



Concept Note
***Regional meeting on skills and the future of work:
Strategies for inclusive growth in Asia and the Pacific***
13 October 2017
Bangkok, Thailand

Background

Skills development is essential for building an inclusive future with decent work. The future of work is, however, not predetermined and it is difficult to estimate how it will impact on jobs and skills needs. At the same time, the demand and supply of skills are being rapidly redefined by radical demographic transformations, technological changes, organizational changes and the transition to a green economy. Technology is driving up skill needs and greater automation is putting low-skilled workers at risk whereas the demand for high-skilled workers is increasing. Realizing inclusive growth and shared prosperity to leave no one behind is a key goal of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and is also an aspiration of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC). These future prospects and agenda for labour markets in the region are prompting countries to revisit their skills strategies and skills development systems.

In responding to the challenge of providing skills for the future, the International Labour Organization (ILO) held two forums last year (2016) to analyse and debate the national situations and responses, and to draw up the ways forward. As part of the ILO/Korea Partnership Programme, the TVET Forum *Skills for the Future: The Perspectives and Experiences from Asia and the Pacific* was held in October. The forum was intended to kick-start substantive debate and work in the area of jobs and skills in the future by sharing the perspectives and experiences from Asia and the Pacific. The forum drew several excellent presentations and materials that highlighted the main reform initiatives taken by the Member States and development partners to make skills systems ready to meet future skills demands. In December, the subject of *Skills for the Future* was taken up as one of five key panel discussions during the 16th Asia-Pacific Regional Meeting (APRM) in Bali, Indonesia. As part of the preparatory work, several research papers were commissioned, and a background note was written that incorporated inputs from the TVET Forum in Korea as well as the findings of the research papers.

While reaffirming the importance of tripartism and urging increased efforts on public and private partnerships in skills development, the rich panel discussion at the APRM shed light on how Member States can prepare themselves for meeting future skill challenges. For example, the panels called for enabling workers to have broader career prospects through the clustering of skills, with enhanced core work skills and through a lifelong learning approach. The discussion also included appeals to go beyond addressing skills mismatches. A call for building an inclusive future involves the creation of more jobs that are rewarding and productive, and that should have a higher skills and value-added content. It is in this context of business and sector transformation that improved workforce skills contribute most to stronger business performance and better jobs. Not only the number of jobs, but also the quality of jobs is the issue. This is particularly the issue in the informal economy. The discussion also highlighted that skills programmes do need to be in sync with future market demand, but at the same time, companies also need to value talent adequately in order to make the most of available competencies. This reemphasized the importance and role of enterprise-based training. The need to improve the status of vocational training in the region was also highlighted. Such improvements include high quality training products, multiple pathways towards higher level education, and decent working conditions and career prospects for TVET jobs. The need to tap the full potential of technology was also raised as a new way to increase access to TVET



for disadvantaged groups. The other point included was further regional cooperation on mutual recognition of skills for promoting fair and decent work for migrant workers.

The debates and front-line research on the subject are currently being compiled as an ILO publication, tentatively titled *Skills and the Future of Work: Strategies for Inclusive Growth in Asia and the Pacific*. The publication aims to disseminate front-line thinking and initiatives in the region on the subject of skills for the future and to inform Member States of possible courses of action as they prepare to meet future skills challenges.

Objective

The “Regional meeting on skills and the future of work: Strategies for inclusive growth in Asia and the Pacific” (hereafter referred to as the ‘Meeting’) will be organized on 13 October 2017. The purpose of the Meeting is to hold an in-depth discussion between experts and tripartite partners (i.e. Fiji, India, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam) on the key issues related to ‘skills and the future of work’. The tripartite partners will present their thoughts and initiatives on skills and the future for work from the national perspectives and provide their views on the scope and content on the first drafts of the publication. The outcomes will be integrated into the final version of the publication.

Date and Venue

The Meeting will be held on 13 October 2017 at the Amari Watergate Hotel in Bangkok, Thailand.

Meeting Participants, Structure and Preparation

Experts along with the tripartite partners from Fiji, India, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam will be invited to participate. The Meeting will be organized along the following four themes –each represents a driving force for shaping the future of work and challenges that associated with it. The session will consist of a number of technical presentations, country presentations and panel discussions.

- Part I: Creating enabling working environment for skills and inclusive growth
- Part II: Responding to future demographic shifts: Aging societies and youth aspiration
- Part III: Technological change and its impact on jobs and skills for the future
- Part IV: Future of skills in the multiple facets of the labour market: Cross-border integration, informality and rural economy

Tripartite delegates of each country is requested to jointly prepare a country brief for this Meeting, outlining labour market and employment challenges that are expected in the future of work, challenges of skills development/TVET as they prepare to meet those labour market changes, and the initiatives that have taken so far. Guidelines and outlines to the country brief will be furnished in more detail to the nominees. The delegation will be invited to make a brief presentation based on the country brief during the Meeting.

Tripartite delegates of each country will also be provided with background reading materials prior to the Meeting.