

Committee: International Labour Organization (ILO)

Agenda: Achieving the Decent Work Agenda through Reinforcement of Collective Agreements

Japan Worker's Representative

We are delighted, as the Worker's Representative of Japan, to take up the major theme of "Achieving the Decent Work Agenda Through Reinforcement of Collective Agreements" As a country with an industrial base, Japan is deeply committed to promoting decent work for all workers, one of the core pillars of the mandate of the International Labour Organization. We take into consideration that strengthening collective agreements is a priority factor in achieving the goals of the Decent Work Agenda, as it would ensure a decent wage, job security, and safe working conditions for all workers.

“Achieving the Decent Work Agenda Through Reinforcement of Collective Agreements” adopted by the ILO in 1999, aimed at promoting employment, protecting workers’ rights, improving the overall social protection, and improving the social dialogue. Collective agreements are the principal of this agenda, since they take into consideration workers’ and employers’ negotiations to put terms that make certain square and fair treatment in the workplace.

Collective bargaining has a long tradition in Japan, and our unions are very important in defending workers’ rights, especially in education, manufacturing, and healthcare industries.

However, the challenge has been to ensure that collective agreements are accessible and serve the interest of all workers, especially in the informal sector and among small and medium-sized enterprises where union representation is usually weak. Strengthening collective agreements in this respect contributes to closing such gaps in coverage and extending the benefits of decent work to all workers, regardless of their employment status or employment sector.

Japan takes cognizance that collective agreements hold an indispensable potentiality in safeguarding and further promoting workers' interests. The government is determined to undertake the dissemination of collective agreements within Japan in practice. Japan had to pass several major initiatives through both its houses over the years for better adaptation and protection of collective bargaining. In doing so, it ensures the improvement in wages, health, safety, and conditions of the working environment among workers.

The main labour legislation concerning the protection of labour rights in Japan has been the Labour Standards Act. In addition, collective agreements are legally binding in Japan. Challenges in Japan: aging of the population, labour market flexibility, and an increasing number of non-regular workers-part-time, temporary, and contract workers-not taking part in collective bargaining procedures undermine the capability to exercise their decent work rights. The growing gig economy also poses a problem, as most of them are not subjected to the realm of traditional collective agreements.

Japan's government has moved to address these challenges. In 2018, the government passed the "Work Style Reform" laws that improved working conditions and put a cap on overtime, while pursuing more inclusive labor market policies. Though progress has been realized, Japan recognizes that much more can be done to reinforce the role of collective agreements in achieving decent work, especially for vulnerable and non-regular workers.

The Worker's Representative of Japan strongly believes that strengthening the role of collective agreements is indispensable for the Decent Work Agenda. So we propose these precautions:

**Promote the Inclusiveness of Collective Agreements:**

We urge the extension of collective-labor bargaining rights to non-regular workers. This requires unions and employers to work together in guaranteeing representation for part-time and gig workers either through new representation frameworks, or adaptation of labor-negotiation practices to modern labor market conditions.

**Encouragement of Cooperation between Employers and Employees:** The social dialogue among employers and workers is an important aspect when arriving at collective agreements. We work for the introduction of policies that help build cooperation between trade unions, employers, and the government. It includes developing an institution of workplace councils; enhancing communication at local and national levels.

**Strengthen Legal Protection of Collective Agreements:** We strongly believe that their effectiveness is essentially dependent on the extent to which collective agreements are observed. The ILO, hence, is advised to help its member states strengthen legal protection for workers to negotiate and exercise their right to collective agreements in the informal sectors and among the SMEs.

**Support Capacity Building and Education for Workers:** For collective agreements to work effectively, workers need to understand their rights; information on how to negotiate a collective bargaining agreement will always be available. We support initiatives to train workers, unions, and employers on the benefits of collective agreements and best practices in negotiating terms that promote decent work.

Concluding, Japan is committed to the promotion of the Decent Work Agenda, along with the reinforcement of collective agreements as an instrument for the betterment of conditions at work and in safeguarding the protection of workers' rights. Despite what was so far achieved in terms of great outputs, there should be continuous effort made to meet the new challenges at global labor market levels.

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