

**Action Plan as adopted by IndustriALL affiliates on 11 June 2019
in Singapore at the FES/IndustriALL Global Union
Asia Pacific Trade and Industrial Policy Meeting,
10 – 11 June 2019**

Introduction:

The Asia Pacific trade and Industrial policy meeting jointly organized by FES and IndustriALL Global Union witnessed active participation 45 trade union leaders and representatives of IndustriALL affiliates from the Asia Pacific region, representatives from FES, civil society experts and academics.

Trade union leaders expressed serious concerns that trade agreements in the Asia Pacific region significantly fall short of addressing genuine developmental needs and challenges faced by workers and trade unions. They affirmed the ten guiding principles and national and regional level strategies for trade union intervention in trade policy forums and processes as provided in the “**Action Plan: Towards the Trade for the Benefit of People**” adopted by the IndustriALL Global Union Executive Committee on 30 November 2018 in Mexico.

Action Plan: Towards the Trade for the Benefit of People in the Asia Pacific Region:

The meeting dedicated a session and evolved action plan of IndustriALL Asia Pacific affiliates in line with the trade union intervention strategies espoused in the Action plan, which was adopted by the Executive Committee.

Currently there are about 48 FTAs and Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA)/Economic Integration Agreements (EIA) which are in different stages negotiations in the Asia Pacific region. Some of the key new generation FTAs as listed below may be focused by IndustriALL affiliates for formulating their intervention strategies at national and regional level. Obviously this list is not exhaustive but an indicative list. Affiliates may choose to take action on most important FTA in their respective national context, depending on the national situation:

1. Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) – The negotiations were launched in 2012, so far 25 round of negotiations have taken place. RCEP is expected to be concluded by the end of 2019.
2. ASEAN-European Union (EU) - *Launched in 2007 and paused in 2009 to pave the way for bilateral agreements with ASEAN members, which are expected to mature as region-to-region FTA in future.*
3. China-Japan-Republic of Korea – The trilateral FTA was launched in 2013 and so far 15 rounds of negotiations were held.
4. India-EFTA FTA – Negotiations were launched in 2013 and so far 17 rounds of negotiations were held.
5. India-EU FTA - Negotiations were launched in 2007 and suspended in 2013. There are possibilities that the discussions may be revived
6. Indonesia-European Union (EU) FTA – Negotiations were launched in 2016 and so far 7 rounds of negotiations were held.
7. Philippines-European Union (EU) FTA– Launched in 2015 and so far two rounds were held.
8. Thailand-European Union (EU) FTA – Negotiations were launched in 2013. Since military takeover in March 2014 no negotiations were held. There are possibilities for renewal of talks soon.
9. Viet Nam-EFTA FTA – Launched in 2012 and so far 16 round of negotiations were held.
10. EU-Australia FTA – Negotiations were launched in 2018 and three rounds negotiations were held so far.

National level actions:

- 1) IndustriALL Global Union affiliates committed to build and strengthen trade union alliances at the national level, monitor ongoing negotiations of RCEP and/or other key free trade agreements currently negotiated by the respective countries and evolve national level action plans and intervention strategies. This will include joint initiatives of affiliates such as drafting position papers, advocacy work, union capacity building and network building at the national level.
- 2) There are reports that many countries in the region are looking to join CPTPP. Work at the national level to ensure that respective government does not join already concluded FTAs such as CPTPP. In countries that have already signed CPTPP, IndustriALL affiliates will effectively monitor the implementation of sustainable development provisions including

labour chapter and take proactive initiatives with and take coordinated actions with IndustriALL affiliates

- 3) As many of the provisions of free trade agreements affect almost all aspects of economic activities with deep implications for livelihood of different sections of the society, IndustriALL Global Union affiliates decided to build cross sectoral alliances at the national level with like minded farmers', women's, civil society organizations, academia and other active sections of the society which are challenging negative implications of free trade agreements, to strengthen efforts to win trade policy outcomes for the Benefit of People.
- 4) Effectively engage with the government at the national level demanding transparency and democratic process in the trade negotiations, making all negotiating documents to be made public and periodic meaningful public consultation.
- 5) Step up the efforts to enhance parliamentary oversight of trade negotiations by working with like-minded members of parliament in respective countries.
- 6) Intensify engagement on FTA related mechanisms such as domestic advisory groups coordinate and share information with IndustriALL affiliates in relevant FTA countries towards effective enforcement of labour provisions
- 7) Take advantage of government's commitments under European Union Generalized System of Trade Preferences (GSP) to raise issues of labour rights violations to defend workers' rights.
 - a. EU Standard GSP: India, Indonesia and Vietnam
 - b. EU GSP+ status: Mongolia, Pakistan, Philippines and Sri Lanka
 - c. EU's Everything but Arms (EBA): Bangladesh, Cambodia,

Regional level actions:

- 8) It is essential to send out a strong political message that trade agreements in the Asia Pacific region ignores genuine developmental needs of people and workers. Organize an Asia Pacific regional day of action to underscore trade unions concerns over negative implications of free trade agreements in the region. The regional day of action may include various actions of protest demonstration, conference, workshop and mass letters to the respective government.
- 9) Evolve coordinated strategy to engage with ongoing RCEP trade negotiations, which is expected to be concluded by the end of 2019. Affiliates present in the countries that are hosting the negotiations can take lead in organizing events around the negotiations with the participation of affiliates from other countries.
- 10) A regional level information sharing mechanism will be established among IndustriALL Asia Pacific affiliates to share information and hold strategic discussions.
- 11) Actively engage with Unions for Trade Justice an Asia Pacific Global Union network involving affiliates of IndustriALL Global Union, Education International, Public Services International, UNI Global Union and Building and Wood Workers' International.
- 12) Efforts will be taken to work in close cooperation with ITUC Asia Pacific
- 13) A coordination mechanism should be established to ensure that trade policy issues are raised by various regional level trade union networks such ASEAN Trade Union Council (ATUC), South Asia Regional Trade Union Council (SARTUC) in their respective activities.
- 14) Engage with regional forums such as Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation

(BIMSTEC) in order to highlight trade union concerns over unjust trade policy issues and to influence trade policy approaches of these forums for the benefit of people.

- 15) Take advantage of debate and actions around 2030 sustainable development goals (SDGs) implementation process and highlight in various national and regional forums how in many ways trade and investment agreements are forming hurdles in achieving SDG targets (particularly the Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic growth) and propose alternative trade policy approaches.
- 16) ILO's Asia Pacific forums for trade unions should be strategically utilized to highlight workers concerns over free trade agreements.
- 17) United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) is the regional development arm of the UN for the Asia-Pacific region plays a key role in influencing trade and development policies in the region. Active engagement of trade unions with UNESCAP will also greatly benefit influencing trade policy decisions in the region.
- 18) IndustriALL Asia Pacific affiliates endorse trade union and civil society actions around forthcoming RCEP negotiations at Melbourne, Australia on 30 June.
- 19) Share information emerging from forthcoming RCEP negotiations among IndustriALL Asia Pacific affiliates and evolve a common position and a memorandum of demands.
- 20) Hold regional day of action on 30th August on the occasion of L20 meeting in Tokyo to highlight trade union concerns over implications of free trade agreements. Organize rallies and demonstration across the region to mark the regional day of action and hand over demand letter drafted based on common position to relevant representative of the respective governments.