

Draft

NEAT WORKING GROUP TOPIC ON INCLUSIVE GROWTH (PHASE II)

“Social Welfare Policies in East Asia:

Sharing Experiences for a New Ground of Regional Cooperation”

1. The importance of “inclusive growth” has become a significant part of emerging consensus on recent development discourse, as many countries have experienced economic growth process without significant improvement in income equality, poverty elimination and other socio-economic shortcomings. Economic development is necessary for the improvement of quality of people’s life in every country. For economic development to be more equitable and sustainable, the process should be accompanied by the development of social welfare.

Accordingly, policy makers need to be more serious in addressing problems related to social welfare. The UN defines social welfare as activities organized to help individual and communities to meet their basic needs and improve their welfare in accordance with the interest of family and society. Basically, social welfare is a field of activities involving organized activities carried out by government, market and civil society or what is more commonly known as “welfare mix”.

In the more developed East Asian countries such as Japan and South Korea, social welfare has become an important part of their development strategies. Some ASEAN countries have achieved remarkable economic growth, but they still have to fulfil their development needs in terms of narrowing economic gaps and reducing poverty.

Social welfare is an important part of a country’s social development strategies for eradicating poverty and reducing social deprivation. In order to have sustainable and effective results, it needs to be implemented in combination with other approaches within the overall context of social and economic development. Social welfare policies should be put integrated with the broader macro-economic development policy.

2. The major objective of this Working Group (WG) is to bring together participants of the ASEAN Plus Three (APT) countries to share their individual country experiences on their social welfare policies, as part of efforts to promote inclusive growth in the context of regional cooperation. We take the view that setting focus on social welfare policies in the APT countries will enhance our understanding of inclusive growth, which can in turn serve the purpose of promoting greater regional cooperation in the APT countries.

3. Participants

The ASEAN Plus Three countries and ASEAN Secretariat are each invited to nominate an expert to attend the WG meeting. NEAT Country Coordinators of the ASEAN Plus countries are expected to nominate 1 (one) expert on their respective country's **social welfare policies** to NEAT Indonesia no later than 11 May 2013.

Each participant is expected to provide a write-up (of around 3,000 words) using the following questions as a guide:

- a. What are the key features of your country's **social welfare policies, especially in social protection**? (Including social security, etc. Please highlight key initiatives or programs).
- b. What are the successes and challenges of these policies?
- c. What are the main features of your **country's experience on social welfare policies** that in your view can be shared at the regional level to promote regional economic cooperation as well as the building of a people-centered East Asian Community?

The participants will also discuss a draft of the WG report with relevant recommendations that will be submitted to the NEAT Annual Conference.

4. Co-Sponsor

This WG is co-sponsored by NEAT Indonesia and NEAT Singapore. The Indonesian side is led by Dr. Evi Fitriani (Head, International Relations Department, University of Indonesia) while the Singapore side is led by Prof. John Wong (Professorial Fellow, East Asian Institute, National University of Singapore).

5. Dates

The WG will meet in Jakarta on Thursday 13 June 2013. Participants are expected to arrive on 12 June 2013. They may depart the city on 14 June 2013.

6. Hospitality

NEAT Indonesia supported by Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, will host the WG meeting. In line with past practice, NEAT Indonesia will provide accommodation (for two nights) and full-board meeting package for one participant each from the APT countries and the ASEAN Secretariat.

We look forward to your nominations.

NEAT Indonesia