

ASEAN-OSHNET WORKSHOP ON "FITNESS TO WORK PRACTICES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALIGNMENT – OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH CONTROL IN THE WORKPLACE AND WORKER READINESS"

7th – 8th JUNE 2022

**Opening Remarks by Guest of Honour
Yang Berhormat Dato Seri Setia Awang Haji Abdul Mokti
bin Haji Mohd Daud
Minister at the Prime Minister's Office**

1. Bismillaah Hirr Rahmaan Nirr Raheem

- Yang Mulia Awg Haji Azhar bin Haji Yahya, Permanent Secretary, Department of Energy in the Prime Minister's Office, as Interim Chief Executive Officer of SHENA;
- Yang Mulia Ir. Haji Mohd Hatta bin Zakaria, Deputy Director General (Occupational Health), Ministry of Human Resources, Malaysia, as the ASEAN-OSHNET Chair;
- Mr. Niyom Songkaew, Director General of Department of Labour Protection and Welfare, Ministry of Labour, Thailand, as ASEAN-OSHNET Secretariat;
- Senior Delegates and Focal Points from the ASEAN Member States, delegates and speaker from the International Labour Organisation (ILO), ASEAN Secretariat, ASEAN-OSHNET Secretariat, Distinguished Guests from various agencies and organisations joining us virtually and in person here today.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentleman,

2. Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh, Salam Sejahtera and a very good morning.
3. It is my honour to welcome you all to the first ASEAN OSHNET Event, hosted by SHENA on behalf of Brunei Darussalam on a very important topic "To Review Fitness to Work Practices and Opportunities for Alignment – Occupational Health Control in the Workplace and Worker Readiness". It is indeed a pleasure to deliver the opening address. I wish to begin by emphasizing the importance of this workshop, as part of the ASEAN OSHNET Work Programme 2021-2025. As reflected in the work plan, this workshop is placed under the thematic area "Strengthen Occupational Health in the Workplace", which contributes to the realization of ASCC Blueprint 2025's Strategic Measures to support accelerated implementation among ASEAN Member State to extend, coverage, accessibility, availability, comprehensiveness, quality, equality, affordability and sustainability of social services and social protection.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentleman,

4. As been reported by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), globally, work-related fatalities due to occupational diseases are found to exceed fatalities caused by occupational accidents. Statistically, in 2017, each year 2.78 million workers die from occupational accidents, of which around 2.4 million of these fatalities were attributed due to work-related diseases every year.
5. Therefore, it is apparent that treatment and diagnosis of occupational diseases require competent medical practitioners equipped with the necessary knowledge, not

only to successfully treat patients but also to initiate the right level of discussion, including reporting to relevant authorities. On a similar note, workers should also be empowered to have access to information and compensation, with no discrimination when reporting such concerns. Indeed, each fatality incurs cost and unmeasurable human suffering and losses to families all over the world. A more thorough examination of workers' fitness to work is very much called for, not only at the commencement of their employment, but also at regular pre-determined intervals, depending on the nature of work and health risks they are exposed to.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentleman,

6. In Brunei, we face similar concerns across the various industries where there is potential for workers to be impacted by occupational diseases due to acute or chronic exposure that can affect their fitness to work. Hence, it is imperative for workers to be medically examined on a routine basis to ensure pre-conditions are diagnosed early and that the fitness to work remains relevant to the job tasks.
7. On that note, SHENA as the regulator for workplace safety and health, with the support of the Ministry of Health, is currently drafting the Medical Examination Regulations, which will aid the enforcement of suitable routined medical examinations to ensure workers receive the right level of medical support as well as compliance by employers.
8. ILO have recommended that to tackle the "invisibility" of occupational diseases, it calls for a multidisciplinary effort with active participation of workers and their representatives, employers, governments and occupational safety and health (OSH) professionals. By addressing this concern, we stand to have the opportunity to improve workers' health within the workplace in addition to improving how businesses run whilst ensuring the safety and health of the workforce.
9. With all that said, I would like to call upon all the ASEAN Member States and their representatives who have joined us today, to pledge their support in delivering a successful workshop, with regional integration and effective collaboration, that not only prioritizes the occupational safety and health of our workers but also remains aligned to improving the work practices within the workplace, and delivering on the objectives of the workshop.
10. To conclude, I would like to thank SHENA and its officers' efforts in facilitating this very important workshop. I also would like to take this opportunity to thank all our distinguished guests and representatives from various agencies and ASEAN Member States for joining us today. With that, I wish you all a fruitful and productive workshop and hope this platform will help integrate everyone's priorities in aligning fitness to work practices and opportunities.
11. Wabillahi Taufek Walhidayah, Wassalamua `Alaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh.