

LAUNCH OF THE CORE LABOR STANDARDS HANDBOOK

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Mini Theater, ADB Headquarters, Manila

OPENING REMARKS

by

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Opening

- Good morning. It is my pleasure to welcome all of you to the *Launch of the Core Labor Standards Handbook*.
- We would like to especially welcome friends and colleagues from outside of ADB. We have representatives from the Philippines government, trade unions, employers' groups, and civil society organizations.
- And please allow me to express our special thanks to the International Labour Organization (ILO) for their continuing cooperation and collaboration in this endeavor.

Partnership between ADB and the ILO on CLS

- Both ADB and ILO aspire to an Asia and Pacific region free of poverty and to provide decent work to its citizens.
- In May 2002, we jointly signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to facilitate collaboration in matters of common interest to our developing member countries. We have identified several areas of collaboration, such

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as joint labor market assessments, development of a knowledge database on social protection statistics, and joint research on a range of labor and social protection issues. In addition, ILO has been facilitating interaction between ADB and trade unions and employers' groups.

- The launch of the Core Labor Standards Handbook this morning is an important milestone in ADB-ILO collaboration. The Handbook was originally drafted under a regional technical assistance project in 2000. ADB and ILO worked together during the intervening years to deliver a product that would help us advance the objectives of the core labor standards in Asia and the Pacific.

Core Labor Standards in ADB Operations

- Why are core labor standards important for ADB operations?
- The four internationally recognized core labor standards are:
 - freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining;
 - elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labor,
 - effective abolition of child labor, and
 - elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.
- The core labor standards became an integral part of ADB's development mission when our Social Protection Strategy was approved in 2001. They are crucial in supporting sound labor market development in the region. But compliance with core labor standards also positively contributes to protecting people - particularly vulnerable groups - from livelihood and employment related risks, and to developing the capacity of workers.

- Rigorous application of the core labor standards is a challenging task. And it will be increasingly so, particularly because the majority of the labor force in Asia and the Pacific is in the informal sector. Ensuring application of the core labor standards in the informal sector has been and will continue to be a major challenge.
- This region is also witnessing a faster pace of labor force mobility leading to regional integration of labor markets. However, this has not been backed by region-wide, consistent policy and regulatory frameworks for core labor standards. The general paucity of resources and capacity in each country to monitor the implementation of core labor standards continues to pose a major barrier.
- We at ADB firmly believe that the poor and vulnerable members of society do not need just any kind of employment – they are entitled to ‘decent work’. The Handbook that we are launching this morning will help us in our continuing efforts to build awareness of core labor standards inside ADB, to more systematically document our own experiences, and to guide our operational activities.
- I encourage the wide use of this Handbook, not only by our staff, but also by those with whom we work: government staff, civil society organizations, trade unions, and consultants and contractors. The Handbook can be used at both macro strategic level and micro project levels. We expect to introduce staff training based on the Handbook next year as part of our social analysis training program. As our experience in using the Handbook builds, we plan to document good practices which in turn will feed back into our operations.

Concluding remarks

- Ladies and gentlemen. Thank you once again for joining us at this launching. In a few minutes we will hear from the representatives of other organizations about this important topic. I believe this modest ceremony can help us to catalyze ever stronger collaboration among ADB, ILO, trade unions, employers groups, governments, and other interest groups in ensuring decent work for all people in Asia and the Pacific.