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Union-Child  
UNI-APRO CONFERENCE TO TACKLE CHILD LABOUR PROBLEM

KUALA LUMPUR, June 3 (Bernama) -- Eradication of child labour is one of the major issues to be discussed at the three-day Union Network International-Asia Pacific Regional Organisation (UNI-APRO) conference which began here today.

Citing an International Labour Organisation report, UNI-APRO president Joseph De Bruyn said 246 million children were involved in unacceptable forms of child labour of which 179 million, mostly children under 15 years, were in hazardous employment such as mining, fishing and construction.

About 8.4 million children are trapped in slavery, trafficking, forced recruitment for armed conflict, prostitution and pornography.

"Sixty per cent of working children live in the Asia Pacific region," De Bruyn said in his remarks at the opening of the regional conference by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad here.

He said that since most of the children were in the informal economy often not recognised or protected under the legal and regulatory frameworks of the labour market, it would be a difficult struggle to eliminate the problem of child labour.

He said that these children performing unacceptable labour should be at school, receiving the education that they would need to be successful in a globalised world.

"Their frequently unemployed parents would be better engaged in performing this work for proper remuneration so that they could support their families, including their children's education, in a normal way," he said.

Apart from that, the conference will focus their attention on recent developments in Myanmar and the labour situation there.

De Bruyn also said that it was hoped that the meeting would develop conclusions which would provide UNI-APRO with a number of strategic objectives for the region in the future.

These include seeking a social dimension to the globalisation process; seeking global agreements with multinational corporations operating in the region and increasing the empowerment of women in employment.

The meeting is being attended by some 500 delegates representing two million UNI members in the Asia Pacific.

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