

Statement by Mr Tan Chuan-Jin, Minister of State for Manpower and National Development, Republic of Singapore, at the 101st Session of the International Labour Conference, 11 June 2012, 4.05 PM (SG Time), Geneva, Switzerland

Introduction

1. Mr President, let me first congratulate you on your election to the Presidency of the 101st session of the International Labour Conference.

Economic and Demographic Situation

2. This year's theme "Building a future with decent work" is a good reminder to all countries that creating meaningful employment is key to a sustainable cycle of economic growth, increasing standard of living, and socio-political stability. Having a competitive workforce and an open and conducive business environment is a key reason that enabled Singapore to recover quickly from the last global recession and achieve a low resident unemployment rate of 2.9% in 2011¹.

3. In the short to medium term, the global economic outlook is likely to remain sluggish with the uncertainty in the Eurozone, the jobless recovery in the US, and the economic slow-down of China and India. Like many other countries, our economy is intrinsically tied to the global economy and against this backdrop, our growth forecast for 2012 is a moderate 1 to 3%². In the longer term, Singapore and other countries which are facing low fertility rates will also have to grapple with the aging workforce and slower labour force growth.

¹ Ministry of Manpower, Labour Market Report, 2011

² [Ministry of Trade and Industry, 2012 GDP Growth Forecast](#)

4. To ensure that Singapore can enjoy inclusive growth for all while ensuring decent wages for decent work, we have adopted two key strategic thrusts to prepare for the future. Firstly, for productivity growth to be the key driver of growth in the decade ahead and secondly, ensuring that growth is inclusive.

National Productivity Drive to Achieve Sustainable & Inclusive Growth

5. The Singapore Government has set a target of achieving 2 to 3 per cent productivity growth per annum over this decade. This is really about making each company and worker more productive and hence more competitive. To achieve this goal, we have put in place various grants and incentives to help companies improve their productivity. We are also investing heavily in Continuing Education and Training to help our workers enhance their skills and be more productive.

Making Sure Our Growth Is Inclusive

6. To make sure our growth is inclusive, we have focused on low-wage and older workers. In 2007, the Government has introduced a key pillar in our social security landscape called Workfare, which provides support for low-wage workers. Workfare encourages low-wage workers to work and supplements their income and retirement savings. Workfare also encourages low-wage workers to enhance their skills and employability, so that they can enjoy sustainable wage increases.

7. In terms of enhancing employment opportunities and retirement adequacy for older workers, the Retirement and Re-employment Act has been enacted in January allowing workers to continue working beyond the retirement age so that they can earn a regular income and build up their retirement adequacy. It also provides employers with the flexibility to continue to tap on the contribution of their experienced older employees. To further encourage companies to continue to hire older Singaporean workers, the Special Employment Credit was introduced in 2011 and further enhanced this year, to provide employers with payouts for continued support to hire older Singaporean workers.

8. We will continue to work with our social partners to improve productivity, so that all Singaporeans, especially our low-wage workers, can look forward to better jobs and higher incomes.

Ratification of International Labour Organisation's Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 (No. 187)

9. Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) is also an important area of work. Since the reform of the Workplace Safety and Health (WSH) framework in 2005, Singapore has made significant progress on the WSH front as a result of regulatory reforms through the enactment of the WSH Act as well as greater industry ownership of WSH outcomes in areas such as industry capability building and standards setting. This has effectively brought down our fatality rate significantly from 4.9 fatalities per

100,000 workers in 2004 to 2.3 fatalities per 100,000 workers in 2011³. This is a result of our numerous efforts to put in place a strategic framework and plan to continuously promote and raise OSH standards in Singapore. The plan was developed together with our tripartite partners and industry stakeholders. It sets out our national vision and guides the tripartite efforts in ensuring a safe and healthy workplace for everyone.

10. Today, Singapore is pleased to announce our ratification of ILO Convention 187 on Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health. This ratification will cement our commitment to continually improve occupational safety and health outcomes for all workplaces and encourage further work to achieve our national WSH vision.

11. On the ASEAN front, we appreciate ILO's support in raising OSH standards in ASEAN. We will continue to work closely with ILO in collaborative projects with our fellow ASEAN member states and raise regional OSH performance.

National Archives of Singapore

Conclusion

12. I wish the 101st International Labour Conference, and all the participants, great success in all your deliberations.

³ Source: Workplace Safety and Health Report 2011.