved in skills including professional and employers’ associations, tripartite organizations and other non-governmental bodies. Ms Torres mentioned that the focal points would be responsible for identifying the key organizations and coordinating the skills activities at the national level and the ILO will rely on their advice and inputs.

Following this presentation, Mr. Imson, Senior Project Coordinator of the ASEAN TRIANGLE Project, ILO, shared the updates and developments on labour migration in Asia and on the protection of migrant workers. The notion of skills recognition cannot be separated from the issue of labour mobility and of labour migration as a result. He highlighted global trends and developments on migration, including the latest statistics regarding number of migrant workers in the world in general and in the ASEAN region in particular. The majority of the data was collected for the launch of the first International Labour Migration Statistics in ASEAN\(^5\) that was made possible through the cooperation of the 10 ASEAN countries and the ASEAN Secretariat. Mr Imson informed the participants that there are global debates on migration that are fundamental for the work on labour migration, at international but also at regional level, including the ASEAN Forum on Labour Migration (AFML). The AFML has been meeting regularly every year since 2007. The issue of migrant protection should be part of the talks regarding labour migration. The ILO rights based approach consists of a set of standards that apply to all workers, including migrant workers. There are several ILO conventions that provide protection for migrant workers and also the ILO Multilateral Framework, adopted in 2006, contains all the good practices regarding labour migration. In addition, Mr Imson outlined the 8 action areas of the ILO Fair Migration agenda that was presented in 2014 with the initiative of the ILO Director General and enumerated a few areas that are considered key issues in the agenda including recruitment, decent employment and working conditions and recognizing the skills of potential and returning workers.

Following Mr Imson’s presentation, Ms Tutay, Director IV, Bureau of Local Employment, Department of Labour and Employment, Philippines emphasized the impact of migration within ASEAN which calls for a ensuring a better the recruitment process for the protection migrant workers. Ms Torres reminded the participants that the ILO has developed a guide on monitoring private recruitment agencies that identifies

---

\(^5\) [http://www.ilo.org/iostat/](http://www.ilo.org/iostat/)
an inventory of different laws around the world about private recruitment agencies. She also informed the participants of the related to ILO Convention 181 on private employment agencies, which states that recruitment agencies should charge recruitment fees to the employers instead of the migrant workers.

The third speaker of Session 1, Ms Irene Isaac, International Consultant, presented updates on the AQRF and went through the basic principles and agreements on the AQRF and how it relates to the MRS. The rationale behind the AQRF is that it was envisioned to facilitate the free flow of learners, skilled labour and professionals by developing a regional zone of trust in their qualifications. It should foster the development of national qualifications framework within a lifelong learning framework and their referencing to a regional and international qualifications frameworks. The AQRF facilitates lifelong learning and the recognition of prior learning whether informal or non-formal. The objectives of the AQRF are to increase trade in services, particularly education services and the temporary movement of natural persons through the development of mutually comparable National Qualification Frameworks (NQFs) and to strengthen education and training systems within each country and the development of a common reference framework to facilitate their harmonization. The AQRF are based on agreed understanding among AMS of a regional framework; invites voluntary engagements for each and every AMS; does not require to make changes to the national qualifications systems; and respects AMS specific structures and processes. She presented the level descriptors to enable comparisons of qualifications developed in the AMS. The AQRF is a common reference framework which was influenced by the European qualification framework diagram. The AQRF consists of 8 levels of complexity of learning outcomes and 2 domains: knowledge and skills and application and responsibility. The referencing procedure aims to describe a common structure for linking NQFs to the AQRF; ensure that the linking process undertaken is robust and transparent; and provide a common reporting structure for the referencing reports. She also mentioned the process of referencing which is listed in the outcome of the “Consultation Paper on Implementation of AQRF” and it involves eleven points in which the structure of the education and training system is described. Ms Isaac also highlighted the importance of the quality assurance framework in the referencing process to create a zone of trust. Currently there are three quality assurance systems that are being proposed and are under discussion: 1) the ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework; 2) the higher education INQHI; and 3) the East Asia Summit Vocational Education and Training Quality Assurance Framework, which is currently in use by the East Asia Summit. The AQRF has been endorsed of three sets of ministers: 1) the 46th ASEAN Economic Ministers (AEM) in August 2014; 2) the 8th ASEAN Education Ministers Meeting (ASED) in September 2014; and (3) there was an ad-referendum approval by all ASEAN Labour Ministers. In the last meeting of the AQRF in March 2015, the Advisory committee was created and it is now undergoing national consultation that should guide through the final agreement and endorsement in October 2015. This will be the final meeting on the AQRF which will be hosted by Thailand. These activities are implemented under Phase II of the AQRF. However, there is a phase III that involves technical support from different AMS, including collaboration between (1) Thailand and New Zealand, (2) Philippines and Australia; and (3) Myanmar and Malaysia.

Session 1 led into a plenary discussion. Mr Lythe inquired about the Technical secretariat board, specifying whether the advisory committee will be composed of detailed operational expertise. Ms Isaac replied that the advisory committee will listen to the NQF boards and can also bring in technical experts for support. Ms Torres expressed her concerns with regards to what happens in Phase III to the countries that are not linked with any technical support. Ms Isaac stated that the linking will not go into very detailed referencing but mainly discuss the basic structure of how the principles apply. Dr Buyong Hamzah related Ms Isaac’s and Mr Imson’s presentations as a way of showing that one factor always has implications in the next and sometimes it is difficult for governments to accept this. He stressed the scope and limitations in the AQRF implementation at the national level.

**Session 2: Knowledge and sharing strategic planning**

Following a short break, Session 2 began with a presentation by Mr. David Lythe, International Consultant, who presented the developments in ASEAN plus Three Forum (AMS + Japan, Korea and China), focusing
on the readiness of AMS for skills recognition for migrant workers in ASEAN. He noted there is a changing view of what qualification frameworks are all about. ASEAN is being studied and will be supported by China, Japan and the Republic of Korea as well as some countries of the Asia-Pacific because in the near future these countries will need skilled workers from ASEAN. These skilled workers are foreseen to come mainly from Indonesia, Myanmar and Philippines. It is very interesting to see the 10 countries from ASEAN are coming together to develop a common framework. He went through his presentation on the AMS as well as presentations on China, the Republic of Korea and Japan relating to NQF and AQRF at the ASEAN Plus Three Forum. He highlighted some important considerations for decision-makers when developing a unified national qualifications system. He stated that the development of a national qualifications framework is not only about referencing existing arrangements to a new structure but also about creating the opportunities for a unified labour force which should consider significant labour market implications. A qualifications framework creates the pathway to a dynamic labour market. There are two very interesting messages to be extracted from this: the first being that the 13 countries are thinking about economic growth, economic development and jobs; and second, that China, Japan and the Republic of Korea are trying to imitate and benchmark informally to the AQRF so that they are able to benefit from the skilled workers from AMS.

During the Q&A session, the Malaysian delegation mentioned that there are two different types of criteria used in the framework: (1) in some countries the focus is on capabilities/competencies whereas in other countries it is on (2) knowledge development. In Malaysia, the training programs are designed focusing on those criteria. On the other hand, there are also programs that are designed in the form of short courses. The question raised was whether all the level descriptors should be complied with. Mr Lythe answered that there are different practices in each of the countries and are at varying stages of development of their NQFs. But what is important is that as the countries progress with their skills frameworks, the skills are clearly linked with the level descriptors of the AQRF. The Lao PDR representative wanted to know why there are no level descriptors for levels two and four in the proposed Lao PDR’s NQF. Mr Lythe mentioned that the certificates were proposed in place. But there are still missing level descriptors and that Lao PDR give more attention and work on their NQF. Viet Nam delegation pointed out that their 5 levels of the NQF are not yet linked with the AQRF levels.

The second component of Session 2 consisted of the updates on the action plans by each AMS. Each country delegation as well as the ASEAN Secretariat had 10 minutes to present their updates.

**Cambodia**

- National workshop on “Implementation of MRS in preparation of AEC”, December 2014, Phnom Penh, Cambodia: to follow up the submitted action plan in Validation/Consultation Workshop on Implementation of MRS in ASEAN Countries; to discuss in the process of implementation on MRS and AQRF; set up an action plan for implementation of MRS on the two selected occupations. Results: draft action plan for implementation of MRS with Thailand on Masonry and Building Electrical Wiring.
- Consultation Workshop on “Implementation of MRS between Kingdom of Cambodia and Kingdom of Thailand”, April 2015, Phnom Penh, Cambodia: to compare both the skills standards of the responsible national bodies between Cambodia and Thailand; meet and consult with the responsible ministries to agree on the skills standards and certification system; consult with the concerned private sector to ensure the skills standards are in line with the industry standards; revise the skills standards and improve the system quality and process for MRS with Thailand; review the action plan for on-going implementation of MRS. Result: how to do the MRS between Cambodia and Thailand; referencing between CS with RMCS on masonry and building electrical wiring; modify the action plan for processing the MRS between Cambodia and Thailand.
- Achievements: created work groups for discussing and reviewing some documents of MRS; created draft law on “Competency Assessment and Certification” for assessing the individual competence and certifying them; in-country workshop to inform the directors/representatives of
training institutions the activities and results of MRS for AEC.

- Future activities: train the competency assessors; accredit the competency assessment centers; create the documents related to the implementation assessment and certification system; preparation of activities for the implementation of MRS.
- Challenges in the implementation of RoS: legislation related to the implementation; collaborative implementation with effective stakeholder engagements; establishment of management system of RoS; staff development on implementation of RoS.

**Indonesia**

- The Indonesia Qualification Framework (IQF) is a reflection on human resources quality in Indonesia; it acts as a neutral reference that can equalize learning outcomes resulted from formal training or education. It also serves as a translation mechanism.
- Key achievements of the IQF to date: regulation 73-2012 concerning Guideline of Implementing NQF on Higher Education; regulation 21-2014 concerning Guideline on Implementing NQF.
- Progress on the IQF implementation and development: in the tourism sector, the IQF has been developed for Hotel and Restaurants that follows the ASEAN’s toolkit; in the construction sector the developments are in progress.
- Key challenges: acceptance of IQF and NCS with industry; socialization with all stakeholders; many training institutions which still need to be accredited; regulation on the IQF just established and will need to create more awareness with stakeholders; need to develop more NCS; implementation of MRS and MRA in ASEAN.
- Next steps: create awareness of the implementation of IQF; encourage stakeholders to develop or update NCS and NQF on requiring fieldwork; increase standards and NQF developer; develop MCC mechanism; strengthen the training institutions and the professional certification agency.

**Lao People’s Democratic Republic**

- Priority skill areas: bricklaying and plastering: reason for selecting these 2 skills area. Disconnect these into a particular skill due the fact that these skills are in one national standard; conduct pilot testing of these 2 skills after disconnection; and finalize and endorse the 2 skills standards prior to recognition.
- To support the action plan: national policies; national structure of skills standards; RMCS structure; NQF being developed; committee and technical committee for the MRS process in Lao PDR.
- Challenges: limited time; the former members of the technical committee who participated in the development of skills in construction have been transferred to other departments.
- Next steps: recognize the priority skills with CLM countries in 2016; apply and disseminate the recognized skills to develop the existing skills curriculums; conduct skills standard testing and certification.

**Malaysia**

- The AQRF: endorsed by Malaysia on July 2015\(^6\). It is handled by the Malaysian Qualification Agency which is under the Ministry of Education, similarly under that all the Mutual Recognition Arrangements (MRA) are addressed by this organization. On the other hand, the MRS are being handled by the Ministry of Human Resources (MoHR) since 2014.
- In December 2014 a task force was established to look into MRS in Malaysia. The background research showed that the Ministry of Tourism was already handling the existing MRA on tourism professionals with 6 suggested skills areas. On the construction sector, managed by CIDB, there is need to be engaged with the industries before further decisions can be made.

---
\(^6\) Endorsement does not carry any international legal obligation to AMS. Implementation of AQFR is based on voluntary engagement.
• Challenges: proposed skills areas under the purview of other ministries/stakeholders; AQRF mapping of skills standards with partner countries; final decision by partner country has yet to be gathered; guidelines and mechanisms of implementation of MRS has yet to be developed, MRA is being considered among the method to be followed.
• Focus on Hospitality and Tourism at the moment; considering another alternative sector such as manufacturing in the following skill areas: steel and foundry, plastic and textile; further engagement with the relevant industries; towards free-flow of skilled labour and to raise the respective levels of skills standards.

ASEAN Secretariat

• Summary of the Task Force on ASEAN Qualification Reference Framework (TF-AQRF) meetings: the first TF-AQRF meeting took place in November 2012 in Thailand: adoption of TOR of TF-AQRF. The main purpose of the TF-AQRF is to design an AQRF as a common reference framework for the region; there are currently 6 TF meetings and the 7th and final meeting will be held in October in Thailand.
• Status of the endorsement of AQRF by AEM, ASED and ALM: endorsed by ASEAN leaders in 2014.
• AQRF and ALM Work Programmes: skills development part of ASEAN cooperation on labour and one of the purposes of the ASEAN charter to create a single market and production base. ASEAN charter one of purposes/ ASEAN Social Cultural Community Blueprint 2009-2015: enhance and improve the capacity of ASEAN human resources and developed a well-prepared, competent ASEAN labour force. ASEAN Labour Ministers (ALM) work programme 2010-2015: strategic priorities are labour market and workforce developments and improve national skills framework in preparation for regional skills recognition framework.
• The issue of skills development and skills recognition is highly recognized under the ASEAN Labour Cooperation. Workshop in April 2015 to review the programme of the ALM and 12 aspects of labour cooperation that will remain very relevant were identified and one of these is the skills development and recognition.
• Draft work programme of the ALM for 2016-2020 is currently being reviewed for finalization. It comprises skills recognition as one the thematic areas, under which the support of the AQRF is proposed.

Myanmar

• National Skills Standard Authority (NSSA) in charge of the skills standards and curriculum development.
• National Skills Qualification Framework in Myanmar: The proposed framework consists of Level 1) Semi-skilled worker; level 2) skilled worker; level 3) advanced skilled worker; level 4) supervisor. This will need further review to conform with the level descriptors of AQRF.
• Requirements for harmonization among MMWA Competency Standards for mutual recognition: range of competency units and skills qualification level; reference technical code/standards and their ranges; curriculum training standard and assessment standard.
• Next step to be considered: conduct a series of bilateral technical meetings in order to discuss referencing and recognition steps with regards to welding; get regional standard by the ILO regarding sewing machine operation that can be applied in GMS or ASEAN region.
• Challenges: budget constraints; shortage of occupational experts and human resources; time consuming; need of technical and financial assistance; limited number of assessment centres and training institutions.

Philippines

• Priority skills: tourism and domestic worker. Collaborate with Myanmar for tourism and Cambodia for domestic work. Nothing has been done since the action plan was drawn.
Tourism: in the process of finalizing the tourism human resource development plan. Domestic workers minimum wage has been set.

Learnings that the Philippines has in those areas are something that other AMS can look at.

ASEAN Skills Assessment and Competency Forum held in the Philippines last May 2015.

Technical exchange between the Philippines and Australia as part of the AQRF activities.

Overall mandate on education and training emanates from the National Coordinating Committee headed by the Ministry of Education to start referencing by 2016.

Preparing for the AEC game plan with a section to sustain the competitiveness of the human resources development and referencing qualification is part of this.

Thailand

Three main responsibility: 1) Skills training consisting of three kind of training: pre-employment training; upgrading training; and re-training. 2) Skill standards, skill standards testing and competition. 3) Training through the promotion of public participation and network in skills development through the Skill Development Promotion Act.

Workshop on the Development for Skill Standard Experts in CLMTV countries to take place 18-20 August 2015 in Bangkok, Thailand. Target group: governments, employers and workers representative from CLMTV. The objectives of the workshop are to exchange experiences in developing national skills standards, testing methods and quality assurance and to provide a platform for participants to develop an action plan with Thailand.

Viet Nam

The framework for development of national occupational skills standards (NOSS) has been issued in 2008. March 2015, decree on the conditions, organization and implementation of skills assessment and issuance.

Development of NQF on 8 levels referencing with EQF and AQRF. Two priority skills areas: automotive technology and tourism. MoU with Thailand.

Benchmarking activities outside the ASEAN region funded by the Australian government. Five selected occupations: warehouse operator, logistics administrative officer, freight forwarder, warehouse supervisor and supply chain manager.

Challenges: governmental agencies commitment; need for better stakeholders engagement; limited resources both financial and human; welding, automotive technology, domestic and housekeeping have not been implemented because proposed to be involved GMS skills mutual recognition project funded by ADB that is still being arranged.

Recommendations: follow-up activities after meetings; putting the proposed action plan into GDVT/MOLISA agendas, the co-founded by the government; ILO and ADB continue to work together in implementation of GMS mutual recognition of skills; participating partner/countries.

Following the countries presentations, Mr Imson highlighted that countries have recognized and reported the value of being able to document the progress in the AMS and the implementation of the action plans. In addition, the importance of raising discussion on MRS at higher levels in the respective governments has been demonstrated and the authorities have suggested adjustments to be made. The earlier higher level officials are involved the better. Last but not least, the value of interagency efforts in pursuing this has been demonstrated by a number of AMS like Philippines and other countries.

Session 3: Report back from the group work

Participants were given a template to fill in with the revisions in their priority occupations, if any; activities, proposed timeframes and remarks whether they will be needing assistance, further discussion, resources, etc. Participants met with other AMS to discuss these action plans and later presented the outcomes of the discussion.
Cambodia

- Proposed priority occupations: masonry; building electrical wiring; automotive servicing; and automotive electrical servicing.
- Proposed activities: train the relevant officers; accredit the training courses and training institutions; conduct public awareness workshop on MRS for the 4 occupations; set up the assessment committee between Cambodia and Thailand; overall impact assessment and workshop.
- Responsible office: DGTSET/MLVT (Cambodia); DSD/MoL (Thailand); ILO (funding and technical assistance.
- Timeline: October 2015- December 2016

Indonesia

- Proposed priority occupations: Tourism and hospitality; construction; domestic work and plantation.
- Proposed activities: develop national qualification; harmonize IQF with AQRF; develop MRS with Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei.
- Responsible office: Ministry of Tourism; Ministry of Manpower; Ministry of Public Work; and Ministry of Agriculture.
- Timeline: October 2015- 2016

Lao PDR

- Proposed priority occupations: bricklaying and plastering.
- Proposed activities: taskforce to develop the standards in the priority occupation was appointed; standardized methodology with RMCS; skills standards are validated towards their improvement; pilot testing; standards tested and designated assessors are trained.
- Responsible office: MOLSW, TESDA (PH), ILO.

Malaysia

- Proposed priority occupations: tourism and hospitality, construction (depending on the progress of the construction sector in Malaysia), domestic workers (standards already put into place) and plantation.
- Proposed activities: coordinate with Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Home Affairs to incorporate MRS for them to allow workers into Malaysia; collaboration with Indonesia; invites Myanmar, Lao PDR, Viet Nam and Cambodia for collaboration; refers to CIDB
- Responsible office: Department of Skills Development, Ministry of Human Resources of Malaysia (as a Chairman of Task Force of MRS in Malaysia)

Myanmar

- Proposed priority occupations: welder, electrician, carpenter and sewing machine operator.
- Proposed activities: Pre-meetings for bilateral cooperation for MRS between Myanmar and Thailand; MoU or agreement with Thailand; workshops for discussion on occupational competency standards; final workshop on reaching agreement between Myanmar and Thailand; planning meeting for implementation of MRS; training of trainers and assessors; accredit national body on training, certification and assessment body between Myanmar and Thailand; conduct skills assessment pilot project for mutual recognition; overall evaluation workshop.
- Responsible office: MOLES/NSSA (Myanmar)- DSD/MoL (Thailand) / TPQI
- Timeline: May-December 2015.
Philippines

- Revised proposal to work with Lao PDR in the proposed priority occupations: brick layering and plastering. Compare with RMCS and determine gaps to be addressed; curriculum development and training of trainers and assessors; develop tools for assessment and certification; assessment and certification systems.
- PH to provide technical assistance in harmonizing standards on brick-laying (masonry) of Lao-PDR’s DSDE and the Ministry of Education.
- Responsible offices: TESDA (PH), DSDE-MOLSW (Lao-PDR) and Thailand.
- Timeline: August- December 2015

Thailand

- Proposed priority occupations: bricklaying and plastering.
- Proposed activities: technical assistance; training of trainers and assessor.
- Responsible offices: Department of Skills Development, Ministry of Labor. Operated by CSHSD.
- Timeline: October 2015- September 2016

Viet Nam

- Proposed activities: implementing full recognition of 3 technical skills areas that were piloted by previous ADB project; reviewing and improving the quality of the 3 NOSSs; developing MRS framework among 3 countries; establish MRS working group; testing and certification for migrant workers.
- Responsible office: GDVT/MOLISA
- Timeline: 2015-2016

Conclusions and Recommendations

During the ASEAN Skills Focal Points meeting, the participants:

1) Discussed the current challenges and opportunities on skills development of the AEC 2015, in general and on the implementation of MRS, in particular.
2) Shared knowledge and updates on the skills programme in ASEAN countries.
3) Provided updates on the progress of implementation of the Action Plans on MRS.
4) Discussed follow-up action and presented the next steps on implementation.

The meeting agreed to establish the Regional Skills Technical Working Group (RSTWG), composed of the currently nominated ASEAN skills focal points that will support all skills-related activities in the ILO, including the Mutual Recognition of Skills project. The next meeting is proposed to follow up and discuss the function and the Terms of Reference of the RSTWG. The AMS are invited to take turns to host the meeting with ILO’s technical and financial support.

A further follow-up meeting was held with Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar with Thailand, Philippines and the ILO to discuss more details of their action plans and identify areas support by the ILO and other AMS.

Please refer to the details of the RSTWG in Annex C. The meeting agenda and list of participants are found in Annex A and B, respectively.
# ANNEX A
## Meeting Agenda

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Day 1: Monday, 10 August 2015</strong></td>
<td><strong>Date: 10 August 2015</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Time: 08.30 – 17.30</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Location:</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Duration:</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Attendees:</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Objectives:</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Agendas:</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Deliverables:</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Next Steps:</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Comments:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08.30 – 09.00</td>
<td>Registration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09.00 – 09.30</td>
<td>Opening Remarks by Mr Arrug Phrommanee (Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Labour of Thailand) and Mr Maurizio Bussi (Director of Decent Work Technical Support Team for East and Southeast Asia and the Pacific)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09.30 – 10.00</td>
<td>Group Photo &amp; Coffee/ Tea Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Session 1:</strong> Updates and developments on labour migration and skills programs in ASEAN and CLM</td>
<td>10.00 – 10.45&lt;br&gt;<strong>1.1</strong> Background the ILO Mutual Recognition of Skills Programme and the role of ASEAN skills focal points&lt;br&gt;Ms Carmela Torres (Sr Specialist on Skills and Employability, ILO/DWT-BKK)&lt;br&gt;10.45 – 11.00&lt;br&gt;<strong>1.2</strong> Updates and developments on labour migration in Asia and on the protection of migrant workers&lt;br&gt;Mr Manuel Imson (Senior Programme Officer, ILO/ASEAN TRIANGLE Project)&lt;br&gt;11.00 – 12.00&lt;br&gt;<strong>1.3</strong> Update on AQRF activities&lt;br&gt;Ms Irene Issac (ILO International Consultant)&lt;br&gt;12.00 – 13.30&lt;br&gt;Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Session 2:</strong> Knowledge sharing and Strategic Planning</td>
<td>13.30 – 14.00&lt;br&gt;<strong>2.1</strong> Developments ASEAN + 3 Forum&lt;br&gt;Mr David Lythe (ILO International Consultant)&lt;br&gt;14.00 – 16.00&lt;br&gt;<strong>2.2</strong> Updates on the action plans by AMS: mutual recognition of skills (10 minutes each)&lt;br&gt;AASEAN Representatives from the countries; Representative from the ASEAN Secretariat&lt;br&gt;<strong>2.3</strong> Updates on TF-AQRF Activities&lt;br&gt;16.00 – 16.15&lt;br&gt;Coffee/ Tea Break&lt;br&gt;16.15 – 17.30&lt;br&gt;<strong>2.4</strong> Group work – AMS to meet and discuss on future collaboration and cooperation on MRS and monitoring platform.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Day 2: Tuesday, 11 August 2015</strong></td>
<td><strong>Date: 11 August 2015</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Time: 08.30 – 16.00</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Location:</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Duration:</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Attendees:</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Objectives:</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Agendas:</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Deliverables:</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Next Steps:</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Comments:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08.30 – 09.00</td>
<td>Recap the discussion on day one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09.00 – 10.30</td>
<td>Report back: Presentation on the Group Work and the main conclusion from the action planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Individual country meetings (for CLM countries)</strong></td>
<td>14.00-15.00&lt;br&gt;Individual country meeting – MYANMAR&lt;br&gt;Representatives from Myanmar and Thailand&lt;br&gt;15.00-16.00&lt;br&gt;Individual country meeting – LAO PDR&lt;br&gt;Representatives from Lao PDR and Thailand&lt;br&gt;16.00-17.00&lt;br&gt;Individual country meeting - Cambodia&lt;br&gt;Representatives from Cambodia and Thailand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>Mr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>Mr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>Mr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>Mr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lao PDR</td>
<td>Mr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lao PDR</td>
<td>Ms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>Mr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>Ms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myanmar</td>
<td>Dr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myanmar</td>
<td>Dr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>Ms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>Ms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>Ms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>Ms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>Ms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viet Nam</td>
<td>Mr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viet Nam</td>
<td>Mr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASEAN SEC.</td>
<td>Ms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASEAN SEC.</td>
<td>Ms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Bangkok</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Bangkok</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Bangkok</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Bangkok</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Bangkok</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Bangkok</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Bangkok</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Bangkok</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ANNEX C
Regional Skills Technical Working Group (RSTWG)

Purpose and Objective

The Regional Skills Technical Working Group (RSTWG) is a working-level technical group that supports all skills-related activities of the ILO including the Mutual Recognition of Skills (MRS) project at the ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP) in Bangkok, Thailand. The Regional Skills TWG will meet at least once a year and be attended by up to two representatives from each of the ASEAN Member States (AMS) to discuss skills-related issues and the implementation of its activities. The current focus is on the MRS in ASEAN. It will exist to monitor progress of Action Plans, review and address related issues and provide strategic direction when and where necessary.

Composition

It shall comprise of national focal points who were earlier designated by the Governments of the AMS to liaise with the ILO and to coordinate skills-related programmes at the national level. As the current focus is on the MRS, this shall foster greater coherence in the implementation and completion of the national, sub-regional or regional Action Plans on this area.

Chairing and its Rotation

The Chair of the TWG will rotate each year among its members.

ILO Technical Support and Guidance

The Regional Skills TWG will exist under the guidance and technical support from the ILO.

Initial Meeting

Initial meeting of the TWG will be convened on the first quarter of 2016 with the ILO taking the lead. The first meeting agenda will include the formulation and adoption of the TWG’s Operating Modality and identification of Chair, among others. The venue and date of said meeting will be determined by the ILO in consultation with the TWG members.