



THE ROAD TO DOHA

by

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A. Introduction

(...)

Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning!

It is a great honour and privilege for me to be here today in the beautiful country of Lao People's Democratic Republic.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the Social Security Organization of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, led by its Director General Mr. Prasong Vongkhamchanh, as well as the ASSA leadership for once again inviting me to participate in an ASSA Board meeting.

I am convinced that this will be a further important step in strengthening the long-standing relations between our two Associations.

I am especially grateful to be here because I believe this is the first time for an ISSA representative to speak in this country. Thank you very much for this opportunity, which I hope will be the starting point of a much closer relationship between the ISSA and your institution, Mr. Vongkhamchanh.

Let me also congratulate the ASEAN Social Security Association for its continuing pivotal role in the development of social security protection in the ASEAN region.

By fostering a greater exchange of experiences and mutual cooperation, the ASSA is promoting a culture of learning and sharing among its member institutions in this dynamic region.

As a global association of 340 social security institutions from 160 countries, this is also one of the major objectives of the ISSA.

I am therefore also pleased that many of ASSA's member institutions are also members of the ISSA and I very much look forward to the day when all ASSA members have joined the ISSA.

The special value and importance of the ISSA is embodied in our signature event: the ISSA World Social Security Forum that will take place in Doha, Qatar from 10-15 November.

More than 1,000 policy-makers and representatives of social security institutions will meet at this most important global social security event. For one week, Doha will be the worldwide capital of social security.

This year's World Forum will be focussing on the crucial and exciting theme of how to make the vision of excellence in social security administration a reality everywhere.

Importantly, this theme has not been chosen arbitrarily, but reflects much of the recent efforts of the ISSA on the Road to Doha. In this regard, I will focus on three major points in my speech today.

First, I would like to explain why the ISSA believes that the theme of excellence in social security administration is vital.

Thereafter, I will present some of the underlying evidence that demonstrates the importance of high-performing social security institutions in responding to short-term and longer-term challenges and in building the future of social security.

Finally, it will be my pleasure to announce an important innovation in the ISSA programme of services that will be launched at the World Social Security Forum: the ISSA Centre for Excellence that will strengthen the practical support the ISSA provides to each member institution.

(1. why excellence)

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your Association and your presence at this meeting here strongly conveys your commitment to carry on with the challenging work of social security administration and to thereby strengthen the important contribution social security makes to economic development, employment, citizen prosperity and social solidarity.

This commitment is very much in line with the vision of *Dynamic Social Security* that guides the activities of the ISSA. This vision has two important components.

First, it emphasizes that social security must strengthen protection and extend coverage. At the same time, however, social security must broaden its scope to also focus on preventive and proactive social security approaches. These approaches that invest in people with a view to promoting health, supporting employment and enhancing empowerment optimize the positive contribution of social security to human capital development, economic growth and social inclusion.

The second component of the ISSA's vision is the emphasis on excellence in social security administration as a condition for the success of social security systems, for adapting them to short-term shocks and longer-term structural challenges, and for working towards protective, preventive, proactive and accessible social security schemes.

(2. recent evidence)

This ISSA vision is reflected in the recent developments and trends in Asia and the Pacific and worldwide, which have clearly demonstrated the key role played by social security administrations in responding to challenges, extending protection and in working towards more proactive and preventive approaches.

Increasingly fragmented labour markets, population migration, the increasing frequency and severity of external shocks due to economic volatility or natural disasters, new health care and disability challenges and the ageing of the population all require social security systems in Asia to adapt and to seek innovative solutions.

These challenges are being tackled through increasingly forward looking approaches and administrative innovations.

Many social security systems have, for example, transformed their administrative procedures to include more tailored solutions and greater flexibility to respond to the specific situations of different population groups.

In addition, an increasing number of social security administrations are strengthening their focus on preventive health and pro-active return-to-work measures.

Remarkable progress in extending coverage in the region has been based both on political will and innovations by social security institutions. New approaches reflect an increasing differentiation of groups made possible by innovative ICT solutions and management techniques that tailor rules and procedures to the specific situations of uncovered groups.

Social security administrations in Asia have also played a positive role in national responses to various crises.

In fact, social security systems have adopted effective short-term measures to diminish the social impact of the economic and financial crisis and are taking preparatory measures for future economic downturns in an environment of continued worldwide economic volatility.

In addition, social security institutions have been playing a key role in responses to an increasing number of natural disasters. These effective responses are made possible by innovative risk management approaches or business continuity plans that have become much more commonplace.

These responses have been facilitated by the proactive application of new management techniques and the effective and efficient use of ICT. A focus has, for example, been on achieving improved coordination and higher efficiency. Notable approaches have been through merging certain services in one organization, moving to uniform quality levels and introducing performance measurement.

The adoption of appropriate ICT solutions, such as smart cards, has facilitated access, reduced error and led to efficiency improvements. E-services continue to revolutionize the delivery of services by enabling personalized responses to individual needs at lower costs.

This commitment to high performance and innovation is also reflected in the progress achieved in the ASEAN region. Let me just mention a few:

- Thailand's success in achieving universal health and pension coverage is globally recognized.
- Indonesia is implementing an impressive and bold plan to integrate its social security programmes and to realize universal social security coverage.
- Malaysia has doubled its efforts to enhance its preventive health and proactive return-to-work measures.
- The 4P conditional cash transfer programme of the Philippines has set a standard for the region in implementing anti-poverty programmes.
- The "Text SSS" service of the Philippine Social Security System has been praised as a visionary application of technology.
- And Singapore's "My Cpf: The CPF Service Transformation" has won the 2011 World Summit Award as one of the five most outstanding best practices in e-Government.

But importantly, the evidence as regards the importance of excellence in social security administration for social security progress can not only be found in Asia, it is a truly global issue. In fact, the ISSA will present a report on trends in social security during the World Social Security Forum in Doha in this regard.

Limited time does not allow me to go in detail here, but examples can be found in all regions.

For example, in Europe and the Americas, integrated information systems have facilitated the development of new benefits that are based on the coordination of multiple institutions, such as conditional anti-poverty cash transfer schemes or return to work programmes.

In Africa and Asia, the innovative use of mobile technologies has facilitated the extension of coverage through overcoming challenges of geographical isolation, limited infrastructure and high costs of bank transfers.

The efforts of social security administrations in the Americas to communicate with the public and educate communities on social security to build a "social security culture" have empowered communities and contributed to better protection and support for social security.

The evidence of recent trends in Asia and worldwide therefore demonstrate the key contribution of social security administrations to facilitate social security responses to short-term shocks and longer-term structural challenges, and to the extension of coverage and the increasing use of pro-active and preventive approaches.

Clearly, social security administrations will only be able to play this positive role based on a firm commitment to high performance, good governance and innovative capacity that allows them to constantly seek further improvements within their mandates.

This is, ladies and gentlemen, what the ISSA calls a commitment to excellence.

(3. Centre for Excellence)

For the ISSA as the global Association of social security administrations, the call is therefore to effectively support its member institutions to work towards high performance and good governance as well as to innovate with a view to proactively promoting social security improvements.

The ISSA must assist its members to make the vision of excellence a reality everywhere.

To achieve this objective, the World Social Security Forum will be a milestone in the history of the ISSA services.

To enable the ISSA to be a more effective partner of each and every member institution in working towards high performance and good governance, the ISSA has been preparing a complete new package of comprehensive knowledge and support services that will be launched during the World Forum: the ISSA Centre for Excellence.

The services of the Centre will be based on a number of ISSA Guidelines that are internationally recognized professional standards in social security administration prepared under the auspices of the ISSA Technical Commissions.

You may recall that I introduced the first set of ISSA guidelines on good governance to you at my last participation in your Board meeting. The feedback from the global ISSA membership to these guidelines, which were launched in 2010, has been highly positive and encouraging.

Let me just quote a few responses to a survey conducted by the ISSA:

- 1. We shared the Guidelines with the Board. It led to the assessment and review of our investment policy.*
- 2. The Guidelines provided ammunition to enable the staff to go to the Board and suggest their implementation.*
- 3. We have developed our own quality guidelines with the support of and reference to the ISSA Guidelines.*
- 4. By using the transparency guidelines, we were able to publish our institution's first Annual Report in 2011. The Guidelines enabled us to communicate our work to government and other stakeholders.*

Drawing inspiration from these very encouraging results, the ISSA in the current triennium 2011-2013 has developed seven new sets of professional guidelines for social security administration. These are the ISSA Guidelines on:

1. Service quality
2. Information and communication technology

3. Investment of social security funds
4. Contribution collection and compliance
5. Prevention of occupational risks
6. Return to work and reintegration
7. Workplace health promotion

Importantly, the ISSA Centre for Excellence will go well beyond that of simply providing knowledge of excellence by means of the ISSA Guidelines, but it will also provide a range of innovative support services to assist each member institution in implementing improvements:

- Each Guideline is accompanied by an on-line self-assessment tool that allows member institutions to assess their situation against the guidelines benchmark and to establish a prioritized action plan;
- An ISSA Academy consisting of workshops and a diploma programme offers a variety of learning and exchange platforms on challenges, experiences and solutions when working towards excellence;
- ISSA Technical Support facilitates implementing improvements by offering support services by the ISSA Secretariat, access to experiences and support by member institutions and information on external experts;
- Finally, member institutions that have successfully implemented ISSA Guidelines can apply for recognition by the ISSA of their achievements.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The ISSA Centre for Excellence will be a milestone for the ISSA as it opens a new chapter in the ISSA's relations with its members.

It will significantly increase the practical value of ISSA membership by providing members with a roadmap to excellence.

And by effectively supporting the initiatives of its member institutions, the ISSA will through the Centre also promote the further development of social security schemes towards the vision of Dynamic Social Security.

On the road to Doha, the ISSA has built an important new programme of services.

The World Forum will no doubt be an important moment for the global ISSA membership.

However, it will only be a point in time on our journey to make the vision of excellence in social security a reality everywhere.

And you can count on the ISSA to support you in this journey.