Question 1: What can be done to compliment economic growth and job creation in a harmonious way?

Steve Marshall began by saying that there is a need to understand what the labour market is, what is its size, its shape, and scope. There are currently no statistics in this regard. One of the first priorities is to do a labour force survey to understand the nature of Myanmar’s working population. Beyond that, there are generally immediate issues, medium term and long term issues. The immediate needs relate to rural and ethnic areas, but in the long term there is need for the creation of decent jobs, and to use foreign direct investment (FDI) to build a profitable society. There is also a need to examine the education system to ensure that young people have the tools to join and be part of a vibrant labour market, which is not currently the case.

Question 2: In terms of the rural-urban divide, approximately 70% of young people live in rural areas. How can they gain access to the new opportunities, and how can they receive necessary skills training?

Mr Marshall said that it won’t be easy. Firstly, it must be recognised that there won’t be industrial jobs for everyone, everywhere. Instead, there should be a focus on value added agricultural activity, but also the potential issue of young people needing to internally migrate for work, which is a complex issue.

Question 3: Turning to Myanmar’s youth who have emigrated overseas, for example to elsewhere in ASEAN, or further afield to Australia, Japan, the US or Europe, should they now consider returning to Myanmar?

Sandar Soe believes it depends on the availability of jobs. Now that sanctions are being removed, there may be new opportunities. However, if high quality jobs do not exist, then there is no reason for them to return. This could be resolved by FDI which could benefit the current work-force of approximately 30 million. In the longer term, as sanctions are lifted, there should be more jobs for young people.

Question 4: What is the role of the 450,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) in Myanmar?

Mr Marshall emphasised that it’s important to distinguish between people displaced due to armed conflict and civil unrest, and those who have moved due to work. Those who have been displaced by an absence of peace are critical. Until the underlying issues are resolved, then there is no point in talking about industrial development because a strong society won’t exist.
One of the ILO’s priorities is to create a livelihood for young people in areas previously or currently impacted by conflict, where there are no work opportunities for such people. Suitable solutions include micro-credit and value added agriculture. Investment can be made to create sustainable work without creating unsustainable issues. Education also needs to be attended to because if future workers do not have the basic skills required, then is a problem, as is the need for vocational skills and the need for a proper labour market and information exchange. Therefore, a lot of fundamental work needs to be done before any sophisticated strategies can be considered.

**Question 5: What can be done to ensure that young people are aware of their rights?**

Mr Marshall believes that it is not just rights at work, but also the right to work which is important. In Myanmar, there are problems of underemployment, unemployment and rights at work. Underemployment and unemployment are the main issues. It is important to ensure that youth are encompassed within all rights currently being brought into the work place across Myanmar. Ms Soe added that there should be equal rights for all young people, not just in cities but in rural and ethnic areas as well.