

Statement
by
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Distinguished colleagues,
Honourable Ministers of Labour of the Asia-Pacific region,
Esteemed guests,

Unfortunately, I was unable to attend this year's event in person. Nevertheless, I am pleased to have the opportunity to share a few remarks with you.

What message we, the Labour Ministers of Asia and the Pacific, have for the rest of the world?

In his book *The Histories*, Herodotus recounts an event that took place more than 2,500 years ago. This historical episode helps us answer that question.

The Kingdom of Lydia attacked the Persian Empire. The result was the victory of Cyrus the Great, King of Persia. Cyrus did not kill the defeated king. Instead, he asked him:

“Who encouraged you to attack my country and choose enmity instead of friendship?”

Today, the same question remains, a question that echoes throughout history:

Why war? Why hostility instead of friendship?

But war is only the tip of the iceberg. Beneath it lies a global system based on conflict and exploitation. This system relies on the extraction of cheap energy, raw minerals, agricultural products, and inexpensive labour. But at what cost does this “cheapness” come? The entire structure is built upon the exploitation of workers and farmers across Asia and the Global South.

As Labour Ministers of Asia and the Pacific, we must unite to stop this cycle of exploitation and war. Today’s global order depends on military capitalism, a system that secures its dominance through violence, a system in which some people can remain wealthy only if others are deprived.

We see the consequences of this destructive path in the genocide in Gaza, the devastation of Lebanon, Iraq, and Syria, and the economic plundering of Venezuela. In Iran, too, we have repeatedly been targeted because of our vast oil and gas reserves, mineral resources, and sensitive geopolitical position.

However, another path exists. The creation of BRICS, in which Asian countries have played a leading role, is one example of this alternative path. As explicitly stated in the group’s joint declaration, BRICS members seek to create a world rooted in cooperation, peace, and mutual benefit. The declaration states that their goal is: “to build a harmonious world with lasting peace and shared prosperity.” The BRICS approach, along with similar organizations, offers a way to transform this unjust global system.

In Asia, since the Second World War, we have witnessed remarkable economic and industrial growth without resorting to colonialism or exploitation. Our progress has been based not on conflict and exploitation but on the principles of cooperation and mutual respect.

In line with the goal of “building a harmonious world with lasting peace,” I propose, as I stated during the opening session, that next year’s theme be: “War and the Workers of the World.”

A conference in which we condemn war and use every capacity available to us to prevent it.

To achieve global peace, we must change the way we view the world. There is a profound concept in Islam and other religions called barakah (blessing), which teaches that the world’s blessings are limitless and continuously increasing, and therefore can be shared among all humanity. This vision stands in contrast to the prevailing worldview of the current global system, a worldview based on a destructive illusion: that the gain of one nation can only come through the loss of another. So, let us choose the path of blessing. Let us choose abundant good

instead of exploitation. Let us come together and, as the Asia-Pacific Group, cooperate in conveying this message to the world. And let us recite a verse from the Qur'an: **وَتَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوَىٰ وَلا تَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ**

“And cooperate with one another in righteousness and piety, and do not cooperate in sin and aggression. And fear Allah.” (Qur'an, Surah Al-Ma'idah: 2)