Tripartism has been described as a strong weapon to help workers progress at their workplace and keep Singapore competitive for investors and businesses.

On 15 November 2017 at the NTUC Ordinary Delegates’ Conference (ODC), tripartism took centerstage during a special Labour Movement (LM) Conversations dialogue which involved union leaders, Cabinet ministers and employers’ representatives.

**Tripartism**

Emphasising the importance of tripartism to meet current economic challenges, Manpower Minister Lim Swee Say explained, “What’s important for us to recognise is that as a Labour Movement, we want to support a Government that is pro-people. As a Government, we must support a Labour Movement that is pro-worker.”

As long as we have a pro-people Government and a pro-worker Labour Movement working together with a strong symbiotic relationship, I believe that the future of tripartism will be bright.”

Manpower Minister Lim Swee Say

Added Singapore National Employers Federation (SNEF) President Robert Yap, “We are in a very unique tripartite relationship that we must protect, cherish and transform to be ready for the future. We employers pledge full support to this tripartite movement, and by working together, we can all have a better future.”

**LM Conversation’s Significance**

Summing up the 90-minute dialogue, NTUC Secretary-General (SG) Chan Chun Sing said the LM Conversations at the ODC demonstrated how tripartism helps Singapore stand in good stead in the global league of economic competition.

SG Chan revealed that the trade unions will continue to play an important role in helping to translate the 23 Industry Transformation Maps (ITMs) for the future economy.

“All the industry transformation maps at the highest level will not create any miracles until we translate them down to each individual and company. That is why NTUC will organise all our unions and U Associate into the 23 ITM clusters to make sure we support the work of each ITM to translate them into better jobs and better skills for workers. That is our commitment to the tripartite partners and we look forward to working with them to bring this about,” stressed SG Chan.

**Tripartite Staff Exchanges**

Meanwhile, officers from the LM, SNEF and Ministry of Manpower (MOM) are getting a taste of how the tripartite partners work together through cross attachments under the Tripartite Staff Exchange Programs (TSEP).

The secondment has provided insights on how MOM and the Civil Service operate and allows me to better connect with officers from the various MOM Divisions.”

Mr Nur Azarudin Putra Mohamed Jufri who was seconded to the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) from NTUC’s Industrial Relations Department

Mr Wong Cixian, a senior industrial relations officer with MOM who was seconded to the LM said: “LM is more than just unions. It includes the social enterprises and different platforms for different groups of workers. It is a big network for the working people.”

Mr Freddy Liew, manager at SNEF’s Centre for Research and Information, likewise attached to the LM, said, “LM is a big body with many different limbs. Each has its own role to play. LM is always evolving to stay representative yet not losing its focus on helping the working people.”

Tripartite partners pledge to work together to help workers and ensure Singapore’s continued competitiveness
On 31 July 2017, tripartite partners launched the new Tripartite Standards (TS) initiative to identify and recognise employers who are committed to implement progressive employment practices. Jointly developed by the Ministry of Manpower (MOM), National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) and Singapore National Employers Federation (SNEF), each Tripartite Standard specifies verifiable and actionable practices in various key areas of employment that employers can voluntarily adopt.

Speaking at the launch event, Mrs Josephine Teo, Second Minister for Manpower, said, “Companies that meet the Tripartite Standards stand out from the rest in a positive way, and we want to help them draw the attention of more jobseekers so they can impact more lives positively.” Adopting the Tripartite Standards enhances employers’ ability to attract and retain talent and shows their commitment to raising Singapore’s employment standards to build better workplaces for all employees.

As of 31 December 2017, more than 500 employers have adopted at least one of the five Tripartite Standards rolled out so far:

**Tripartite Standard on Employment of Term Contract Employees**
- Treat all term contracts of service of at least 14 days which are renewed within one month after the previous contract as continuous service.
- Provide term contract employees with leave benefits and appropriate notice periods, based on the cumulative length of service.
- Provide term contract employees with training to perform their jobs effectively.

**Tripartite Standard on Recruitment Practices**
- State only selection criteria related to qualifications, skills, knowledge and experience required for the job within recruitment advertisements.
- Use job application forms that request only for relevant information required to assess an applicant’s suitability for the job.
- Use a set of relevant and objective selection criteria consistently for shortlisting and selecting candidates.
- Train HR practitioners, line managers and supervisors with recruitment responsibilities to conduct fair and unbiased interviews.

**Tripartite Standard on Grievance Handling**
- Put in place and communicate to employees a grievance handling procedure that:
  - States clearly the appropriate authority to hear the appeal and a reasonable time period for action to be taken.
  - Gives the employee the right to bring the unresolved dispute to the next level or request for the union’s assistance, where applicable.
- Train supervisors and relevant staff to manage employee feedback and grievances and work with the union if the company is unionised.

**Tripartite Standard on Flexible Work Arrangements**
- Appoint a member of the senior management to champion Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs).
- Inform employees about the types of FWAs that they can request for, the processes to do so and the employer’s expectations on the responsible use of FWAs.
- Communicate outcomes of FWA applications to the employees in a timely manner, and document them properly.
- Train supervisors to evaluate FWA applications and to manage and appraise employees on FWAs fairly.

**Tripartite Standard on Procurement of Services from Media Freelancers**
- Have written contracts agreed upon and acknowledged by both parties before media freelancers start rendering their services.
- Pay media freelancers based on the agreed payment period when payment milestones are met.
- Resolve disputes between parties via negotiation and mediation first.
- Cover media freelancers with insurance if required to offer their services on set and/or location as specified by the companies for the project.

To find out more about the Tripartite Standards and how to sign up, please visit www.tafep.sg or email ts@tafep.sg. Employers can also approach TAFEP, NTUC or SNEF for assistance on meeting the requirements of the Tripartite Standards.
Since the launch of the SGSecure movement in September 2016, Singapore has seen greater public awareness on the threat of terrorism. Workplaces too, need to play their part and raise their preparedness and response capabilities. Many terror attacks including those of Barcelona and London have affected several workplaces (e.g. resorts, retail and F&B outlets) had to shut down to facilitate recovery. Being prepared can go a long way, including having a backup plan to overcome disruptions and continue business operations.

At the National Security Conference (NSC) on 26 September 2017, graced by Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean, tripartite partners launched the SGSecure Guide for Workplaces and the enhanced bizSAFE framework to help businesses be prepared.

Developed in consultation with industry partners, the guide contains steps that businesses can take to prepare the workplace, protect the workplace, and partner the community. Businesses can also tap on the enhanced bizSAFE to increase their risk management capabilities against the terror threat.

During a panel discussion at the NSC, panelists from both private and government sectors shared with participants their insights on the importance of robust contingency plans, complemented with a ready workforce, in minimizing costly disruptions to business operations and the practicality of such plans in the business world.

Companies which have already begun the SGSecure journey

“As part of Ya Kun’s training for staff, outlet supervisors and area managers gather every two months or so at the company’s town hall meeting where they discuss emergency preparedness measures, among other things. Managers and supervisors disseminate the information from the meetings to the workers at its 64 outlets across the island. Employees are also reminded regularly to look out for any suspicious characters.” (Excerpt from Today, 22 September 2017)

“With terrorists setting their sights on soft targets with a high concentration of people, food and beverage company Timbre Group is not taking any chances. All its operations management staff have received first aid and fire extinguisher training in the past three years or are scheduled to go for such training. Early this year, the company has taken steps to make its management more aware of security threats. Its operations management is told, for example, to download the SGSecure mobile app to keep informed.”

(Excerpt from The Straits Times, 27 September 2017)

What can businesses do?

Start the SGSecure journey with these 4 easy steps:

1. Appoint and register an SGSecure rep at www.mom.gov.sg/sgsecure
2. Encourage employees to install the SGSecure app to receive important alerts during major emergencies
3. Brief employees on the emergency escape routes and places to hide during an incident
4. Download and display the “Run, Hide, Tell” and “Press, Tie, Tell” advisories to educate employees on how to respond in times of crises

Going further with the Enhanced bizSAFE

To assist companies to build capabilities to become SGSecure-ready, MOM, Ministry of Home Affairs, SkillsFuture Singapore and Workplace Safety and Health Council have also enhanced the bizSAFE framework to incorporate SGSecure elements. Find out more at www.wshc.org.

For more information, please visit www.mom.gov.sg/sgsecure.