

► 17th Asia-Pacific Regional Meeting

6–9 December 2022 | Singapore

Special Session | Information Note

The promotion and application of the Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy in Asia and the Pacific and the Arab States

► Background

The Bali Declaration adopted by ILO constituents of the Asia-Pacific and the Arab States at the 16th Asia and the Pacific Regional Meeting in 2016 indicated as policy priority for Member States to “maximiz[e] the opportunities for decent work arising from investment, trade and the operation of multinational enterprises, through the promotion and application of the ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy (MNE Declaration)”.

Since 2016, the ILO has provided constituents in the two regions with enhanced support to achieve the above-mentioned policy priority through several interventions, including awareness raising and capacity building, research, technical advice, support for the appointment process of national focal points for the promotion of the MNE Declaration, dialogue facilitation at the national and cross-border level, and support for collective action. All these interventions – based on the MNE Declaration¹ – are aimed at enhancing the capacity of Member States to harness the opportunities offered by trade and investment agreements and operations of multinational enterprises to advance decent work for all.

These interventions align as well to the 2021 ILO Global Call for Action for a Human-centred Recovery from the COVID-19 Crisis that is Inclusive, Sustainable and Resilient in which constituents committed “to fostering more resilient supply chains that contribute to: i) decent work, ii) sustainability of enterprises along the supply chain, including micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, iii) environmental sustainability, and iv) protection of and

respect for human rights in line with the three pillars of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy, supported by sustainable international trade and investment”.

The MNE Declaration provides the tripartite-agreed framework to encourage the positive contribution that multinational enterprises can make to economic and social progress and the realization of decent work for all. It positions this objective in the increasingly important global agenda of responsible business conduct and inclusive economic growth. Numerous ILO Member States have taken steps to appoint national focal points (Nepal and Pakistan) or similar processes to spearhead the promotion of the MNE Declaration at the national level. Some countries have developed and adopted national action plans on business and human rights (Japan, Pakistan, Thailand) with a strong emphasis on the protection and respect for labour rights in business operations. Others have underpinned these policy initiatives with development cooperation projects that include promoting the uptake of the principles of the MNE Declaration among MNEs in their country combined with activities and dialogues in countries of operations (China and Japan). Development cooperation projects have strengthened the outreach on the alignment between decent work and trade. The MNE Declaration is referenced in an increasing number of trade and investment agreements between Member States and other important trading partners, especially the European Union.

1 The MNE Declaration and associated information on its principles and applications are available at: www.ilo.org/mnedeclaration.

► Session objectives

The special session is part of a [regional follow-up mechanism](#) that was agreed by tripartite constituents in 2017.² According to the agreed follow-up actions, a regional report on the promotion and application of the MNE Declaration is prepared and discussed with ILO constituents at a special session of the ILO Regional Meetings. The regional reports are prepared based primarily on inputs received from governments, employers' and workers' organizations on the basis of a questionnaire. The special session provides an opportunity to discuss the latest report on "The promotion and application of the MNE Declaration in Asia and the Pacific and the Arab States", made available as background information for the special session of the 17th Asia and the Pacific Regional Meeting.

More specifically, the session will:

- provide a tripartite dialogue platform in which tripartite constituents from the Asia-Pacific and the Arab States regions can exchange experiences and identify opportunities and challenges for decent work and structural transformation that trade, investment and operations of multinational enterprises offer at national and regional levels;
- discuss concrete policy initiatives and other measures to promote the uptake of the principles of the MNE Declaration among all actors and support responsible business conduct;
- offer a venue for feedback on further promotional activities on the MNE Declaration and/or technical assistance required from the Office to ensure a stronger alignment between responsible business, trade, investment and a human-centred recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

► Possible points for discussion

1. In view of the impact of COVID-19 pandemic and emerging new crises impacting economies, workers, and enterprises in the regions, what are the positive contributions and difficulties for decent work and structural transformation that the operations of MNEs, and trade and investment more broadly, present for a human-centred recovery?
2. What are some concrete examples of how countries in the two regions have promoted the application of the principles of the MNE Declaration, and to guide and support responsible business conduct at the regional and national level? What is being done to identify, minimize and resolve some of the challenges?
3. What more can be done on the promotion and application of the MNE Declaration in the two regions?

2 [MNE Declaration, Annex II](#), March 2017 revision.