

## **Trade Union Statement on the 8th ASEAN Regional Tripartite Social Dialogue Conference in Manila, 18-19 October 2017**

Trade unions across the ASEAN expressed great disappointment over ASEAN governments who refused to commit to advance workers' rights in the sub-region.

Ironically, governments refused to heed the workers' calls during the 8th ASEAN Tripartite Social Dialogue Conference—a forum dedicated to deepen understanding and relations between and among social partners—government, employers and workers.

At the two-day Conference, panel sessions delved on effective social dialogue mechanisms, many examples of which featured good practices of the Philippines.

On the final day of the conference, social dialogue in practice was put to a test. The final plenary session was held to come up with the conference conclusions and recommendations.

In separate interventions, workers' delegates asked that the conference document reflect the calls to ratify ILO Convention 144 on tripartism; Convention 151 on labor relations in the public sector; and core labor standards covering freedom of association and free collective bargaining; an end to forced labor; elimination of child labor; and an end to discrimination at work.

Ratifying ILO Convention 144 is important as it provides the framework for tripartism and social dialogue in ASEAN member countries. The conference did not explicitly define tripartism and provide a framework for social dialogue. ILO Convention 151 was the subject of a panel discussion where the resource persons openly called for its ratification. Meanwhile, core labor standards was a recurring theme, especially with the acknowledged decline in trade union density across ASEAN.

In the course of the dialogue, workers revised their position several times with the hope of convincing governments and employers to soften their position. Workers offered to change the language to "work towards ratification of the ILO Conventions" instead of the direct call for ratification of ASEAN member states to indicate commitment. They still objected without explaining their position. Workers then moved to just "recognize that trade unions are calling for the ratification" of the said standards. But governments led by Indonesia, Malaysia and Myanmar and employers maintained their stubborn stance.

After the discussion on the conference statement, trade unions affiliated to Building and Wood Workers International (BWI) and Public Services International (PSI) along with NAGKAISA Labor Coalition expressed their strong objection to the final Conference Joint Statement for not living up to the spirit of tripartism and social dialogue. ###

20 October 2017

*Signed by ASEAN affiliates of:*

- *Building and Wood Workers International (BWI)*
- *Public Services International (PSI);*

*and, members of:*

- *NAGKAISA Labor Coalition, Philippines*