

**ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review  
Regional Preparatory Meeting for Asia and the Pacific**

**7 December, 2011  
Kyoto, Japan**

**Intervention made by Ms. Mun Ching Yap, Youth Representative, Malaysia**

1. Introduction

- Youth unemployment is becoming a major issue around the world from China to the Middle East
- More reports from Europe (Greece, Portugal) on youth diaspora to developing countries e.g. Brazil in search of jobs
- Arab Spring – one factor was high unemployment – youth have nothing to lose and no stake in system
- Pressing issue because high proportion of population in developing countries are youth just coming of age – entering their 20s and finding themselves without prospect for a job
- ASEAN – Median ages: MAL (27), IND (28), PHI (23) – at least 200m youth under 30 in ASEAN alone
- ILO Stats: 100m youth enter the workforce annually, 74m without jobs, majority women because of gender bias in labour markets
- 45% of unemployed live in Asia Pacific i.e. SEA & P (14.7%), S Asia (10.3%) and East Asia (8.9%)
- Global Financial Crisis exacerbated situation because
  - Harder to find jobs
  - Those who do find themselves with poorly negotiated short term contracts with minimum benefits
  - Those who have jobs have higher chance of losing them (last in, first out)
  - Firms less willing to invest in training – why invest when they can hire many to do the job for one at the same rate or can hire skilled workers fired from other jobs

2. ILO Theme of ‘Decent Employment’

- Many jobs fall in 3D category – dirty, demeaning, dangerous
- Arab Spring pressed home that youth not only concerned about finding jobs but jobs that give them sense of dignity
- Tunisian immolation which sparked off Arab Spring was the result of a man being humiliated and robbed of his self worth
- Authoritarianism contributed to this situation
- Youth have no voice and are effectively disenfranchised

3. Areas to address:

a. Closing the gaps in information and skills

- In many countries, jobs are available but youth are said to be unemployable because they lack the skills and experience required by the employer
- Consequence of education system that is not synchronised with needs of economy – applies to university grads too
- if firms do not train, youth will not get experience, without experience, firms not keen on hiring them
- Education systems needs revamping and business leaders need to be engaged for input on skills required

- Vocational training is one area that needs to be looked at – either vocational schools for high school grads or vocation attachment included into university programmes
  - Govts can incentivise firms to take on interns, graduates
  - b. Employers must look beyond paper qualifications
    - Assess youth applicants based on aptitude, attitude and potential
    - Job skills can be taught but not life skills
    - Firms must learn to appreciate and make the most of diversity in staff experiences
  - c. Encourage entrepreneurship
    - Govts need not always create jobs but only have create room for youths to create their own jobs
    - Youth well placed to spot gaps in market and create new demand suitable to their generation
    - Some situations e.g. Saudi Arabia, social structure make it necessary for women to go into home businesses
    - Govts' role is to support these small enterprises and give them room to grow
  - d. Address gender bias
    - More girls graduate from universities every year but labour market remains male dominant – what happened to these 'disappearing' female graduates?
    - Women are excluded from many jobs and face more difficulties e.g. sexual harassment, unequal pay for the same job
    - Laws in some countries discriminate against women and women are more often forced into the informal sector where they have no social safety net
    - Need to break down gender association with jobs e.g. female pilots, male crew, female security & ramp staff
    - Govts need to look at tax and welfare structures to ensure some form of tax neutrality
    - Getting women into the formal sector increases taxpayer pool and increases tax revenue, also allows govts to provide benefits to women once they are in the system
  - e. Empowerment
    - Youth want social justice
    - Can empower through collective bargaining or involve youth in political processes through the ballot
    - Not only all talk no action, civil service must have higher representation of youth, including INGOs, international institutions
4. Why now?
- Social stability – Arab Spring shows that unless youth are gainfully employed, more problems may arise in young countries
  - No jobs for youth means no consumption – we are too much invested in a consumption-based development model
  - LT Investment – investment in education and training for youth today will provide returns for the next 40 years
  - GFC – firms need to be innovative and creative to survive – need to change and youth can provide the energy, talent and creative to enable firms to change

*Prepared by: Yap Mun Ching (7 Dec 2011)*