

ILO/Japan
Tripartite
Regional Meeting on

Youth Employment

in Asia and
the Pacific

Bangkok
27 February ~
1 March 2002



International Labour Office

**Report on
the ILO/Japan Tripartite Regional Meeting on
Youth Employment in Asia
and the Pacific**

**Bangkok, Thailand
27 February – 1 March 2002**



**International Labour Office
Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
Bangkok**

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ILO Bangkok Area Office and East Asia Multidisciplinary Team
Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
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Preface

“The primary goal of the ILO today is to promote opportunities for women and men, including the young, to obtain decent and productive work, in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity. To this end, the ILO is working in partnership with the international community, business and labour to address the employment challenge.”

Juan Somavia,
Director-General
International Labour Office

At the start of the new century, youth employment continues to be a serious problem. According to ILO estimates 70 million young people are searching for work but cannot find any; about 80 per cent of them are in developing countries and transition economies. Youth are nearly twice as likely as adults to be unemployed. In many countries the ratio is higher. Young people are often the last hired and the first fired. They are less likely to be protected by legislation. Disproportionately large numbers of young workers are exposed to long-term unemployment, engaged in precarious employment or limited to short-term work. As a result many young women and men are economically inactive, as they either do not enter or drop out of the labour force. Socially disadvantaged youth are particularly affected. Youth inactivity, unemployment and underemployment perpetuate a vicious cycle of poverty and exclusion. Youth joblessness is linked to social problems such as crime, vandalism and drugs. “Joblessness among the young can be devastating, and governments have tried, in a number of ways to deal with it. But policies targeted at young people, including preferential hiring, have proved largely unsuccessful for the simple reason that they are economically unsustainable.”¹

¹ Kofi A. Annan, “We the Peoples: The Role of the United Nations in the 21st Century,” (New York: United Nations, 2000), p. 25.

In developing countries conventional unemployment rates do not capture the seriousness of the youth employment problems, because many young people cannot afford to be without a source of income. Instead, the inadequacy of work opportunities manifests itself in casual employment, intermittent work, insecure arrangements and low earnings. Underemployment is high among young people who work in household production units and in the large informal economy. Yet temporary jobs of low quality may harm the future prospects of young workers.

Studies of youth employment point to the greater burdens borne by teenagers and women. In some countries teenage youth (aged 15-19 years) suffer higher rates of open unemployment than young adults (aged 20-24 years). Issues of youth employment are also linked to problems of child labour. In many countries more young women than young men are unemployed or inactive. Women often face discrimination with regard to education, training and employment.

For these reasons promoting productive employment for young people is high on the decent work agenda of the International Labour Organization. Effective policies for the labour market and employment promotion should be formulated, implemented and monitored to provide young people with opportunities for employment and income.

The ILO/Japan Tripartite Regional Meeting on Youth Employment in Asia and the Pacific was organized to address issues of youth employment in the region. It was part of a wider project that included preparatory research and country workshops. The ILO/Japan Multi-Bilateral Programme provided funds for the country workshops, regional meeting and youth publications, while the ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific supported the preparatory research. The hope is that research, discussions and plans will be followed up with action.

Ian Chambers
Director
Bangkok Area Office and East Asia Multidisciplinary Advisory Team
Bangkok
April 2002

Acknowledgements

The regional project was a team effort involving the Bangkok Area Office and East Asia Multidisciplinary Advisory Team, the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, the Southeast Asia Multidisciplinary Advisory Team, ILO Headquarters, Area Offices in Beijing, Colombo, Hanoi, Jakarta and Suva and ILO constituents in participating countries: Australia, People's Republic of China, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR), Indonesia, Japan, Papua New Guinea, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Viet Nam. The project was coordinated by Elizabeth Morris in Bangkok with the assistance of Kyoung-Hee Yu and Busakorn Suriyasarn. Country papers and national workshops in Indonesia and Papua New Guinea were backstopped by David Lamotte. National workshops received strong support from Sumalee Arayakosol, Alan Boulton, Ian Chambers, Claudia Coenjarts, Roderic Jan Eric Evers, RoseMarie Greve, Shafinaz Hassendeen, Djankou Ndjonkou, Mukda Sunkool and A.M. Zakaria. Ties to the Youth Employment Network were maintained through Gyorgy Sziracski. E. F. G. Amerasinghe, Raghwan and Frederick Thomasson provided assistance for meetings of employers and workers. ILO officials who made presentations at the technical sessions of the regional meeting were: Ian Cummings, Nelien Haspels, David Lamotte, Elizabeth Morris, Busakorn Suriyasarn, Gyorgy Sziracski and Takfumi Ueda. Penelope Ferguson handled press coverage, public relations and speech writing. Sophy Fisher helped with the proceedings. The meeting website was produced by Busakorn Suriyasarn and Teerasak Sirirattanothai. Logistical support was provided by Amorn Kumar, Prayoonsri Likhitdechakadi, Teerasak Sirirattanothai, Mathana Mathanasutr, Nitchakarn Ratanawijarn and Chomesri Vichitlekakarn. Rueban Dudley proved an invaluable source of institutional knowledge for regional meetings and ILO protocol. A panel of five Thai youths reminded participants about the importance of decent work for young women and young men: Sriprai Srithonglang, Weerasak Boonpuen, Mali Chataw, "Nice" and Apiwan Paenraksa. Finally, the ILO would like to thank the Government of Japan and the ILO/Japan Multi-Bilateral Programme in Bangkok headed at the time by Junichi Tagawa.

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1 Introduction

As a follow-up to the Millennium Summit the International Labour Organization has been working together with the United Nations and World Bank to put jobs at the centre of economic and social policies in order to create decent work for all. In the Millennium Declaration Heads of State and Government resolved to “develop and implement strategies that give young people everywhere a real chance to find decent and productive work.”

A network on youth employment has drawn on the most creative leaders in private business, civil society and economic policy. Secretary-General Kofi Annan explained the purpose of this network at the Global Employment Forum held at the ILO in Geneva during November 2001.

Mr Annan stated that “As the Millennium Summit tells us, we must develop and implement strategies that give young people everywhere a real chance to find decent and productive work. The facts and figures speak for themselves. There are an estimated 66 million unemployed young people in the world today – an increase of nearly 10 million since 1995. They make up more than 40 per cent of the world’s total unemployed.”

“In addition to securing employment for the current generation, the global economy will need to accommodate half a million *more* people in the labour force of developing countries over the coming decade.”

“Being unemployed early in life takes a heavy and enduring toll on the individual. It can damage prospects for employment later in life, leading to a circle of despair, poverty and social instability. And thereby, it leads to a destructive circle for all society.”

“We cannot afford to let this vicious cycle to continue any longer. Youth is our most valuable asset – our future. We must nurture that asset. We must develop both the Global Agenda and Youth Employment Network so that they can do their job effectively.”

A High-level Panel for the Youth Employment Network was appointed to prepare recommendations for mobilizing political commitment and practical action. These include a new approach, key priorities and action agenda.

New approach

Youth are viewed as assets rather than problems. Across the globe they are making important contributions as innovators, entrepreneurs, workers, consumers and citizens. They are at the forefront of the information and communication technology revolution. They are artists and athletes. They bring creativity, enthusiasm and leadership to the process of development. Thus, young people must be viewed as development partners rather than a target group. In order to generate sufficient opportunities for young women and young men there must be a political commitment made by national leaders to implement policies for decent work. Strategies can be shaped at the global level but policies for employment and plans for action must be developed at the national level with the participation of key actors: government agencies, trade unions, business community, youth organizations and civil society.

Box 1: A new approach, a new political commitment and a new partnership for full employment

The recommendations of the High-level Panel of the Youth Employment Network are:

- (1) First, young people are an asset in building a better world today, not a problem. In the next 10 years 1.2 billion young women and men will enter into the working age population, the best educated and trained generation of young people ever, a great potential for economic and social development;
- (2) Second, heads of State and Government at the Millennium Summit gave a firm political commitment to developing and implementing strategies that give young people everywhere a real chance to find decent and productive work;
- (3) Third, there is great potential for improving the employment situation through the integration of public policies for young women and men in overall employment policies and by making full employment an overarching goal for global economic and social strategies and for national policies.

Source: United Nations General Assembly, Fifty-sixth session, Agenda item 29, Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit, Recommendations of the High-level Panel of the Youth Employment Network, 28 September 2001.

Key priorities

Four priorities for action plans at the national level have been identified by the High-level Panel of the Youth Employment Network. First, enhancing *employability*: in order to achieve decent work for young women and young men it will be necessary to invest in education and training. Second, ensuring *equality*: young women must have the same opportunities as young men to education, training and jobs throughout their working lives. Third, promoting *entrepreneurship*: policies should make it easier for young women and young men to start and run enterprises. This means reforming laws and institutions and encouraging entrepreneurship. Efforts should be made to provide greater opportunities for decent work in the private sector and informal economy. Fourth, creating *employment*: employment creation and poverty alleviation should be at the centre of macroeconomic policies and development plans.

Action agenda

A guide for action includes recommendations to improve the position of young people in the labour market. Youth employment policies should be part of integrated strategies that link macroeconomic, social and development policies for employment promotion and poverty alleviation. Youth employment must receive a high priority. Institutions that support youth must be strengthened through consultative mechanisms, capacity building, government coordination and other methods. A knowledge base for youth employment should be developed to improve the formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies for youth employment. Three aspects of education, training and life-long learning are: (i) adapt strategies for education and training that lead to adequate and sustained investment in human resource development; (ii) ensure that girls and boys are able to obtain quality education that enhances employability and fosters the attitudes and values needed to succeed in life; (iii) improve accessibility, relevance and effectiveness of secondary and higher education as well as technical and vocational training. Action should be taken to improve the capabilities, productivity and incomes of young people working in the informal economy to facilitate their integration into the mainstream economy. The formation of self-help groups and membership-based organizations should be encouraged in order to assist young people in the informal economy obtain better access to supplies, information, credit and markets. Strategies should be introduced to enable young women and young men to take advantage of employment

promotion and income generation through information and communication technology (ICT).

New opportunities for young people should be exploited in the service economy such as caring for the young and old, sick and disabled. Service jobs may include work related to the environment, tourism, entertainment and media in public-private partnerships. In addition to innovation and entrepreneurship steps should be taken to create employment opportunities through enterprise development with awareness and information, finance and marketing, networks and mentoring. The range of labour market services available to young women and young men should be expanded and improved to facilitate their access to work through labour market information, job placement services, gender-sensitive assistance, “one-stop shops” and information technology development. Special assistance should be provided to youth “at risk.” A “social floor” needs to be ensured through labour standards, social protection and social dialogue as a means of claiming basic rights, ensuring safe work, obtaining social security, providing health services and addressing issues of HIV/AIDS. National leaders must “listen and learn from young people.” Policies should support networking, alliances and partnerships to promote decent work for young people. An enabling environment should be created through improvements in the international economic, financial and policy environment to promote employment and alleviate poverty. Efforts should be made to raise awareness and build support for the Youth Employment Network in order to provide decent work for young people. These recommendations were transmitted by the United Nations Secretary-General to the Fifty-sixth Session of the United Nations General Assembly in the overall framework of the follow up to the Millennium Summit.

The ILO/Japan Tripartite Regional Meeting on Youth Employment in Asia and the Pacific combines preliminary research, national workshops, a regional meeting and information dissemination.

ILO/Japan regional project

In order to maximize the benefits of the ILO/Japan Tripartite Regional Meeting on Youth Employment in Asia and the Pacific a package of activities was planned to prepare for and follow up on the meeting.

(1) *Preparatory research*

- Youth statistics

The project compiled statistics on youth in the Asia and Pacific region to supplement the data in the ILO's *Key Indicators of the Labour Market (KILM)*. As part of this process a consultant prepared a thematic paper: *Youth employment statistics in Asia and the Pacific: A review of Internet resources*.

- Thematic studies

ILO consultants prepared two thematic studies for the region: *Promoting youth employment through information and communication technologies (ICT): Best practice examples in Asia and the Pacific* and *Active labour market policies for youth employment in Asia and the Pacific: Traditional approaches and innovative programmes*.

- Country papers

National studies on youth employment were prepared by ILO consultants for eight countries that participated in the regional meeting: Australia, Indonesia, Japan, Hong Kong SAR, Papua New Guinea, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Viet Nam.

(2) *Activities funded by ILO/Japan*

- National workshops

There were six national workshops on youth employment held in the Hong Kong SAR (30 November 2001), Viet Nam (4 December 2001), Sri Lanka (10 January 2002), Thailand (25 January 2002), Indonesia (13 February 2002) and Papua New Guinea (20 February 2002).

- Regional Meeting

The meeting reviewed information, experience and recommendations of country studies, national workshops, statistical research and thematic papers in light of the key priorities outlined by Secretary-General Kofi Annan's High-level Panel for the Youth Employment Network – enhancing employability, ensuring equality, promoting entrepreneurship and creating employment.

- Information Dissemination

The project will disseminate information through publications and a website. The latter may be found at: <http://www.ilo.org/bangkok/conf/youth/agenda.htm>. Publications include a summary report of the regional meeting, a policy paper on youth employment and an action manual for the “four Es”.

(3) *Follow-up*

It is hoped that the project will move from plans to action. The ILO will provide assistance in seeking donor support for some of the pilot projects prepared at national workshops and discussed at the regional meeting.

2 Proceedings

2.1 Inaugural session

Welcome remarks from the ILO Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific

Mr Yasuyuki Nodera welcomed delegates to the meeting and thanked representatives from the Governments of Japan and Thailand for their support. Their presence indicated that together with other global leaders they share the ILO's concern about youth employment. The recently launched high level policy network on youth employment has brought together the United Nations, the ILO and the World Bank as well as creative leaders in private industry, civil society and economic policy.

Mr Nodera stressed that youth unemployment is a huge problem. An estimated 66 million young people world wide are unemployed with many millions more underemployed, and projections point to an alarming increase over the next ten years. Unemployment can leave youth with lasting scars, he warned, pushing them into poverty and despair.

In addition, young people face a chronic shortage of decent work. Promoting decent work is a central goal of the ILO, enabling women and men to meet basic needs for themselves and their families in conditions of freedom, security, equity and dignity. We are told that our youth are our future, Mr Nodera said, yet young people – particularly young women and the socially disadvantaged – assume a disproportionate burden of unemployment and underemployment. Without decent work for young people there can be no social stability.

This meeting resulted from months of work conducting research, organizing workshops and developing recommendations. The agenda highlighted four key themes identified by the policy network – employability, equality, entrepreneurship and employment. Working together governments, employers and workers can make an important contribution to promoting these themes. The ILO's unique strength – its tripartite structure – means it can play a vital role in tackling this daunting task.

Address from the Minister of the Embassy of Japan in Thailand

This meeting comes at a time when most countries, particularly developing countries, face serious problems relating to economic slowdown and rising unemployment, the Minister of the Embassy of Japan in Thailand, Mr Takashi Sato said. More than many other groups, youth are exposed to unemployment. This can damage their careers and push them towards poverty, crime, vandalism and drugs. Japan also faces these problems with an unemployment rate of 5.6 per cent. He hoped that by stimulating an exchange of views and experiences the meeting would help find solutions.

The Japanese government was very pleased to sponsor the regional meeting on youth employment under the ILO/Japan Multi-bilateral Programme that provides technical assistance for labour and employment in the region. The focus of the meeting on employability, equality, entrepreneurship and employment – as they relate to young people – is in line with the core strategy of Japanese overseas development aid and its emphasis on human development.

Japan has invested heavily in the region and in Thailand. More than 40 per cent of foreign investment in Thailand comes from Japan and more than 1,200 Japanese companies operate here. Japanese companies currently employ more than 350,000 Thai workers. Mr Sato hoped that economic relations would continue to be mutually beneficial.

Address by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare of the Government of Japan

Mr Kazushi Nishida, Deputy Director of the International Division of Japan's Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, welcomed participants and thanked in particular the Government of Thailand. He said that in an era of globalization youth unemployment remains a universal problem and serious concern.

In Japan recent trends show that fewer young people are entering the labour market after high school, waiting instead until they graduate from college. At the same time unemployment has almost doubled, while the number of so-called "*freeters*" – young people who are in a cycle of part-time work and open unemployment rather than in full-time employment – has risen 150 per cent in 5 years to 1.5 million.

Behind these changes lies a shift in attitudes towards work by both employers and youth. Companies are altering their recruitment patterns in response to economic change. Employers are less likely to offer life-long employment, and this, coupled with underlying affluence, means that youth have a less positive outlook on work.

The Government of Japan has responded to these developments with a five-pronged approach to tackling youth unemployment:

- Offering employment support measures to high school and college graduates, including job fairs, information dissemination, employment counselling, job placement and vocational training
- Assisting “*freeters*” through individualised support with skills development and job search
- Organizing programmes to improve the attitude of youth towards employment through guidance and internships
- Improving vocational training by upgrading polytechnic colleges to provide more focus on knowledge and skills
- Promoting gender equality

Changing demographics mean that fewer youth will be entering labour markets in the future. At the same time, changes in attitudes towards work and the structure of employment create challenges.

Mr Nishida hoped that the meeting would provide an opportunity for participants not just to learn about past experiences but also to propose policy recommendations and practical measures for future initiatives. The Government of Japan will continue working together with the ILO on issues relating to labour and employment throughout the region.

Keynote address by the Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Welfare of Thailand

Ms Ladawan Wongsriwong, Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Welfare of Thailand, began by stating that youth unemployment is a quiet crisis and a pressing issue facing the region – and the world – today. According to ILO estimates 66 million young people are unable to find work, 80 per cent of them in developing countries and transition economies. The picture for underemployment is similar.

Yet youth unemployment generally receives less attention than related problems such as crime, vandalism and drugs. Young people often lack the influence, confidence and resources to make their voices heard.

Decent work is crucial to the future of youth and hence to the future of society. Ms Ladawan compared building a life to building a house – both need a sturdy foundation. Yet many young people lack the solid base that education, training and experience can provide and in tough times, such as the Asian financial crisis, they are particularly vulnerable – young women and poor youth more than most.

There is a need to link skills training more closely to market requirements and to adopt policies that support business and so boost employment. These measures must be accompanied by equality of opportunity.

Ms Ladawan noted that the meeting offered a chance to study these important issues and share national experiences from youth workshops. In Thailand the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare will be the focal point for youth employment and will also coordinate the inputs of others – employers' associations, workers' organizations and civil society.

The Minister of Labour and Social Welfare had stated that the high level policy network launched by the United Nations Secretary-General was providing useful guidance. She hoped that the meeting would also make a real contribution to tackling the problem. Thailand is committed. We will succeed because, she said, because we cannot afford to fail.

2.2 Introduction and panel sessions of Thai youth and the Youth Employment Network

Introduction to objectives of the meeting

The session was chaired by Mr Ian Chambers, Director of the ILO Bangkok Area Office and East Asia Multidisciplinary Advisory Team. Ms Elizabeth Morris, ILO Labour Market and Human Resources Policies Specialist, began by introducing the objectives of the meeting. She explained that the meeting would focus on the four priorities identified by the United Nations Secretary-General's High-level Panel for the Youth Employment Network – enhancing employability, ensuring equality, promoting entrepreneurship and creating employment. A range of

information – provided by the ILO, governments, employers, workers and youth – will be available to support the discussions including:

- Thematic studies on information and communication technologies, active labour market policies and statistics relating to youth
- The results of six national workshops held in the Hong Kong SAR, Viet Nam, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea, plus country papers for Australia, Japan and the Solomon Islands, as well as a sub-regional study on the Pacific Islands
- Papers prepared by participants on best practices and lessons learned

Ms Morris hoped the meeting would produce a summary report of the speeches, presentations and discussions reflecting different views and alternative approaches, plus practical measures to address youth employment, a policy publication and an action manual.

She said that the discussions should identify policy priorities and practical measures to help young women and young men find decent work. In doing so participants would hear the views of young people themselves. Most importantly, she said, the meeting should produce action.

Panel of youth

The introduction was followed by a panel of youth discussing “The challenges of finding decent work: What does it mean to me?” facilitated by Ms Busakorn Suriyasarn, ILO Programme Officer. Five young Thais discussed the problems and challenges they have faced in finding work and supporting themselves and their families. Mr Chambers said that it was important to see how employment issues were perceived by young women and young men. The stories of the panel members should illustrate similar problems faced by youth in other countries of the region.

Ms Sriprai Srithonglang, 18 years old, from Nakorn Ratchasima. After completing vocational training in dress-making she worked in a furniture factory for three months. However, she resigned because the wages of 80 *baht* per day or around US\$1.85 amounted to only two-thirds of the minimum wage in the province. She and her aunt then started making furniture to sell in villages. The business is going well and she would like to expand it.

Mr Weerasak Boonpuen, 24 years old, from Bangkok. He obtained a higher vocational training certificate in business administration three years ago and since then has been unsuccessfully looking for work to support his family and to pay for the schooling of his two younger sisters. Although discouraged because he cannot obtain employment in his chosen profession, he has found other work with an NGO focusing on community development, environmental conservation and advocacy activities. He told delegates that large numbers of educated youth are unable to find appropriate jobs. There is an over supply of certificate holders chasing a small number of office jobs. Employers tend to recruit over-qualified staff for low-level positions – youth with masters’ degrees are filling positions advertised for bachelors’ degrees. Many young people accept temporary work in fast food restaurants or neighbourhood convenience stores. It appears that the education and training provided to youth do not qualify them to find jobs. Advertisements in newspapers generally request work experience that new entrants do not have. Youth are often discouraged by waiting to hear the results of applications and interviews. For those lucky enough to find a job, there is usually a period of probation. Some young men and young women drop out of the labour force. Mr Weerasak would like to continue his education and open a business.

Ms Mali Chataw, 24 years, from the Lahu Tribe in the Northern Thailand, fourth year student in economics in Bangkok. After completing primary school in her home village, she went to a secondary school in town. She has worked part-time in homes, supermarkets and hotels to pay for her studies – as a housemaid, waitress, cashier and babysitter – although she found this difficult. Ms Mali said that young people from the hill tribes face greater obstacles finding job opportunities; for example, educational loans were not available to those without Thai nationality. She explained that many Thais have a negative image of hill tribes leading to job discrimination because employers can identify them by ID, name, accent and appearance.

Mr “Nice”, 24 years old, from Chiang Rai. The youngest in a poor, female-headed household he completed a Grade 12 education but has worked since Grade 9. This has included helping his family raise cattle and sell cabbage and flowers. He has also washed dishes and cleaned cars in both Chiang Rai and Bangkok earning 50 *baht* a day. The resulting monthly wage of 1,500 *baht* did not contribute enough to family income, so he found a job in a bar as a waiter and an entertainer. The income was good but after three years he became HIV positive. He stopped work and

went through a difficult time feeling weak and rejected. However, he eventually received encouragement and medication. He now works at home – and no longer looks for jobs outside – as a member of a self-help group dealing with herbal products and handicraft items.

Ms Apiwan Paenraksa, 20 years old, from Bangkok. As a university student she became interested in youth activities and community development. She was elected a member of her district youth council. Her parents support her studies but she has also set up a business with her friends to earn extra money selling greeting cards, artificial flowers and simple clothing. The group has faced discrimination selling their products since consumers are reluctant to buy items produced by youth. However, the experience has been beneficial, because they have learned about production, accounting and marketing. In addition the business has taught them to use their free time usefully. Ms Apiwan said that families and communities can provide valuable support to young people.

Mr Chambers noted the important contributions of each member in the youth panel to the participants' understanding of employment issues. Thai youth have discovered different ways of finding jobs and earning incomes. The panel offered a number of lessons:

- It is difficult for young people to find work in the Asia-Pacific region, yet they cannot afford to be unemployed.
- The challenge is not just to find any job but to obtain decent work with at least a minimum wage.
- Formal employment does not always pay enough to live on which leads to the exploitation of workers. However, pay in the sex industry or earnings from drug dealing can be ten to twenty times the minimum wage. This is the “real economics” of youth employment.
- Equal rights are particularly important for young men and women whose ethnicity or disability makes it more difficult for them to find jobs. Some groups need special support.
- Since young people are often the only form of social security of their families, they are under enormous pressure – cultural and emotional – to earn enough to support their parents and siblings as well as themselves.

- Jobs are sometimes so scarce that recruiters or managers act as “gate keepers” asking job seekers to pay them the equivalent of a month’s salary, or even more, to get a job. Youth are also vulnerable to exploitation when it comes to holding a job.
- Education and training should be relevant to the labour market. Effective mechanisms are needed in local communities for the creation of sustainable jobs paying liveable wages.

Mr Chambers said that members of the youth panel are real people who have experienced real tragedies but who also have real hope. They have shown great courage in describing their personal experiences in seeking employment opportunities. Their accounts remind us that we cannot think of youth as a group but must remember that they are individuals – each with a story to tell.

Panel on global alliance for youth employment

The youth panel was followed by a panel representing the United Nations, International Labour Organization and World Bank on the “Youth Employment Network: Global Alliance for Youth Employment”. The first speaker was Mr Saifuddin Abdullah who is a member of the High-level Panel for the Youth Employment Network.

Mr Abdullah reported that the Secretary-General of the United Nations in his message to the panel members had stressed, “Young people are an asset – not a problem”. This idea should direct all discussions of youth employment.

Mr Abdullah said it was time to review and implement integrated policies. The Secretary-General has called for national action plans to be drawn up using a new consultative approach that involved all important stakeholders. The key elements recommended by the High-level Panel highlighted “the four Es”:

Box 2: Four top priorities for all national action plans

- Employability – invest in education and vocational training for young people, and improve the impact of those investments;
- Equal opportunities – give young women the same opportunities as young men;
- Entrepreneurship – make it easier to start and run enterprises to provide more and better jobs for young women and men;
- Employment creation – place employment creation at the centre of macroeconomic policy.

Source: United Nations General Assembly, Fifty-sixth session, Agenda item 29, Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit, Recommendations of the High-level Panel of the Youth Employment Network, 28 September 2001.

The ILO has been requested to take the lead in organizing the future work of the Youth Employment Network and assuming responsibility for hosting a permanent secretariat. The Network's recommendations were submitted to the Fifty-sixth Session of the United Nations General Assembly in September 2001. This ILO/Japan Tripartite Regional Meeting on Youth Employment represents the first regional youth consultation since the United Nations General Assembly, Mr Abdullah said.

The next step is to launch a political process leading to the adoption and implementation of national action plans to provide young women and young men with decent and productive work. Panel members and the global alliance should contribute to this by mobilizing support and providing advice. Further, the High-level Panel has committed itself to raising awareness, building support, widening networks and improving links to other international initiatives. He suggested that the ILO should also launch an international programme on youth employment.

Mr Abdullah said every member State needs a national action plan. The Network is asking ten countries to lead the way as "champions". The ILO together with the United Nations and the World Bank stand ready to help countries develop their national initiatives and share the lessons learned.

In conclusion he said policy makers should adopt a new perspective by listening to young people. Democracy is defined as government of the people, for the people and by the people. National action plans for youth should work the same way.

The second panel member to speak was Ms San Yuenwah of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). She explained that ESCAP is the regional arm of the United Nations, with 61 member governments spanning the entire geopolitical scope of Asia and the Pacific. Poverty reduction is ESCAP's major goal. Two-thirds of the world's population live in the region. Half of these people survive on less than two dollars a day and one in five lives on less than one dollar.

The United Nations Secretary-General told the United Nations Millennium Summit that youth unemployment produces a destructive circle of poverty, despair and unrest. The leaders agreed on a goal of developing and implementing strategies that give young people a chance to find decent and productive work.

World wide, almost 70 million young people are unemployed. The effects include inadequate skills, low self-esteem, social exclusion, discrimination and poverty. Some of these issues have been highlighted by the panel of youth from Thailand.

The United Nations defines youth as persons aged 15-24 years, although many countries in the region use different definitions. According to the United Nations measure there are more than a billion young people – one in five of the world's population today.

Integrating young people into productive employment is a major challenge. In most countries youth unemployment is two or three times that of adults, or even worse. In Indonesia the ratio of youth unemployment rate to adult unemployment rate is 8.5 to 1, while in Thailand and the Republic of Korea the ratio is 4 to 1. Although youth unemployment affects all groups and sectors, it is generally higher among those with more education and in urban areas, because young people from poor households and rural populations cannot afford to be completely without work. She also stressed that a healthy workforce is a productive workforce. HIV/AIDS is a deadly threat to young people. In Africa a whole generation of youth has been lost through the disease.

Ms San concluded that youth employment is part of the overall poverty reduction strategy for the United Nations. It is vital that youth employment be incorporated into employment policies at both the regional level and the national level. For its part ESCAP is fully committed to the Secretary-General's youth employment agenda and to breaking the vicious cycle created by unemployment and poverty.

Mr Gyorgy Sziracski of the ILO Employment Strategy Department in Geneva told participants that the problem created by employment and underemployment of youth should not be seen as simply an issue of numbers. Rather, consideration should be given to the consequences of creating a group living in poverty, without prospects or hope. Unemployment produces a global time bomb of frustration, hostility and conflict that combine to create a vicious circle that must be broken. Nevertheless, the issue of youth employment offers opportunities as well as challenges for youth and society.

Mr Sziracski explained the organization, structure and methods of the Youth Employment Network and outlined its work so far – formulating policy recommendations, disseminating information about good practices and launching collaborative youth initiatives. Its recommendations include calling on governments to develop national action plans that prioritise employability, equality, entrepreneurship and employment. Ten countries are to serve as models or “champions”. The Network has invited the ILO, World Bank and United Nations to provide technical support for these countries. It will be important to develop indicators to monitor the progress of youth.

The next steps will be to strengthen national capacities, support local initiatives, monitor overall progress and share lessons learned. The ILO will assist with technical support, the Network secretariat and fund raising. It will also continue to help with youth employment through its programmes for education policies, qualifications frameworks, career guidance, life-long learning, youth entrepreneurship, job creation, gender equality, employment-intensive programmes, lifestyle training, crisis response, youth statistics and policy analysis.

Mr Christopher Chamberlin from the World Bank Office in Bangkok explained that the World Bank considers youth to be a priceless asset and not just a social problem. Youth employment is a complex topic so he focussed on three aspects – perspectives, instruments and examples.

Perspectives. The foundation of the World Bank's work with youth is education. School dropouts are linked to economic shocks. The returns on investing in education are high. Therefore, we must keep students in school and bring those who drop out back into the system. Youth without skills are marginalised. A skills gap can lead to problems of underemployment and poverty, low wages and job insecurity. Social exclusion resulting from joblessness and poverty was touched upon by the Thai youth panel.

Instruments. The World Bank supports the Youth Employment Network through a number of instruments. The leading instruments for low-income developing countries are the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs). PRSPs can place youth employment on the development agenda. The ILO is involved in five countries: Cambodia, Honduras, Mali, Nepal and the United Republic of Tanzania. The World Bank can also contribute to the Youth Employment Network through its analytical work, particularly that on social risk and vulnerability. Its work on education and training – both studies and projects – is also of direct relevance to youth employment. Through its social development sector the World Bank addresses issues of marginalisation and social exclusion of youth.

Examples. A World Bank study in the Philippines found that the scale of the problem is immense. There are 6.5 million youth, of whom 25 per cent are out of work or out of school. Two-thirds of these are school dropouts. By comparison the total number of unemployed in Thailand is 1.6 million. The World Bank has programmes on youth development elsewhere in the world, notably in Europe and Latin America. It looks forward to strengthening partnerships on youth employment.

In conclusion Mr Chamberlin said that there were no “quick fixes” for youth employment. Poverty now serves as a focus for efforts to promote employment of youth. The World Bank salutes the ILO for taking the lead.

Mr Chambers opened the discussion by saying that participants had heard about individual cases and global alliances but decentralised community approaches might also play a significant role in reducing youth unemployment. Local responses are most effective with active participation from young people. In Thailand the *tambon* development programme might be used to support youth employment initiatives.

He asked Mr Chamberlin about the real effectiveness of active measures on youth employment undertaken during macroeconomic downturns. Mr Chamberlin responded that only limited progress can be made on employment issues without pro-poor growth. Job creation and training programmes are more difficult to finance during downturns. However, issues relevant to families and communities such as drugs and values were addressed during the Asian crisis. We must be ready to take advantage of growth opportunities for youth employment during economic recovery, he said.

Mr Chambers noted that Mr Abdullah had stressed the participation of youth. How is this done? Were young people involved in decisions made by governments, employers and unions? Mr Abdullah responded that consultation and empowerment are central to finding solutions, but examples of participation are rare. Yet young people need to be involved. Strategies should be developed with active youth involvement at the grass roots level.

Mr Chambers asked what can be done within the United Nations to give youth greater voice. Ms San said that ESCAP runs training programmes to help young people understand how the UN functions and to learn ways to articulate views at the international, national and local levels.

Mr Abdullah added that consultations with young people have taken place in countries such as Malaysia, the Philippines and Viet Nam. However, these discussions are not intersectoral but reflect the way bureaucracy is divided into areas such as youth, welfare and education. Mr Sziracski said that the ILO can encourage youth participation and role models among its constituents – governments, employers and workers. Mr Chambers noted that there has not been much progress in including young people, although there is a recognised need for greater participation and better interaction.

Mr Chambers raised the issue of education as one of the ways that the World Bank moves young people out of open unemployment and social exclusion. He pointed out that education is not always appropriate for employment. The Panel of Youth noted that it is just one element of employability. “Pathways” need to be developed to ease the transition from school to work. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has demonstrated the importance of giving children experience in the world of work. He added that in looking at this issue specific problems and appropriate solutions need to be identified.

Mr Chambers said he hoped the meeting would result in a commitment to action rather than just lamenting the fact that so little has been done. While an understanding of the problems is necessary to find solutions, he hoped the meeting would also identify policies that exploit existing structures and ongoing programmes, rather than attempt to start something entirely new.

2.3 Session on information and communication technology (ICT) and youth employment

Government representative from Indonesia, Mr Edison Situmorang, served as chair for the session. Mr Takafumi Ueda, ILO Senior Small Enterprise Specialist from Geneva, presented a paper on “Promoting youth employment through information and communication technologies (ICT): Best practice examples in Asia and the Pacific” by ILO consultant Mr Richard Curtain. Mr Ueda pointed out that ICT is included as a priority by Secretary-General of the United Nations Kofi Annan in the report prepared for the Millennium Summit. The ILO *World Employment Report 2001* points out that not even the poorest countries can afford to ignore ICT, because to do so would jeopardise their ability to acquire knowledge. Countries without ICT risk being excluded from global markets. The paper outlines five key considerations in the development of ICT: (i) it can promote entrepreneurship among the young, (ii) it can create opportunities for public-private sector partnerships, (iii) it can assist vulnerable groups of young people, (iv) it can link the informal economy to new opportunities in the global economy and (v) young people should be placed in charge.

Some examples of good practices were highlighted, including Greenstar India, an NGO initiative that has set up solar powered community and e-commerce centres in remote villages of India. The income generated is used to fund basic community needs such as clean water, micro credit and Internet access. Another project – still at the ideas stage – is to use young women as information intermediaries. These women employ computer skills and English proficiency to relay information to local women in community centres. The cost of this project is estimated at US \$1,000 per year for each community.

An example of a public-private partnership is SOFTBANK emerging markets, which is setting up programmes to incubate Internet companies in developing countries and is promoting free Internet services to schools and other institutions. Good practice recommendations include

developing support strategies, encouraging self-employment, providing business skills, organising youth competitions, arranging mentor support, providing business capital and developing public-private partnerships. Other aspects include promoting social responsibility and pro-poor development, monitoring specific goals, publicising Internet marketing and encouraging youth participation in planning, developing and implementing programmes. However, if best practices are to be more widely adopted they need to be part of an integrated strategy.

Mr Ueda explained that the ILO has plans to set up a website to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and information among those involved in youth employment programmes. This will complement the Youth Employment Network.

Mr Saksiri Kashpasharin, Managing Director of Imagimax Studio in Bangkok then made a presentation on “ICT and Youth Employment in Thailand.” Mr Saksiri operates a company that applies ICT to entertainment and runs a digital training school for Thai young people. He explained that all countries have a problem providing employment to youth. Young people in the ICT sector can help change the situation in Thailand and the region. However, there are factors restricting ICT development in Thailand.

The Thai government has no solid plan to develop information technology, although other countries such as Singapore and Malaysia have been building up their infrastructure for ten years. There are not enough schools and universities, particularly outside Bangkok, while existing institutions suffer from funding problems that prevent them from obtaining up-to-date software and hardware. Department heads in Thai universities are often behind the times with respect to ICT. A lack of specialised ICT courses results in inadequate support from teachers who do not appreciate that ICT is valuable for all subjects.

Mr Saksiri pointed out that Thailand has a small domestic market, so it is necessary to open Thai gateways to world markets. The country needs to promote its capabilities and potential – currently ICT in Thailand is not as well known abroad as it should be – and government support is needed for this. The weakness of the *baht* means that hardware and software of international standards is expensive. There is also a shortage of trained staff with adequate English skills. More support and greater encouragement from schools and parents would help.

Despite these obstacles ICT can open up opportunities for Thailand. Thai youths have lots of creativity and imagination, and ICT allows them to exploit these talents on an equal footing with young people in other countries. New entrepreneurs can sell Thai products directly to world markets while benefiting from lower costs. Thai culture in particular and Asian culture in general should also be an advantage, because youth are encouraged to seek compromise rather than confrontation. Thailand lags behind in infrastructure development for ICT. But Mr Saksiri said that these disadvantages could be overcome by using computer technology to make the most of Thai creativity.

Mr Situmorang commented that ICT offers many opportunities. However, we must also be aware of its potentially negative effects such as introducing young people to violent games through computers and the Internet.

2.4 Session on national workshops and synthesis report for country studies

The session was chaired by Mr Scott Barklamb, an employers' representative from Australia. He encouraged an open and informal sharing of experiences and ideas.

National workshops

The first presentation for the national workshop on youth employment in Indonesia was made by government participant Mr Edison Situmorang. He said the Indonesian government considers that young people have a strategic role to play in national development. A key goal is to encourage more young people to become self-employed.

However, the government structure makes it difficult to organize integrated programmes. More than ten ministries are involved in implementing government policies related to youth employment. The large number of government organizations involved in youth issues had been raised by Mr Saifuddin Abdullah in the morning session.

Mr Situmorang explained that the number of young people aged between 15 and 19 is increasing. Educational attainment is also rising. While 35 per cent now have a college-level education, the number and level of jobs available are not increasing to match.

The proposed action plan contains several measures. These are raising awareness of youth employment issues among key stakeholders including employers' organizations and trade unions about the four priorities of the High-level Panel of the Youth Employment Network – employability, equality, entrepreneurship and employment; sustaining current youth programmes; changing the perception that office type jobs are more prestigious than blue collar work; promoting community-based youth employment programmes; encouraging innovative self-employment; promoting entrepreneurial skills and starting a credit system similar to the Grameen Bank. He said that there had already been some success among NGOs in generating youth employment.

Government participant Ms Carrie Lau Ka-Wai then reported on the national workshop in the Hong Kong SAR. Three hundred representatives from different sectors of the community including government, employers, schools, parents and youth took part in the workshop.

Workshop participants agreed that enhancing employability would require support from different sectors of the community working together towards a single policy package. Employers can help by assessing the employability of young people and suggesting improvements in government policies. Parents can give their children a positive attitude towards work. Young people themselves can contribute their views and opinions.

The workshop found that better preparation is needed for young entrepreneurs. In particular, potential entrepreneurs need to be more aware about the financial side of business operations. They should not disregard potential risks or rely on government assistance.

Discussions focused on measures to enhance the employability of young people and help them to become entrepreneurs. There were six separate discussion sessions:

- Enhancing the employability of youth in tourism and related industries
- Fostering a positive attitude towards life and work through parental influence
- Promoting youth entrepreneurship
- Using integrated approaches to enhancing youth employability

- Creating employment opportunities for young people
- Promoting equal employment opportunities for disadvantaged groups such as disabled youth and juvenile delinquents

A video highlighted efforts to help young people in Hong Kong looking for work. It focused on a public-private partnership in the tourism industry. This training programme covers skills, attitudes, experiential learning and job search. More than ten thousand young people participate in the programme each year. In the most recent programme about 80 per cent found jobs afterwards.

Mr Pex Avosa, government participant from Papua New Guinea, then made a presentation about their national workshop. He said that Papua New Guinea (PNG) is rich in natural resources. Its population of 5.2 million is reasonably small in comparison with its geographical size and potential wealth. However, PNG has some of the worst social indicators in world. Income is not “trickling down” to ordinary people. Conditions are continuing to deteriorate with rapid population growth, a stagnating economy and political instability.

Youth employment needs to be seen in the context of the overall employment situation. Unemployment and underemployment are major problems that affect all ages and both sexes. There is strong competition for wage jobs. Out of a potential workforce of around three million people only 270,000 are employed in the formal sector as paid employees. Youth unemployment appears to be very high, although the most recent statistics from the 1990 population census put the official overall unemployment rate at only 5.3 per cent. While around 50,000 youth leave school every year, only 5,000 enter the formal wage sector. Thus, most young people depend on informal economy jobs, subsistence agriculture employment and traditional social structures to survive. Many youth migrate from rural areas to urban centres, leading to rising crime and social problems.

Youth are often described as a problem, but they should be seen as an asset. Papua New Guinea would like to implement a national youth policy. The PNG workshop also recommended labour-intensive projects backed by appropriate training, community-based activities in rural areas together with apprenticeship schemes and training programmes that bridge the gap between school and work. There is also a need for research into future trends for youth employment.

Government representative Mr H. M. Gunasekera reported on the national workshop in Sri Lanka. Unemployment remains a chronic problem currently affecting 83 per cent of 15-29 year olds. Many of these young people have good educational records. Clearly, there is a mismatch between the requirements demanded by employers and the skills supplied by youth.

Vocational training programmes have not been effective in terms of creating job opportunities for young people. Half of the youth completing these programmes fail to find employment within two years of graduation and 20 per cent of those who do find work are employed in occupations unrelated to their training.

About 27 per cent of young people are self-employed but most have inadequate skills for technology and management. In rural areas the unemployment problem is exacerbated by inadequate information. Sri Lanka lacks an effective labour market information system that points to job opportunities and training priorities. As a result young people do not know where to go and what skills are needed to get a job. Nor do they know how to approach potential employers including large companies.

The government and the private sector must work together on a strategy to solve these problems. First, there is a need to restructure the existing vocational training system so that growth sectors of the economy are identified and skill requirements can be met. Second, the education system needs to be reformed so that it equips young people for nation building. Third, Sri Lanka must introduce effective labour market information and career guidance systems, particularly in the rural areas.

The government needs to maintain a strong macroeconomic framework. The current economic growth rate of 5-6 per cent per year is not enough to absorb the young people entering the labour force. Estimates put the required annual growth rate at around 8 per cent.

The national workshop on youth employment in Sri Lanka formulated three project proposals for donors' consideration.

- Improving the labour market information and career guidance systems
- Introducing an incubator facility to boost small and medium-sized enterprises and helping them with needs such as training and credit

- Establishing a system to enhance new skills such as information technology

Ms Areeya Rojvithee reported on the Thailand national workshop. She explained that the definition of youth in Thailand is people aged 15-25 years. However, the ILO's measure of 15-24 years was used at the workshop. She said there are 62.7 million people in Thailand of whom 11.5 million are young people. They make up 6.1 million of the overall labour force of 37 million.

These young people face many problems. Changes in technology and the impact of globalisation have brought insecurity and uncertainty. Many youth are either unemployed or underemployed. Poverty has prevented some youth from getting an adequate education. Many unskilled youths migrate to urban areas where they face low wages and are the first to lose their jobs in times of crisis. This can lead to social problems.

According to Ms Rojvithee the mismatch between the skills offered by youth and the skills needed by employers is the main cause of unemployment among young people. Thailand needs to consider the requirements of the private sector at the same time as safeguarding peace and security.

A range of policies to tackle youth problems is implemented by government ministries in coordination with NGOs. Among areas covered are upgrading basic skills such as those related to languages, mathematics, computers and management; boosting cooperation between schools and the workplace; encouraging young workers to resume their studies; improving measures for social welfare and job protection; creating better labour relations systems; protecting Thais working overseas; and reviewing policies for foreigners working in Thailand with a view to training Thai workers to replace migrant labour. The private sector is also being encouraged to help with skills development.

In looking at best practices Thailand is working to promote equal opportunities by adopting specific projects to encourage women's participation in training courses including a women-friendly training centre in Chiang Mai. Another best practice is a pilot project that trains disabled youth in electrical repairs alongside non-disabled youth. Thailand is also encouraging the relocation of factories from urban areas in order to create employment in rural areas and reduce migration to urban centres. The aim is to increase incomes in the countryside and improve the quality of life.

The Thailand national workshop made some specific recommendations. Youth should be recognised as an asset of the nation. Policies formulated to help them should be properly implemented. Life-long learning, networking arrangements and accurate information are all crucial for career development.

Ms Rojvithee responded to points made in the morning panel of Thai youth. She said that more initiatives for vocational training of young people need to come from the youth themselves. Youth do not always want to accept guidance and loans provided by the government. Thus, it is essential to use effective methods to attract and advise youth. This includes the provision of relevant labour market information to place young women and young men and women in employment.

The Viet Nam national workshop report was presented by Mr Tran Dac Loi representing the Vietnam Youth Federation. He explained that Viet Nam is a relatively young nation with 67 per cent of the population under 35 years. Fifteen million or 19 per cent are below 24 years. In the last 15 years 1.2 million new jobs have been created, as new fields of economic activity have opened up. Incomes have risen. But Viet Nam still faces major challenges, including unemployment of urban youth and underemployment among rural youth. Low skills result in low earnings.

Mr Loi said that the experiences youth face in looking for work influence their overall view of the society, for better or worse. Young people encounter greater difficulties finding jobs or starting businesses than other members of the labour force, hence they require special attention and specific policies. We need to help them to help themselves, he said.

The Viet Nam workshop had three major objectives: to finalise the country paper on youth employment; to exchange information and raise awareness; and to come up with proposals and an action plan to promote youth employment. Workshop participants discussed measures to improve vocational training, advisory services and job opportunities for young women and young men. Currently most young people prefer a university education to vocational training. The resulting project proposals include reforming the structure and quality of education and training, so that the skills produced more closely match the needs of employers and the economy. The link between supply and demand remains weak.

The business sector can help – especially when it comes to training – and NGOs can make a contribution, for example with issues relating to

youth and their families. Viet Nam must adopt life-long learning. Youth also need to learn how to learn. Mr Loi said that Viet Nam must encourage entrepreneurship and self-employment.

Synthesis report

Following the national workshop reports Mr Niall O’Higgins, Professor of Political Economy from the University of Salerno in Italy, presented a “Synthesis report on country situations” based on the country studies prepared by ILO consultants. Mr O’Higgins began by discussing the transition from education to employment. Young people need a basic education before they can enter the labour market. Unemployment is only the tip of the iceberg – many young women and young men are underemployed. A growing number are working in the informal economy. Policies for youth employment must be integrated into a general employment strategy, and employment policies themselves must be integrated with other policies that affect young people. This will require coordination among different institutions and agencies. Mr O’Higgins suggested that targets be established together with the means and resources to achieve them. Basic levels of education and literacy are necessary to take advantage of new technologies. Systems for education and training must be responsive to the market. Two methods mentioned in the country papers are the modern apprenticeship system in Australia and community-based approaches in the Pacific Islands. Most people look for jobs without the support of public or private employment services. However, employment services can link job-seekers and employment opportunities more effectively through the Internet or telephone.

Perhaps, said Mr O’Higgins, the most important issue is the availability of reliable and up-to-date labour market information. Young people need information to find jobs and governments need data to develop policies. It is often said that young people do not have the right attitude towards employment – yet attitudes depend on education, training and information about job opportunities. As the High-level Panel of the Youth Employment Network has pointed out, young people should be viewed as an asset, not a problem. Mr O’Higgins concluded that the solution for youth lies not in changing their attitudes but in changing their circumstances.

2.5 Session on government policies, employers' role and workers' role in promoting youth employment

The chairs for this session were Mr Gyorgy Sziracski and Mr Takafumi Ueda from the ILO in Geneva. The first presentation on government policies to promote youth employment was made by government representative from Australia Mr Graham Carters. He argued that governments need to establish a business climate conducive to employment creation through strong economic growth. Another important task for governments is to give youth the skills and qualifications they require to prepare them to enter the labour market.

The next stage is to maintain the competitiveness of young people after they enter the labour market. The key to this is some sort of safety net, for example income support and minimum wages. Government and business should work together on this.

Policies are also needed to assist youth in the transition from school to work and to help with job search, career counselling and vocational guidance. An example of successful support during this transition is the modern apprenticeship system in Australia that combines on-the-job and off-the-job training. Australia's Job Network – a network of private community and government organizations across Australia which are contracted by the government to deliver employment services – also provides a range of useful services including assistance to young job seekers to develop their job search skills.

Mr Carters explained that governments can help young people to help themselves, either by organizing events such as roundtables or by promoting entrepreneurship. Governments can also assist young people to start their own businesses. Good business ideas are not enough. Youth need skills in business and finance.

Governments can play an important coordinating role through central administration, state authorities and local governments. They are also responsible for compiling labour market information and providing public employment services.

The employers' role in promoting youth employment was presented Ms Leyla Yilmaz from Australia. She said that employers can make a tangible contribution to youth employment – one that can make the difference between success and failure.

Australia's labour market has an ageing population with declining numbers of young workers. At the same time part-time jobs and casual work opportunities are increasing. Employers – particularly those in traditional industries such as electronics, engineering and automobiles – now recognise the importance of managing the transition between education and work. The business sector is taking an active role in creating employment opportunities.

The regional motor industry serves as an example. This industry finds it difficult to attract and retain young people with relevant skills, because most now want to go into IT jobs or the hospitality sector that they see as more glamorous. Work in traditional industries is viewed as dirty, difficult and sometimes isolating. Currently there are unfilled job vacancies. Employers have been considering how to make these more attractive to youth.

Creating new opportunities for young people is not a simple task. A range of programmes involving government, educators and unions is required. Skills need to be relevant to the jobs that are available. Thus, life-long learning is encouraged. Rates of pay must to be appropriate. Employment protection should also be considered.

Ms Yilmaz said that employers need clear partnerships between key players. For many years employers have worked with the education system and training providers to make curricula more relevant. Employers contribute to the national qualifications framework and are piloting new initiatives such as modern apprenticeships, training assessment, work experience and flexible programmes. These have had mixed success. Employers need to take every opportunity to promote the automobile industry through an integrated approach. Research is underway into what attracts young people to a particular industry and the results are available on the Internet. Mobile vans are used to promote career development in rural areas. Young people are being helped to acquire skills necessary to look for jobs. Employers have also helped create a business management programme that focuses on small businesses rather than large enterprises.

Equal opportunities are very important. Ms Yilmaz explained that employers have taken steps to increase the number of women in the automobile industry through support and training using a women's network and role models.

Mr Cameron Robinson from Australia then presented the workers' role in promoting youth employment. He said the situation in Australia is different from that of other countries, so its experience may not apply everywhere. Unions are viewed by many young people as just another institution – middle aged, mostly male and blue collar. Hence we have been forced to re-evaluate the way we present ourselves to them, he explained.

Unions in Australia have also had to adapt to the changes in the workforce – the emergence of the service sector and the increase in part-time jobs and casual employment. He said that unions need to engage these workers. We are working with governments to develop codes of practice for new sectors such as information technology. Another example is telephone call centres that employ many young people.

Mr Robinson noted that trade unions are also addressing issues related to the possible exploitation of young workers during the transition period between education and work. They are also working to improve the employment situation of young people through better wages and improved security. Workers' organizations are addressing such issues as job discrimination, workplace bullying and sexual harassment. Unions are also involved with training qualifications and career guidance.

Mr Robinson stressed that trade unions need to hear more young voices. Historically, institutions have not been effective in encouraging the participation of youth. Thus he welcomed the panel discussion of Thai youth.

Mr Sziracski responded that messages coming from the presentations by government, employers and workers from Australia are about coordination, partnerships, integration, networking and linkages with the world of work. Although Australia's circumstances may differ from those of other countries at the regional meeting, participants can adapt practical ideas and apply the underlying principles.

2.6 Session for presentations on enhancing employability and ensuring equality

The first panel session on the key priorities of the Youth Employment Network was chaired by Ms Lo Fung-Kuen, workers participant from the Hong Kong SAR. "Employability – investing in education and vocational training for young people and improving the impact of those investments" was presented by two speakers. The first was

Mr Ian Cummings, Senior Specialist in Vocational Training of ILO in Bangkok. He said that to tackle the problem of large numbers of unemployed and underemployed it is necessary to address some key issues. While governments often pay lip service to youth employment programmes, many are “an end in themselves” and not effective. Wages that do not reflect productivity are sometimes given as a reason for high youth unemployment.

Box 3: Skills for employability

Training for informal economy activities can reduce the exclusion of youth, but at the same time there must be an awareness that young people are still maturing – physically as well as mentally. For example, many youth enterprise schemes fail due to loss of capital – credit and grants – particularly where the family’s economic and social situation is precarious. Therefore, strategies must be adopted to protect young entrepreneurs.

Most training occurs in the workplace and ranges from apprenticeship to informal on-the-job training. Institutional training, unless well planned and targeted, often does not meet the needs of the workplace.

Employability now requires a new set of skills without which labour market strategies will fail. Young people need to learn “core or key competencies” to function in a rapidly changing workplace – examples of these survival skills include:

- Communicating ideas and information
- Collecting, organizing and analysing ideas and information
- Working with others in teams
- Language, literacy and numeracy
- Managing contingencies – decision making
- Using technology – particularly ICT

Source: From Ian Cummings, “Youth training and employment”, ILO/Japan Tripartite Regional Meeting on Youth Employment in Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok, 27 February – 1 March 2002.

Mr Cummings noted that access to education and training for work should be available to all. Yet skills needed for the workplace are not being provided by schools. Rapidly changing technology and shorter product lifecycles mean training and skills are more important than ever before. However, we should not be deceived into thinking that education alone is the answer, since large numbers of educated youth do not have decent work. Girls outperform boys at school but often follow traditional subjects unrelated to labour markets. He said many young people drop out of education and training, so we should look to improve vocational guidance and job matching.

Mr Cummings explained that youth face specific challenges when it comes to employability. They are still maturing both physically and mentally. Inexperience means they need greater support when looking for jobs. Appropriate work experience before leaving school can serve as a springboard for the transition from school to work. However, many employers abandon such schemes as too time consuming.

Mr Cummings said that economies benefit in terms of output and employment from a workforce with skills that are appropriate and flexible. Training courses must be adaptable and targeted. However, the characteristics that mark successful business – greater responsiveness to market signals – are often lacking.

Employability today requires new sets of skills. Core or key competencies are related to communication, analysis, teamwork, language, literacy, numeracy, decision making and information technology. The role of governments needs to be reviewed in terms of ability to develop flexible policies and deliver appropriate skills at the right time. Although many governments no longer take the lead in training, they should encourage core competencies, provide overall coordination, stimulate employer participation and create better systems of labour market information. To do so they need a clear vision of what they want to achieve. According to Mr Cummings this should be nothing less than reforming the general education system and rethinking how learning takes place, so that we move away from rote learning to thinking and exploring.

The second presenter on enhancing employability was the employers' participant from Sri Lanka Mr K. B. Dasanayaka. He explained that Sri Lanka has provided free education for more than sixty years. The literacy rate is 91 per cent, primary school enrolment is 96 per cent and secondary school enrolment is 75 per cent. Sri Lanka has thirteen national

universities and numerous vocational training providers. Nevertheless, unemployment has reached alarming proportions, particularly among educated youth. The reason for this lies in the irrelevance of education and training and the expectations of those looking for work.

Mr Dasanayaka said that the education system was designed for another era. While the ILO says that employers are now looking for greater versatility, a positive work ethic and communication skills, these qualities are in short supply. The first report of the National Education Commission identified the basic competencies required in Sri Lanka. An examination of the technical and vocational education and training (TVET) systems indicates that the focus is still on supply rather than demand. Lack of coordination among different agencies confuses young people who are making career choices. Sri Lanka needs proper labour market information, career guidance and counselling services in order to make training more demand driven. While this will help with entry level employment, Sri Lanka must also ensure continuing employability with ongoing training.

However, education and training are only a means to an end and not an end in themselves. Mr Dasanayaka pointed out that job creation is also necessary and the focus should be on high quality, skilled jobs. The government's primary role here is to create the appropriate economic conditions for private sector development. The ILO can help with knowledge building, technical programmes, micro-finance schemes and equal opportunities. Sri Lanka has opened its economy to global markets. Now it must create appropriate conditions for economic growth linked to international trade. Otherwise investment in education and training may be wasted.

The second topic for the panel session was "Equality – providing equal opportunities to young women and young men". The first presenter Ms Nelien Haspels, ILO Senior Specialist in Gender and Women Workers Issues in Bangkok, explained that gender equality refers to the equal rights, responsibilities, opportunities, treatment and valuation given to women and men in employment and training. It means ensuring that all persons are treated with dignity and allowed to develop their potential in order to attain a higher quality of life. Women are a growing proportion of the Asian workforce. In particular, there is an increase in young rural migrant women moving into low quality jobs in labour intensive manufacturing and service sector jobs. Many of these are "3 D" jobs – dirty, dangerous and demeaning.

Box 4: Practical measures to promote equality between young men and women

- (1) Measures to identify bottlenecks and opportunities for promotion of equality in:
 - Recruitment
 - Selection
 - Promotion
 - Transfer
 - Training
- (2) Measures for recruiting:
 - Avoid indicating a preference for a certain group or sex unless it is clearly justified
 - Encourage everyone to apply through information channels that reach young women and young men
 - Use criteria, tests and interviews for selection that relate to job competencies and are the same for everyone
- (3) Measures for the workplace:
 - Ensure respect and a healthy working environment free of harassment – including sexual harassment – for all workers
 - Ensure that workplaces are family friendly
- (4) Measures for positive action known as “positive discrimination” or “affirmative action” are practical temporary measures to combat the direct and indirect results of past discrimination by favouring training and employment for groups suffering from past discrimination.

Source: From Nelien Haspels and Busakorn Suriyasarn, “Youth employment in Asia and the Pacific: Equality at work for young women and men”, ILO/Japan Tripartite Regional Meeting on Youth Employment in Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok, 27 February – 1 March 2002.

Women's wages are typically two-thirds those of men for equivalent work. Indirect discrimination in the labour market follows from the exclusion of one sex because of preferences or stereotypes – for example, “all girls become mothers” or “men are natural leaders”. This leads to significant job segregation – horizontal and vertical. Horizontal job segregation between “men's jobs” and “women's jobs” is falling world wide and is at its lowest in Asia with the exception of the People's Republic of China. Ms Haspels noted that there are now more women in men's jobs but not *vice versa*. Vertical job segregation, based on the position of the sexes in the job hierarchy, is greater in Asia and the Pacific than elsewhere in the world despite the investment in education. She said this discredits the theory that women do not move up in the hierarchy due to lack of qualifications. The “glass ceiling” remains intact with less than 20 per cent of positions in management filled by women.

Since sex is a poor indicator of competence, measures to promote equality between men and women are both “right” and “smart” for employers. They promote social justice and make economic sense. Policy priorities that improve labour market information and support equal employment opportunities can help promote greater equality in youth employment. There is a need for positive measures and affirmative action to counteract the legacy of past discrimination – such as setting quotas or targets for women employees. Practical measures can change the workplace environment – identify bottlenecks and opportunities, improve recruitment and placement.

The second speaker on ensuring equality, Ms Busakorn Suriyasarn from the ILO in Bangkok, told participants that there are still gender gaps in training programmes linked to value systems. In general, boys have better access than girls to secondary school and tertiary education. While increasing equality in education is leading to improvements in the employment of women, it has not overcome job segregation and wage disparities. Ms Busakorn noted that access to education and training is still unequal. Segregation in training is followed by segregation in the workplace creating a self-perpetuating cycle: men receive longer periods of more formal training leading to higher skill levels and more secure jobs. Women obtain “suitable skills” often via shorter training and informal courses. In particular those who spend time outside the labour market find themselves in a vicious circle whereby lack of training leads to low quality jobs and low paid work that, in turn, offer little additional training.

Policy priorities and practical measures are needed to address these problems. These include explicit equal opportunities goals and improved vocational training curricula. Ms Busakorn argued that there should be more equal access to training and jobs in non-traditional fields such as those related to science and technology. Practical measures include improved links between training and jobs for both young women and young men, special support for vulnerable groups of young women, awareness raising and flexible programmes compatible with family responsibilities, special training to prevent sexual harassment and workplace violence and integrated training to prepare young women to become self-employed.

Box 5: Priorities in training and retraining for girls and women

- Adopting explicit equal opportunity goals and measures in vocational training systems
- Including both males and females meaningfully in the full range of standard vocational training programmes rather than providing only traditionally female-oriented skills to girls and women
- Revising all training curricula to avoid gender stereotyping and to promote equality between the sexes
- Encouraging both boys and girls to enter non-traditional occupations in order to break existing patterns of job segregation – for example girls into scientific and technical fields and boys into jobs in the care sector
- Establishing more effective linkages between training systems and labour markets so that girls and women are trained in employable skills alongside boys and men
- Offering special tailor-made training for potentially vulnerable groups of women
- Raising awareness among men workers in workplace-based training programmes about their role in sharing family responsibilities
- Introducing prevention of sexual harassment and gender-based violence at work into vocational training

- Developing flexible training programmes – in terms of design, delivery and location – for young and adult women and men with family responsibilities who need or seek to combine paid and unpaid work
- Integrating vocational training and enterprise development into training for women who will become self-employed
- Designing special measures such as targeted information campaigns to facilitate the entry of workers with family responsibilities into training and retraining for labour markets

Source: From Nelien Haspels and Busakorn Suriyasarn, “Youth employment in Asia and the Pacific: Equality at work for young women and men”, ILO/Japan Tripartite Regional Meeting on Youth Employment in Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok, 27 February – 1 March 2002.

2.7 Session for presentations on promoting entrepreneurship and creating employment

The panel on entrepreneurship and employment was chaired by Mr Pex Avosa, government representative from Papua New Guinea. Mr David Lamotte, ILO Enterprise Development Specialist from Manila, made the first presentation on “Entrepreneurship – making it easier to start and run enterprises to provide more and better jobs for young people”. He said that the pathways by which young people move from childhood to adulthood are changing. Entrepreneurship is just one solution to the complex challenges they face. Like education, however, entrepreneurship is a means and not an end in itself. Encouraging entrepreneurship has many benefits. Young people often employ other young people. They are likely to create more innovative businesses. Knowledge about running businesses also leads to better employees and informed consumers.

Yet entrepreneurs face difficulties. The High-level Panel of the Youth Employment Network raised some important points – countries need to rethink their legal and institutional frameworks and create supportive business environments that help entrepreneurs rather than setting up obstacles or barriers to enterprise. The panel cited one country in which it takes 29 months to obtain a business license. The informal economy should be integrated into the mainstream economy. The framework should encourage and promote innovation by young women and young men.

Box 6: Developing a youth entrepreneurship strategy

Promote a more enabling environment

- Review and reorient the legal and institutional framework to make it easier to start and run a business
- Encourage financial institutions to provide credit and other financial services
- Foster an entrepreneurial culture
- Ensure that young women have the same opportunities as young men

Integrate entrepreneurship into the mainstream education system

- Examine education systems to see the extent to which they promote entrepreneurship and self-employment as viable and rewarding career options
- Integrate entrepreneurship education into academic curricula such as ILO's *Know About Business*
- Provide business start-up training and support for graduates who want to start their own business such as the ILO's *Start Your Business (SYB)* and *Improve Your Business (IYB)* programmes

Promote access to credit for young entrepreneurs

- Encourage finance institutions to provide credit to young people
- Combine access to credit with business development services

Foster partnership with employers and workers

- Sponsor, run and judge youth enterprise competitions
- Provide mentoring and advisory services
- Do business with young entrepreneurs
- Encourage advocacy by representative organizations on the needs of young women and young men entrepreneurs

Foster the involvement of young women and young men

- Encourage participation and ownership of decision making in entrepreneurship programmes
- Promote the formation of entrepreneurship organizations
- Involve and consult these organizations

Source: From David J. Lamotte, "Promoting youth entrepreneurship", ILO/Japan Tripartite Regional Meeting on Youth Employment in Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok, 27 February – 1 March 2002.

Mr Lamotte explained that most countries encourage entrepreneurship through programmes that can be broadly classified into two types. The first supports business with financial and human resources such as credit and training. The second type focuses on skills training. Other programmes include promoting appropriate role models, youth enterprise competitions and school-based businesses. He said that many of these programmes come through the education system and not the labour sector, so there is a need to create better links between the two. Entrepreneurship and self-employment should be integrated into mainstream education – subjects such as mathematics, languages and history can all be related to business – alongside skills helpful for business start-ups.

The most successful programmes operate within an integrated framework. They are usually started by a visionary individual rather than a government programme and are clearly linked to market opportunities. They look for partnerships, since a single programme cannot provide all of the skills and support that are required. Public-private partnerships are the most effective. Financing can be a problem. Social attitudes or cultural factors can also create barriers such as to credit provision for unmarried women. Yet young entrepreneurs need easier access to credit. Micro-finance schemes are not the only answer. Successful start-up programmes combine youth credit schemes with business development services.

Employers' associations and workers' organisations can also play a role, for example by sponsoring enterprise competitions, providing mentoring services, offering work experience, organizing on-the-job training and doing business with young entrepreneurs. Young people can help by forming self-help groups and entrepreneurship clubs. Existing projects are clearly successful but they do not reach enough young people. What we really need, he said, is a better strategic approach.

The second speaker, Ms Elizabeth Morris from the ILO in Bangkok, spoke about "Employment – placing employment creation for youth employment in macroeconomic policies and development plans." According to the High-level Panel for the Youth Employment Network, employability, equality and entrepreneurship require an enabling environment. Skills and training must be supported by public policies for job creation, gender equality and economic growth. Employment promotion must be placed at the centre of macroeconomic policies.

Box 7: Creating employment

Youth employment problem

Youth employment is a chronic problem in most countries of the Asia and Pacific region. Lack of adequate information often makes it difficult to measure unemployment and underemployment of young people. It is clear, however, that youth unemployment rates are generally greater than adult unemployment rates. Moreover, jobs of youth tend to be more sensitive to economic downturns than those of adults based on the principle of “last in, first out.”

Employment Policy Convention

Tackling youth employment requires a macroeconomic strategy designed to stimulate growth, employment and equity. In this regard youth employment must be placed on the general agenda for employment promotion. Employment Policy Convention, 1964 (No. 122) represents a commitment to full employment policies.

Global Employment Agenda

More recently the ILO has developed a Global Employment Agenda for employment promotion by national governments. This provides a framework for policies to promote employment. Sustainable economic growth and a strong private sector can open employment opportunities for young people.

Integrated employment strategies

The effectiveness of policies for youth will depend on economic growth and sufficient jobs. Yet good results can be achieved with an integrated package to combat youth unemployment: education and training, guidance and counselling, support for entrepreneurship. Youth employment and job creation cannot be separated from the educational system and its relationship to the world of work. Active labour market policies are useful in targeting vulnerable groups of young people such as disadvantaged youth, school dropouts, young women, ethnic minorities and disabled youth. There is a strong case for increasing and strengthening the protection of young people in the labour market. This includes young women and young men in temporary, contract and part-time work with low pay and little organization.

Labour market information

In order to improve policies it is useful to have information and analysis about young people in the labour market. This should identify the nature and causes of youth unemployment. Improved statistics by age and sex enable policymakers to identify target groups and monitor youth employment.

Social partners and youth participation

Better policies result from active involvement of employers' organizations and trade unions. Young people themselves should participate in policy making for youth employment.

Source: From Elizabeth Morris, "Creating employment", ILO/Japan Tripartite Regional Meeting on Youth Employment in Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok, 27 February – 1 March 2002.

She explained that delegates to the ILO's Thirteenth Asian Regional Meeting in August 2001 concluded that employment promotion is essential for decent work and poverty reduction. Development plans must place employment issues on the policy agenda through improved cooperation between government agencies and social partners.

The second strategic objective of the ILO is to promote opportunities for women and men to obtain employment and income. The ILO's Employment Policy Convention, 1964 (No. 122) commits countries to support full, productive and freely chosen employment. Policies should ensure that there is work for all who are available for and seeking work and that such work is as productive as possible. Country Employment Policy Reviews (CEPRs) have been a key part of the ILO's employment promotion strategy and youth employment issues should be a priority in future CEPRs.

The 1998 International Labour Conference noted that economic downturns and structural adjustment make it difficult to help unemployed young people. Delegates called for innovative policies to create employment opportunities for young people; increased investment in basic education with better access for disadvantaged categories of young people; greater participation of employers and workers in education and training; increased flexibility in on-the-job and off-the-job training; more effective employment agencies; greater support for self-employment and

entrepreneurship among young people and increased competitiveness through investment in improved technology and human capital.

Young people benefit from general policies related to growth, employment and poverty. According to the ILO's Comprehensive Employment Framework an employment-led strategy on poverty reduction needs to be developed. Youth employment strategies must be linked to the overall employment agenda. Employment creation should be a factor in shaping economic development plans and public expenditure programmes.

Ms Morris concluded that although we lack adequate information to measure unemployment and underemployment, it is clear that youth employment is a chronic problem in most countries of Asia and the Pacific. Young people suffer during economic downturns. Employment policies must be at the centre of development programmes. Youth employment strategies must be part of national youth policies. The effectiveness of policies for young people will depend on economic growth and sufficient jobs. Yet good results can be achieved with an integrated package to combat youth employment including education, training, guidance, counselling and support for entrepreneurs. Better labour market information is required alongside active involvement of employers' organizations, trade unions and young people in policy making. There is also a strong case for strengthening the social protection of young workers.

Following the presentations on promoting entrepreneurship and creating employment Mr Avosa noted that private-public partnerships should not become just an employment mantra. They need to have practical applications. Government participants commented that employment policies for young people cannot simply be integrated into overall national strategies because they face specific difficulties that require separate policies.

Participants stressed that equality is also very important – not just equality between men and women but equal opportunities for disabled persons and minority groups. Employment policies for special groups need to take into account national practices and cultural traditions. Opportunities for positive discrimination are limited, since different groups have different strengths. The best approach is to create conditions so that each group can maximise its own potential. The concept of partnerships should also be expanded beyond the tripartite structure to include self-employed workers. Ms Haspels later responded by pointing out that women are not a minority. Government representatives had mentioned

positive measures to promote women's position in the labour force. She explained that positive steps are usually "protective measures" that are difficult to apply. Furthermore, these measures can be counterproductive if they make women workers less competitive and less employable. Hence the ILO prefers measures that promote equality.

2.8 Session to introduce group work

Ms Elizabeth Morris, ILO Labour Market and Human Resources Policies Specialist in Bangkok, introduced the discussion sessions. Delegates broke into four groups, each of which focused on one topic – enhancing employability, ensuring equality, promoting entrepreneurship or creating employment. During two discussion sessions the groups covered both policy priorities and practical measures for each topic with the aim of producing recommendations to present in the plenary.

2.9 Session to report on group work

This session was chaired by Mr Ian Chambers, ILO Director of the Bangkok Area Office and East Asia Multidisciplinary Advisory Team. Each group had appointed two reporters – one for policy priorities and the other for practical measures.

Enhancing employability

The first reporter was Mr Graham Carters, a government participant from Australia, who spoke about policy priorities. Three issues or challenges were identified:

- Knowledge and skills
- Assistance in transition
- Access to the workplace

Knowledge and skills. Mr Carters said we need to invest in education and training and ensure that the skills taught are those that the labour market needs. In particular, core foundation skills such as language, literacy, numeracy and IT must be strengthened. There should be a vocational stream together with tertiary education. Young people should be encouraged to stay at school beyond the minimum leaving age of 15 years. Although governments are responsible for coordinating and funding, employers, workers and local communities should also play a role. Reform is likely to require a long-term commitment.

Assistance in transition. More effort should be put into offering work experience and career guidance in the transition from school to work. Governments must work with other stakeholders to develop a national skills and competencies framework which – as well as core skills – includes communication, teamwork, leadership, organisational responsibility, work processes and problem solving. Governments must again take the lead with participation and ownership by all stakeholders.

Access to the workplace. Young people need immediate help with information about employment opportunities and job search. Governments in consultation with employers must play a leading role in providing work experience opportunities. Youth should also be helped to develop the skills and techniques needed to find work. Accurate analysis of information on supply and demand in labour markets including skill shortages is essential. Disadvantaged youth will need special help.

The second report from group work on enhancing employability was presented by Mr Farshal Hambali, workers' participant from Indonesia. He focussed on practical measures related to the same three issues:

Knowledge and skills. Mr Hambali said that accurate labour market analysis is necessary to identify the skills and competencies needed. Practical skills rather than textbook knowledge are required. Schools should teach subjects such as budgeting and taxation. Students should be able to learn about different workplaces. There is also a need to improve institutional capacity by upgrading teachers, facilities and equipment. These improvements should be equally available in rural and urban areas. This is a long-term process in which governments must take the lead, but professional organizations, employers' associations, trade unions, youth organizations and NGOs can also play a role.

Assistance in transition. The group recommended developing a website that lists job vacancies and offers practical tips about how to look for work and succeed in interviews. National training authorities – using the same “tripartite plus” structure as the ILO – should be formed at appropriate levels. Mr Hambali said that informal youth committees can provide more innovative ideas to help with youth employment issues.

Access to the workplace. Promotion through publications, speakers, websites and elsewhere needs to be done on a continuous basis. Employers and workers can assist with career counselling and job

matching. Employers can also assist with training. Promoting equal opportunities is another important priority. Publicising the stories of role models – entrepreneurs or employees – and learning about successful initiatives in other countries is also helpful.

Ensuring equality

Two reports were prepared for the group work on ensuring equality. The first on policy priorities was presented by workers' participant from Australia, Mr Cameron Robinson. The second on practical measures was reported by Mr Gibson Oeka, government observer from Papua New Guinea.

Mr Cameron said countries already have policies enshrined in their legislation or constitutions to provide equal rights for men and women. Yet problems of discrimination and inequality still exist. This stems from a failure of implementation. Achieving equality raises a number of issues and challenges. There is a need to ensure equal access to education and training, employment opportunities and reliable information. Barriers – whether cultural or legislative – must come down. Governments should take positive steps to promote equal opportunities in all forms of education and training. Young women as well as young men must also have access to labour market information.

Some cultures erect barriers such as those to discourage young women from exercising equal rights. Measures and mechanisms are needed to counteract such barriers. Legislative obstacles should be removed such as those related to education systems, labour markets and property rights. Mr Cameron reported that we must also remember that these measures are targeted not just at men and women but urban areas and rural populations. The benchmark should be equality for all groups.

Mr Oeka said that, practically speaking, policies are needed which ensure equal access to education and training. We must encourage young women and young men to participate in non-traditional fields. Legislation needs to be reviewed to ensure that it does not conflict with policies to ensure equal opportunities. Practical measures are required to remove cultural barriers. We also need reliable, timely and pertinent statistical information to help identify areas of inequality and to assess the effectiveness of policies and programmes.

Although governments need to take the lead in solving these problems, other actors have a role to play. In policy areas governments can work with employers, unions, schools, families, communities and the media.

Promoting entrepreneurship

The group work on promoting entrepreneurship was presented by Mr K. Velayutham, workers' participant from Sri Lanka, and Mr Urai Homtavee, observer from Thailand. The working group identified ten challenges:

Securing finance. Mr Velayutham reported that access to viable finance is needed to encourage self-employment for young people. Governments in particular can help with practical advice, guidance and information. Steps should be taken to make it easier for young people to obtain credit and finance.

Identifying opportunities. We must help young people pick business niches and avoid crowded markets. Harnessing market knowledge and publicising priority areas for development are challenges for both governments and entrepreneurs.

Reforming education and training. Education systems and vocational training should be reviewed and reformed. Entrepreneurial skills – including commercial, managerial and life skills – can be incorporated in the curriculum. Employers can help identify the “basics” needed for running a business. There is a need to raise education standards and introduce new subjects to meet the requirements of youth and employment.

Integrating dropouts. Youth entrepreneurship can offer a second chance for gainful employment. Young entrepreneurs can help to identify regulatory barriers and other problems.

Reviewing regulations. Regulations should encourage rather than discourage entrepreneurship. Young entrepreneurs sometimes have unusual ideas that fall foul of official regulations. These should be reviewed.

Sharing experience. Ms Homtavee explained that young people do not generally have job experience. Advice – particularly on marketing and distribution – is crucial. Mentoring schemes can also help. Governments

working together with employers' associations and trade unions can help youth start businesses.

Supporting Expansion. Doing business means taking risks and it is important for governments and agencies to encourage risk taking. They can also provide practical assistance with finance, marketing and distribution.

Involving communities. Companies and consumers must be encouraged to do business with young people in order to counter the idea that youth are not capable as business persons. Communities can play an important role to promote and assist youth in business.

Expanding opportunities. Enterprise support should be available in all areas. Business incubators, regional programmes and Internet access can all help. The greater the access to support, the greater the benefits to society. Governments should help young people in remote areas find employment opportunities.

Involving youth. Consultation with youth will improve all these programmes. The views of young people should not be ignored.

In conclusion entrepreneurship is not the single answer to youth unemployment but it can help young people find a role in society and boost self-confidence and self-esteem.

Creating employment

Policy priorities for group work on creating employment were presented by Mr H. M. Gunasekera, government participant from Sri Lanka. He said that in some countries employment promotion is not given a high enough priority and is not linked to other macroeconomic variables. Attention has been paid to price stability, export performance, GDP growth and income distribution while employment issues have been ignored. Capital-intensive techniques rather than labour-based approaches are sometimes used. The working group identified five issues related to employment creation. Efforts must be made to:

- Link employment promotion to macroeconomic variables and give priority to policies that provide both employment and output
- Encourage governments to work more closely with civil society

- Devise measures to combat gender inequality – governments, employers, unions and NGO’s can all help
- Allocate additional funding to enhance employability – for example in vocational training schemes – employers as well as governments can help here
- Review laws, procedures and regulations such as tax law, customs procedures and investment regulations in order to encourage greater investment

Mr Gunasakera reported that governments, employers and workers can contribute to employment creation in different ways. Governments can build frameworks to improve policies and laws that encourage investment. Employers can identify growth sectors of the economy and provide assistance and advice to vocational training agencies. Workers can provide advice on workplace issues and proposed legislation. Young people also have a role to play in enhancing employability. Youth need to speak out about their needs and requirements.

Mr Edison Situmorang, government participant from Indonesia, reported on practical measures for creating employment. He said that in some countries employment creation is not being given a high priority. Strategic planning is very weak due to inadequate focus of plans and integration of sectors. Social partners need to be more closely involved in strategic planning for employment creation.

Better labour market information is required. Growth sectors of the economy should be identified, prioritised and supported with special loan schemes to encourage more small businesses. Labour-intensive schemes, such as recycling, should be encouraged. He said we need to find ways to increase the effectiveness of public-private partnerships. All these measures should be supported by effective legislation and regular monitoring.

Mr Situmorang added that the main role of governments should be to establish economic conditions, develop appropriate programmes, encourage decentralisation processes and involve the social partners. Trade unions can help by organising participants, providing facilitators and evaluating programmes. Employers’ associations can promote corporate responsibility. Together with youth and NGOs they can provide resources and become involved in monitoring, evaluation and facilitation.

2.10 Session for general discussion of youth employment

This session was chaired by Ms Elizabeth Morris of ILO in Bangkok. Workers' participants expressed concern that reforming legislation to encourage employment creation might jeopardise worker protection. What are the guarantees that changing legislation will create jobs? A safety net should be maintained. The chair agreed that links between employment promotion and social protection should be strengthened.

Employers highlighted the benefits of establishing "one-stop-shops" to handle investment. Reviewing labour laws should be done on a tripartite basis. Sponsorship programmes and youth competitions can be organized for young entrepreneurs. Ms Morris suggested that "one-stop-shops" might be a good way of cutting red tape and promoting new investment. This should be accompanied by improvements in labour market information.

Workers representatives noted that more young people should have been included in the meeting. Ms Morris expressed the hope that there would be greater youth participation in future meetings particularly in policy debates.

Government representatives emphasised the importance of small enterprises and micro credit. Youth could be brought in as facilitators or organizers in training. The chair reminded participants that the Thai youth panel had pointed to the importance of entrepreneurship and credit. Business development services are needed to support young entrepreneurs. The director of a large bank said that in the past they have sponsored sports events for young people but he now thought that the money would be better spent on a pilot project for young entrepreneurs. He said he intended to convince his fellow directors to introduce a youth competition. Ms Morris said that their experience would be of general interest. A report could be placed on the meeting website.

A representative of workers pointed out that too few young people are joining trade unions although millions desperately need the help of workers' organizations. In this regard he referred to an International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) resolution on the need to increase unionisation rates in response to globalization and change. Trade unions need young people. Youth need unions. There are mutual benefits from working together. Unions need to work with youth to create better

access to education and training that will, in turn, improve opportunities for employment. Otherwise a lack of jobs can lead to violence, crime and prostitution.

Employers repeated that youth employment issues do not receive a high enough priority. For example, measures to relieve unemployment in China tend to concentrate on redundant workers in state-owned enterprises. Although laid-off workers are a serious problem the additional challenges of youth employment should not be overlooked. Many graduates prolong their education because they were unable to find work. The employers' representative said that the issue of youth employment will be raised in tripartite meetings. Ms Morris noted that in describing the situation of youth it would be useful to have labour market information disaggregated by age and sex. A better understanding of what young people are actually doing would make it easier to identify the ways forward.

Government participants pointed to the problem of matching demand and supply in labour markets. Youth require accurate information to help them find employment. There is a need to compile, analyse and distribute labour market information and the ILO is in a position to help. Issues relating to jobs and equality are not the exclusive concern of governments but also require the involvement of social partners, civil society, NGOs and families.

Youth representatives stressed the importance of knowledge and skills for enhancing employability and urged the ILO to consider projects that assess the relevance of education and training for labour markets. The ILO could also assist by organizing training workshops at the regional level to disseminate good practices such as those related to labour market information and information technology development.

The ILO's role is to exchange information globally, and it would be useful to share the experience of this region – particularly relating to youth entrepreneurship – with other regions. Employers' delegates said the ILO could help facilitate this sharing of experience as well as building of capacity. Social dialogue and the social partners can play an important role in promoting youth employment. In this regard it is important to strengthen the capacity of employers' organizations and trade unions.

Workers' participants emphasised the need to consult youth organizations in member countries warning that we cannot presume to know the opinions of youth. Ms Morris noted that the meeting website will

offer links to youth organizations. Perhaps, these sites could also link back to the ILO.

Government participants pointed out that entrepreneurship can be difficult in countries where there is no supporting culture especially in rural areas that lack basic services such as Internet access. Utilising existing policies, programmes and projects, rather than creating new ones, is the way to proceed. Ms Morris referred to the ILO's *Key Indicators of the Labour Market* that contains information about concepts and definitions as well as sources and uses for labour statistics. She said that hard copies could be made available for rural communities in Papua New Guinea where the website is not accessible.

The FAO observer reminded participants about his organization's focus on food security and agricultural development. Since FAO tries to address issues affecting rural youth, the meeting provided a good opportunity to find out what other agencies and various countries are doing. He welcomed an opportunity to collaborate with participating countries on rural youth.

Government observers stressed the importance of family ties and parental support in enhancing employability of youth. Young women and young men with poor academic records are frustrated when they lack the skills required for the types of jobs that meet their parents' expectations. This affects their confidence and can create a vicious cycle.

An ILO official said he was happy to see young people representing governments, workers and employers within the tripartite system. However, it is also necessary to reach out to youth organizations. He suggested that participants should look more broadly at the concept of entrepreneurship. It is not only about creating jobs and self-employment. The attributes of an entrepreneur can be useful in other ways – in politics, employment and society. It is also important to share experiences. The ILO headquarters was in the process of designing a website for the youth employment network and would be happy to establish links to other sites. An *E-Newsletter* is also planned to disseminate information from members and participants.

Ms Morris noted that issues raised during the general discussion had identified the four strategic objectives of the ILO relating to labour standards, employment promotion, social protection and social dialogue as well as the four priorities of the High-level Panel for the Youth Employment

Network – enhancing employability, ensuring equality, promoting entrepreneurship and creating employment.

2.11 Closing ceremony

The closing session was chaired by Mr Ian Chambers, Director of the ILO Bangkok Area Office and East Asia Multidisciplinary Advisory Team.

Government representative

Government participants were represented with a closing statement by Ms Carrie Lau Ka-Wai from Hong Kong SAR. She said that support for the “four Es” of the Youth Employment Network – enhancing employability, ensuring equality, promoting entrepreneurship and creating employment – relies not only on the government but also on the collaboration of employers’ associations, social groups and youth themselves. Young people are human assets. Investing in youth is investing in society. When formulating policies that affect them, it is important to use tripartite mechanisms or multipartite systems.

Some countries have encountered various problems with youth employment. These may grow out of their national political, structural, financial and cultural background. The challenge is to resolve such problems before countries need to implement preventative measures or remedial programmes. Otherwise they will fail.

She said new approaches that encourage youth participation should be adopted. Policy makers and implementing organizations should keep in touch with young people in order to be creative and objective in devising programmes and measures. To employ a new approach for youth employment government officials and social partners dealing with young people need additional training to understand youth issues.

Mr Chambers noted that Hong Kong is one of the regional leaders in handling employment issues for young people. The economy currently faced spiralling unemployment and regional recession. However, the ILO is confident that Hong Kong has the skills to deal with unemployment and the way it does so – particularly with regard to youth employment – will offer important lessons to the rest of the region.

Employers' representative

Mr Scott Barklamb from Australia served as the employers' representative in the closing session. He thanked the organizers and hosts of the meeting on their behalf. Mr Barklamb said that participants have heard a lot about challenges, issues, structures, settings and the engagement of all partners. Employers cannot afford *not* to be engaged, he said. Creating jobs for young people means supporting future markets and business viability. Individual employers also have a special responsibility for creating decent work – the decisions, motivations and capacity of employers will make a difference – but economic growth plays an important role in job creation.

Promoting youth employment is not an easy task, but it is too important to be left to governments alone because the potential rewards for society are immense. This has already been recognised by the high level of international commitment. Mr Barklamb suggested sober reflection and honest recognition of the scope of the challenge. But we are optimistic, he said. Support from the ILO and the ideas, experience and perspectives of social partners mean we are not starting from scratch. We would also like to commend the optimism and resilience of the Thai youth panel members. They are an example to us all.

Mr Chambers said that the dynamics of the private sector depends upon shareholders. He hoped that employers would be able to convince shareholders of the need for concrete action on youth employment.

Workers' representative

Mr Harry Sandrasekara from Sri Lanka represented the workers' participants in the closing ceremony. He recalled the important work of the ILO in placing employment and poverty on the agenda for developing countries. He said that the ILO has been at the forefront of activities to create employment. The ICFTU and unions have worked with the ILO before. This is the first time that joint recommendations have been proposed by the UN, World Bank and ILO working together to promote youth employment. Now we need to prioritise measures to create employment opportunities. We are not talking about any employment but, rather, decent work. The real success of this meeting will be if these ideas are translated into action.

ILO closing remarks

Mr Ian Chambers represented the ILO in the closing session. He said that two issues had become recurring themes.

First, participants had considered the respective roles of governments, employers, workers, NGOs, youth organisations and young people. The purpose of the ILO – set out in its Constitution – is to encourage government, employers and workers to work together towards common objectives for mutual benefit. The issue is what can we all do to make real improvements for young people. The answer also has to be based on interaction with young people. The focus should be on objectives and not institutions.

Second, the Thirteenth Asian Regional Meeting concluded that there should be national plans of action, covering decent work including rights, employment, entrepreneurship and training. Action plans should encompass the ILO's overall objective that economic policy can only be justified in terms of social advancement. We hope that our continued collaboration – through electronic communication and other means – will outline a commitment based on interaction with youth to objectives and strategies rather than institutions. The ILO commitment – national plans for decent work – will involve the “four Es”. The ILO secretariat will work with government, employers and workers to obtain concrete outcomes. We all agree with the analysis of the problems. However, practical action is needed to help young women and young men find decent work. Mr Chambers asked participants to inform the ILO about problems encountered along the way. Youth employment has been given a high priority by ILO members. We are ready to respond.

Mr Chambers concluded by recalling the comment of an observer that the family dimension of youth employment is particularly relevant in Asia and the Pacific. Families are often the units of last resort and the fundamental support for young people. In most of Asia the family rather than the individual is the building block of society. Nobody teaches us how to be parents. Yet greater attention might be paid to how parents help their young people.

3 Ways forward

Basic steps for promoting youth employment are to formulate employment strategies, develop policy priorities, identify practical measures and implement actions plans. Governments, employers and workers have given support to the “four Es” recommended by the High-level Panel of the Youth Employment Network: enhancing employability, ensuring equality, promoting entrepreneurship and creating employment.

Action plans may receive technical assistance from ILO offices at headquarters and in the field – the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP), the sub-regional Multidisciplinary Advisory Teams (MDTs) – East Asia Multidisciplinary Advisory Team (EASMAT) in Bangkok, Southeast Asia Multidisciplinary Advisory Team (SEAPAT) in Manila, South Asia Multidisciplinary Advisory Team (SAAT) in New Delhi – and Area Offices (AOs) in Bangkok, Beijing, Colombo, Hanoi, Jakarta and Suva.

The regional project on youth employment draws on and contributes to a growing knowledge base. ILO Conventions and Recommendations support measures to achieve full employment and decent work. Many of the recommendations of the High-level Panel of the Youth Employment Network build on research and approaches developed by the ILO over the years. Among the key documents is the Resolution Concerning Youth Employment presented to the 86th Session of the International Labour Conference in 1998. The ILO has joined the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) process to demonstrate the effectiveness of applying decent work principles to poverty alleviation programmes. Efforts should be made to include youth in PRSPs in order to meet the youth employment target for the Millennium Development Goals. The ILO Global Employment Agenda outlines key priorities for integrated strategies to provide decent work to all workers including young women and young men. The conclusions of the Thirteenth Asian Regional Meeting point out that employment generation must be at the centre of the policy agenda and express a special concern for youth employment.

The ways forward will involve different strategies. Among those considered at the regional meeting were:

- Developing national plans for youth employment by governments, employers and workers together with youth

- Encouraging community-based projects and local development initiatives for generating youth employment
- Becoming “champion countries” under the Youth Employment Network
- Placing youth issues within national plans for decent work as a follow-up to the Thirteenth Asian Regional Meeting
- Ensuring that youth employment is adequately represented in Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs)

These approaches are not mutually exclusive.

Within the ILO a new structure has been put in place to support youth employment issues. These are currently focused on the Youth Employment Network. Overall responsibility is in the Employment Policies and Advisory Services (EMP/POL) unit of the Employment Strategy Department (EMP/STRAT). The Secretariat for the Youth Employment Network has been transferred from the ILO liaison office in New York to ILO headquarters in Geneva.

There was a general consensus among the tripartite participants that preparatory research, national workshops and the regional meeting must be followed by concrete action. The ILO/Japan project has gathered information, undertaken analysis, identified problems and outlined solutions. Preparations and discussions have contributed to a greater understanding of youth issues. Unless steps are taken to move forward many youth will face unemployment and underemployment in terms of both the quantity and quality of jobs available to them. The toll on youth can be frustration, hardship and exclusion. Economic, political and social costs can be high.

Providing decent work for young people will require political commitment, effective institutions and integrated policies. Participants noted that while global alliances and new approaches are useful in terms of looking at youth as an asset rather than a problem and encouraging the participation of young people in planning effective strategies for employment promotion, it will be necessary to exploit existing structures and continuing programmes. The focus should be on objectives. Practical steps must be taken to provide young women and young men with decent work. The real success of the meeting will be in ideas translated into action.

Annex I: Agenda

ILO/Japan Tripartite Regional Meeting on Youth Employment in Asia and the Pacific

Conference Room 3, United Nations Conference Centre (UNCC)
Bangkok, 27 February – 1 March 2002

First Day, 27 February 2002

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| 0830 – 0900 | Registration |
| 0900 – 0945 | Inauguration |
| | Opening address: ILO Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific Yasuyuki Nodera |
| | Address: Minister of the Embassy of Japan in Thailand Takashi Saito |
| | Deputy Director of International Division, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare Kazushi Nishida, Government of Japan |
| | Inauguration: Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Welfare Ladawan Wongsriwong, Government of Thailand |
| 0945 – 1015 | Coffee Break |
| 1015 – 1245 | <i>Morning session chaired by the ILO – Ian Chambers</i> |
| | Introduction to objectives of the meeting – Elizabeth Morris |
| | Panel of Youth: “The challenges of finding decent work: Or what does unemployment mean to me?” – Young women and young men from Thailand facilitated by Busakorn Suriyasarn |
| | Panel of United Nations, International Labour Organization and the World Bank: “Youth Employment |

Network: Global Alliance for Youth Employment” – Saifuddin Abdullah (UN Secretary-General’s High-level Panel for the Youth Employment Network), San Yuenwah (ESCAP), Gyorgy Sziracski (ILO) and Christopher Chamberlin (World Bank Office Bangkok)

1245 – 1400

Lunch Break

1400 – 1500

First afternoon session chaired by Government – Edison Situmorang

“Promoting youth employment through information and communication technology (ICT): Best practices in Asia and the Pacific” – Takafumi Ueda

ICT and Youth Employment in Thailand – Saksiri Kashpasharin, Managing Director, Imagimax Studio, Bangkok

1500 – 1630

Second afternoon session chaired by Employers – Scott Barklamb

Presentation of National Workshop Reports:

Indonesia – Edison Situmorang

Hong Kong SAR – Carrie Lau Ka-Wai

Papua New Guinea – Pex Avosa

Sri Lanka – H.M. Gunasekera

Thailand – Areeya Rojvithee

Viet Nam – Tran Dac Loi

“Synthesis report on country situations” – Niall O’Higgins

1630 – 1700

Coffee Break

1700 – 1745

Third afternoon session chaired by ILO – Gyorgy Sziracski and Takafumi Ueda

“Government policies to promote youth employment”
Government Participant – Graham Carters

“Employers’ role in promoting youth employment”
Employers’ Participant – Leyla Yilmaz

“Workers’ role in promoting youth employment”
Workers’ Participant – Cameron Robinson

1800 Reception at the UNCC Hosted by ILO Regional
Director for Asia and the Pacific

Second Day, 28 February 2002

0900 – 1030 *First morning session chaired by Workers – Lo Fung-Kuen*

Panel Presentation:

“*Employability* – investing in education and vocational training for young people and improving the impact of those investments” – Ian Cummings and G. K. B. Dasanayaka

“*Equality* – providing equal opportunities to young women and young men” – Nelien Haspels and Busakorn Suriyasarn

1030 – 1045 Coffee Break

1045 – 1215 *Second morning session chaired by Government – Pex Avosa*

Panel Presentation:

“*Entrepreneurship* – making it easier to start and run enterprises to provide more and better jobs for young people” – David Lamotte

“*Employment* – placing employment creation for youth employment in macroeconomic policies and development plans” – Elizabeth Morris

1215 – 1345 Lunch

1345 – 1400 Introduction to Group Work – Elizabeth Morris

1400 – 1515 Group Work on “Policy Priorities: Enhancing employability, ensuring equality, promoting entrepreneurship and creating employment”

1515 – 1530 Coffee Break

1530 – 1700 Group Work on “Practical measures for enhancing employability, ensuring equality, promoting entrepreneurship and creating employment”

Third Day, 1 March 2002

Morning session chaired by ILO – Ian Chambers

0900 – 1045 Presentations on “Policy Priorities” and “Practical Measures”: Reports from Group Work

Enhancing Employability – Graham Carters and Farshal Hambali

Ensuring Equality – Cameron Robinson and Gibson Oeka

Promoting Entrepreneurship – K. Velayudam and Urai Homtavee

Creating Employment – H. M. Gunesequera and Edison Sitimorang

1100 – 1230 General Discussion – *Elizabeth Morris*

Closing Session – *Ian Chambers*

Brief Statements by Representatives of:

Governments – Carrie Lau Ka-Wai

Employers – Scott Barklamb

Workers – Harry Sandrasekara

ILO Closing Remarks – Ian Chambers

Annex II: Speeches

Opening Remarks by Mr Yasuyuki Nodera ILO Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific

At the
ILO/Japan Tripartite Regional Meeting on Youth Employment
in Asia and the Pacific
United Nations Conference Centre
Bangkok, 27 February 2002

H.E. Ms Ladawan Wongsriwong,
Mr Takashi Saito, Minister, Embassy of Japan in Thailand,
Mr Kazushi Nishida, Deputy Director, International Division,
Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, Government of Japan,
Distinguished guests and participants,
Colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning – welcome. It is a pleasure and a privilege to have you with us this morning. I would like to begin by acknowledging the time and the effort that you and your colleagues and counterparts have committed to this work in advance of this meeting. It is a wise investment. And it is desperately needed.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Youth employment is of enormous concern to the ILO. Your presence here today demonstrates that we are not alone. And so do the actions and the words of leading figures on the global stage. United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Anann has made this issue a particular cause. As you know, he has joined forces with the ILO Director-General Juan Somavia and the World Bank President Jim Wolfensohn to launch a high level policy network on youth employment. That network is drawing on the most creative leaders in private industry, civil society and economic policy. It is a high quality network. That is encouraging – because it must tackle a vast problem.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Youth employment, or rather the lack of it, is a huge problem. World wide, 66 million young people are openly unemployed. Many millions more are underemployed. Projections point to alarming increases in both figures over the next decade. And our figures may well be conservative. A variety of factors make it difficult to gather an accurate statistical picture.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The ILO's *raison d'être* is decent work. Our primary goal is ensuring that women and men have access to opportunities for decent work in conditions of freedom, security, equity and human dignity. That is quite a formal description. In less formal terms – it is very simple. It means people can feel confident that they can meet their own basic needs and those of their families. It means being able to afford food, housing, clothing and medical care. It means being able to send children to school and not to work; and being able to look forward to reasonable security in old age. These are reasonable expectations, for individuals, for families, and for communities. Decent work creates this framework for society. The UN Secretary-General Kofi Anan observed at the ILO's Global Employment Forum in November that freely chosen, productive employment was “the very foundation on which social stability rests”. And yet, in the world today, decent work is in alarmingly short supply. For young people, the shortage is chronic. Young people make up some 40 per cent of the world's unemployed. Unemployment early in life leaves lasting scars. It seriously damages people's employment prospects for later life. At its worst, it leads to a circle of despair and poverty.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We very often hear that our youth are our future. Then, let us take a look at that future – let us take a look at the situation our young people face. Our future is shouldering the burden of 40 per cent of the world's unemployment. Our future is weighed down even more by underemployment – working long hours to eke out the barest income, without the time or resources needed for training or education. And, the patterns of youth unemployment and underemployment show that our future is bedevilled by discrimination. Young women are more likely to be affected than young men. So too, are other socially disadvantaged groups. And our future is threatened by other problems associated with joblessness

– crime, vandalism and drugs. We know, in short, that our young people, our future, do not have enough decent work. And therefore, our future does not yet have social stability. And neither do we.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This meeting is the culmination of months of work and research. Each of the countries represented in this room today has held a national workshop. Each of the countries has been involved in extensive research work, and in developing proposals for future action. The programme ranges through key concerns in the youth employment agenda – including active labour market policies and opportunities presented by information and communications technology. It highlights the themes identified by the Secretary-General's high-level policy network, of employability, equality, entrepreneurship and employment. And last, but not least, it stresses the contributions that can be made by governments, employers and workers. Tripartism is the ILO's great strength. It is a strength that can make a vital difference in the area of youth employment. The youth employment trends we face today are more than disturbing. Turning them around calls for a concerted effort by all.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Once again, I thank you for your presence here today, and wish you well with your deliberations. You face a daunting agenda. We all face a daunting task. It is essential that we make progress.

Thank you.

**Opening Remarks by Mr Takashi Saito
Minister, Embassy of Japan**

At the
ILO/Japan Tripartite Regional Meeting on Youth Employment
in Asia and the Pacific
United Nations Conference Centre
Bangkok, 27 February 2002

H.E. Ms Ladawan Wongsriwong, Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Welfare, Thailand,
Mr Yasuyuki Nodera, ILO Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific,
Mr Kazushi Nishida, Deputy Director, International Affairs Division,
Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, Japan,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great honour for me to express my appreciation to all of you here today on this occasion, the ILO/Japan Tripartite Regional Meeting on Youth Employment in Asia and Pacific. I would like to take this opportunity to say a few words on behalf of the Government of Japan.

First of all, I would like to stress the importance of this seminar. At present, most of countries in the world, especially developing countries, are facing the serious problems of unemployment, underemployment and economic inactivity. Above all, young people are exposed to these problems. This situation not only damages their career development, but also brings them into poverty and social problems, such as crime, vandalism, and drugs. Even Japan cannot take it easy, because the labour market situation is worse than ever with the latest unemployment rate being 5.6 per cent. This situation heavily influences vulnerable people, such as the younger generation. So Japan would like not only to exchange views, opinions and experiences with other countries which are in similar situations, but also would like to learn lessons from discussions. Taking proper care of youth is an important challenge for all of us, and I hope the ILO will support us in tackling the problems by coordinating with other organizations and stakeholders that have a variety of resources on this issue.

In January this year, the Government of Thailand held a National Workshop on Youth Employment, which I am sure makes a valuable input to this seminar. I appreciate the great help and contribution of the

Government of Thailand to host and invite all of us to this significant ILO meeting.

It is my pleasure that the Government of Japan provides a financial contribution to this seminar. This has been carried out as one of the projects under the “ILO Multi-bilateral Programme”, which provides technical cooperation through the ILO system. I think that implementation under the programme will make the seminar more effective and useful in view of tackling our common issue across borders. In addition, the theme of the seminar and the content of the discussion – “Employability”, “Equality”, “Entrepreneurship” and “Employment” – of young people, is in line with the basic concept of Japanese overseas development assistance, which stresses human development, so I recognise that this seminar is a good example of Japan’s ODA cooperation.

Furthermore, Japan makes a great deal of investment in this region. A large number of Japanese companies operate here, and to a great extent they contribute to creating employment opportunities for local people.

As we are in Thailand, let me take up the case of Japanese business relations with Thailand. More than 40 per cent of the foreign investment to Thailand is from Japan and the number of companies registered in the Japanese Chamber of Commerce is about 1,200, which is the biggest Japanese Chamber of Commerce in the world. There are many more companies that are not registered in the Chamber of Commerce. Japanese companies employ a total of 372,000 Thai workers. These figures concerning Thailand alone are enough to see how close are our economic relations with the region as a whole. We hope to see these relations further develop to benefit both sides.

In closing, let me again warmly welcome Your Excellencies, distinguished guests and all participants, and I wish further that this seminar will deepen the experience, friendship and mutual understanding among the participants. Finally, I would like to pay my respects to the tireless efforts of those who have prepared for this seminar.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.

Opening Address
by
Mr Kazushi Nishida, Deputy Director,
International Affairs Division Ministry of Health,
Labour and Welfare, Japan

At the
ILO/Japan Tripartite Regional Meeting on Youth Employment
in Asia and the Pacific
United Nations Conference Centre
Bangkok, 27 February 2002

Thank you Ms Chairperson,
H.E. Ms Ladawan Wongsriwong, Deputy Minister of Labour and Social
Welfare, Thailand,
Mr Yasuyuki Nodera, ILO Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific,
Mr Takashi Saito, Minister of Embassy of Japan in Thailand,
Distinguished participants,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Introductory remarks

Following Mr Saito's address, on behalf of the Japanese government, I am delighted to have the opportunity to address you as the representative of Japan's Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare. I welcome your participation here today at the ILO/Japan Tripartite Regional Meeting on Youth Employment in Asia and the Pacific.

I would also like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the Government of Thailand for providing strong support for this meeting, and particularly for the distinguished presence of Deputy Minister Ms Ladawan from the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare.

To begin with I apologise to all of you that an official in charge of youth employment from Japan is not at this meeting. This is because they are working very hard on our serious domestic employment situation.

Significance of the meeting on youth employment

First of all, I hope this meeting will be a great opportunity for everyone to share information, experiences and good practices, and furthermore, to deepen discussions about youth employment. In

a globalized world, youth employment continues to be a universal, serious problem. Japan has also been seriously suffering from youth employment problems recently. On behalf of my Ministry I am pleased to have this opportunity to give a brief introduction to Japan's experience and measures regarding youth employment.

Youth employment in Japan: Current status, recent trends

(1) Measures taken by the government

Until recently in Japan, youth employment worked well based on measures that transfer students smoothly and accessibly from school to work. For students about to graduate from high school, public employment services have worked with schools as a go-between in helping students find work. For those about to graduate from college or some other form of higher education, schools and private sector companies have provided information to help students find work. Both of these systems have ensured that a high percentage of students found employment. The smooth job placement system owed its success to good matching between school and companies, and meant that most students were employed in long-term employment. The result was that Japan was successful in terms of youth employment.

(2) Recent trends and background

However, the situation has been changing in recent years. This has been caused by three factors:

First, the balance of job entrants has shifted from high school graduates to college graduates.

Second, underemployment has almost doubled in size from the past average, mainly because the number of job offers has fallen significantly for structural reasons.

Third, the number of young people who do not find full-time employment after graduation – repeating a cycle of part-time jobs and unemployment – has grown significantly. We call these “*freeters*” – an abbreviation for “*free arbeiter*”. The total number of “*freeters*” grew to 1.5 million or an increase of one and a half times in five years.

There are considered to be two reasons for these trends:

First, job consciousness on the part of young people is changing. The high rate of youth unemployment and the growth in the number young people without stable employment are an indication of this. Youth have a different image of work and fewer opportunities for recognising the value and meaning of work. Furthermore, affluence among youth may cause a decline in the significance of jobs. These changes result in an insufficient awareness among young people.

Second, the attitude of companies toward employment is gradually changing. More and more companies have a tendency to demand human resources to produce immediate results, even if this means mid-career recruitment. In the past, companies just depended on new graduates, a system based on long-term employment. However, due to drastic economic changes and technological innovation, they are gradually changing their recruitment patterns.

Youth employment measures taken by Japanese government

As a result of this changing situation, the government has focused on youth employment as a serious challenge. It has therefore undertaken significant measures for youth employment. These consist of five approaches:

(1) Employment support measures for new graduates

Public employment service offices have enhanced support services for both high school and college graduates.

For new high school graduates – job interview fairs in which students and companies come together at a single location are being held at various locations. Classes on how to prepare to find employment are being offered to high school students.

For new college graduates – public employment service offices in each prefecture are providing services for information, counselling and placement.

For graduates who have yet to find jobs – through registration with employment service offices, counselling and information for employment are provided. Vocational training is also offered by companies and special schools.

- (2) Employment support measures for youth without stable employed called “*freeters*”

Since “*freeters*” obtain insufficient skills or career development, which means great losses not only for individuals, but also for the whole society, the government has taken measures for coping with losses. Some public employment service offices in urban areas are providing individualised support. These policies involve assessing aptitudes, offering counselling, providing information and creating demand.

- (3) Job consciousness among young people

To ensure job consciousness among young people, the government is supporting guidance and internships through schools beginning at an early age.

- (4) Public vocational training for employability

For the purpose of enhancing employability, polytechnic junior colleges are being turned into polytechnic colleges. They will then train advanced, skilled workers with highly specific, applicable knowledge and skills.

- (5) Equality between men and women in employment

For companies, administrative guidance is provided to correct recruitment practices that discriminate between men and women. Especially in companies that have large disparities between the recruitment of men and women, positive action is encouraged to promote the expanding recruitment of women.

For people dealing with selection, rules for equal opportunities for men and women are promoted. For female students, awareness-raising activities are organized such as seminars and the distribution of materials on choosing jobs adapted to individual ability and aptitudes.

Challenges encountered in Japan

The above-mentioned measures are now being undertaken, so it is too early to assess their effect. In the future, the fact that Japan will be facing a decreasing number of young people will result in a tight labour market for young people in an ageing society. Currently the structural supply-demand job mismatch is widening because of the changing consciousness of young people together with changes in the

industrial structure. We must tackle these challenges more seriously by taking steps to eliminate the job mismatch, smooth transfer from school to work and facilitate circumstances for getting work.

In conclusion, this meeting is very valuable and a good chance for Japan to participate. I look forward to conveying information about the discussions at this meeting to my colleagues.

Closing remarks

Finally, let me express the hope that, through this meeting, participants will not only learn about youth employment policy, but also propose good policy recommendations and practical measures by working together. We also sincerely hope that all participants make full use of the discussions at this meeting when they go back to their own countries.

The Japanese government stands prepared to continue working with the ILO to provide support for the improvement of labour and employment throughout the Asia-Pacific region.

Thank you very much for your close attention.

Opening Address
by
H.E. Ms Ladawan Wongsriwong
Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Welfare of Thailand

At the
ILO/Japan Tripartite Regional Meeting on Youth Employment
in Asia and the Pacific
United Nations Conference Centre
Bangkok, 27 February 2002

Mr Takashi Saito, Minister of the Embassy of Japan in Thailand,
Mr Kazushi Nishida, Government of Japan,
Mr Yasuyuki Nodera, ILO Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to welcome you to this meeting – and to welcome those of you who are visitors to the Kingdom of Thailand. I wish you a pleasant and productive stay.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This meeting deals with one of the most pressing issues facing our region and the world today. If we say that the world faces a crisis, we are not overstating the case. According to the ILO estimates, there are 66 million young people looking for work but unable to find any. And eighty per cent of these young people live in developing countries and transition economies. World wide, young people are twice as likely as adults to be unemployed. In many countries the figure is many times higher. Underemployment is another, similar story.

This is a quiet crisis. Youth employment issues do not receive enough attention – although the associated problems of crime, vandalism and drugs are only too obvious. This is due to the fact that the full magnitude of the problem is often not clear. It can be difficult to put together a statistical picture of youth employment. Work is underway in many countries to sharpen the picture – but it is still much more blurred than we would like. Young people themselves often lack influence. They may lack the confidence, the resources and the expertise they need to deliver their message. And yet that message must get through. Decent employment is crucial – both for young people themselves – and for the

societies in which they live. If we do not hear that message, and if we do not act, their future is in danger, and so is ours.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Building a life is like building a house. A strong house needs a solid foundation. And the foundation in our lives is laid in our youth. And those foundations will affect the entire design of the house – of the life – that follows. Someone who has a good basic education, followed by the right kind of further or vocational education, and opportunities to make a smooth transition into the workforce – is going about the business of building a life with a very strong start. That sound foundation will not just benefit them – but their family as well. But for many young people – this is not the case. Many lack access to education and to useful training opportunities. Many are openly unemployed or underemployed – either not working enough hours to earn a decent income – or having to work enormously long hours to make enough money to survive. In hard times, young people are hurt particularly. Young women often face special problems. So do young people from poorer families. Tackling youth employment means tackling all of the above, and more. And it means linking all of these. We need to link training with market needs, so that young people can find decent jobs when they finish. We need to do all that we can to boost employment – and shape policies so that they encourage enterprises to grow, and to employ young people. And we need to do all we can to make sure that these opportunities are available to guard against discrimination.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This meeting offers a welcome opportunity to consider these issues in depth – and to share the results of national discussions that have been held in advance. We, in Thailand, look forward to hearing the experience of others from around the region. In turn, we hope that the results of the discussions from our national workshop will be useful for others. The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare is taking responsibility for this area – while encouraging inputs from a very wide range of players. The Ministry will serve as a focal point while bringing together the cooperation from other arms of government, employers' organizations, workers' organizations and civil society in general.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I hope that our efforts at this meeting and beyond will make a real contribution to global efforts to address this issue. The high level policy network that has been launched by the UN Secretary-General, H.E. Kofi Annan together with the ILO and World Bank, is providing useful guidance. In this region commitment to the issue was made clear at the ILO's Asian Regional Meeting. And in Thailand, I know, we are just as committed. We look forward to working together, sharing ideas and pursuing new directions. I want to close this morning – not with the hope that we will succeed – but with the certainty that we will. Because we cannot afford to fail.

Thank you.

Annex III: List of participants

AUSTRALIA

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