



## **Time to Ratify! Support the Rights of Migrant Workers!** International Migrants' Day, 2010

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Today, December 18, marks International Migrants' Day – a day to celebrate the contributions made by millions of migrants all over the world, and to promote international solidarity and respect for migrant rights as human rights. The Steering Committee (SC) for the Global Campaign on Decent Work and Rights for Domestic Workers and its partners across the globe calls out to the world to seize the moment and join the campaign for the protection and promotion of the rights and welfare of all migrant workers and their families.

### *Celebrating 20 years of the Migrant Workers' Convention*

This year, the International Migrants' Day marks a significant milestone: the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families, or simply, the Migrant Workers Convention (MWC). While deliberations that led to the adoption of the Convention began in the 1970s, it was on the 18<sup>th</sup> of December 1990 that the Convention was adopted by the UN General Assembly Resolution 45/158. This 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary provides an opportunity for the international community to reflect on and reaffirm the importance of this document. With 214 million people living outside of their country of origin, and given the IOM's projection that by 2050 this number could rise to 405 million<sup>1</sup>, now is the time to view this Convention in a new light. In addition to guiding states in the creation of their national policies with a view to thwarting the abuse and exploitation of migrants, it is the only instrument that provides a solid foundation for international cooperation on migration within a principled, rights-based framework.

To take concrete action to respect the rights of the non-citizens who contribute in so many ways to their economies and societies, and recognizing that this often comes at great personal cost to migrants and their families, the Steering Committee urges all states to remember the promise and hope that this UN Convention gave 20 years ago to migrant workers all over the world. The Steering Committee joins their voices in calling for the ratification and implementation of the Migrant Workers' Convention.

### *ILO Convention on Domestic Work*

On this International Migrants' Day, moreover, the Steering Committee is looking towards June 2011, when ILO member states will meet for the 100<sup>th</sup> International Labour Conference to consider the adoption of a Convention on Domestic Work. The Steering Committee welcomes the opportunity to engage this important international dialogue that has much bearing on migrant domestic workers.

The broad impacts of an ILO Convention on Decent Work for Domestic Workers should not be understated. Domestic workers, the majority of whom are women, provide a vital service for other workers and their families, allowing them to improve their standards of living by caring for their homes, children, and elderly

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<sup>1</sup> International Organization for Migration, *World Migration Report 2010, The Future of Migration, Building Capacities for Change*, p. 21.

family members. Because their workplaces are in the private sphere, however, domestic workers often fall outside the reach of national labour laws, and their workplaces are rarely subject to inspection. Significant abuses, considerable suffering, and rights violations are allowed to persist as a result. Thus, for decades now, domestic workers and their allies have been struggling to gain recognition and respect as workers, demanding the same rights and access to social protection as any other worker. The decision of the 99<sup>th</sup> International Labour Conference in June 2010 to adopt, in principle, a convention on domestic work was a substantial first step in this long overdue recognition.

The General Comment on Domestic Work, recently adopted by the U.N. Migrant Workers Committee, gives further credence to the need for an ILO convention on domestic work. More than the immediate benefits in terms of labour standards for domestic workers, a new convention would also address the needs of all workers employed in informal sectors. Thus, the Steering Committee also loudly proclaims this International Migrants' Day:

Domestic Work is Work! Domestic Workers are Workers! Domestic Work is not Slavery!

*On this 2010 International Migrants' Day, the Steering Committee calls on governments to...*

- Ratify the 1990 UN Migrant Workers' Convention and implement its provisions in national laws in order to protect and promote the rights of all migrant workers and members of their families.
- Support the Global Campaign on Decent Work and Rights for Domestic Workers towards a meaningful, ratifiable and enforceable ILO Convention on Decent Work for Domestic Workers, reaffirming domestic workers as indispensable workers entitled to fair work, fair wages, and fair treatment in accordance with the ILO Decent Work Agenda;
- Incorporate domestic workers under the purview of national labour laws with a view to reducing the slavery-like conditions, abuses, rights violations, inequalities, and racial and ethnic discrimination that domestic workers face;
- Ratify and implement the ILO conventions (Conventions 97, 143, and 181) relating to migrant workers, ensuring non-discrimination in the equality of treatment;
- Take action to end all forms of discrimination against migrant workers because of, but not limited to, race, religion, class, gender, age, and status;
- Continue to support the campaign for justice and freedom for Rizana Nafeek, a Sri Lankan domestic worker in Saudi Arabia who was sentenced to death for the accidental death of child under her care and now in a critical stage as her file which was pending before the External Affairs Ministry has now been handed over to the office of His Royal Highness the King of Saudi Arabia for his Majesty's final decision.

The Steering Committee calls on people everywhere to commemorate the many and important contributions that migrant workers make to our societies, and to join the struggle to protect and promote the rights and welfare of all migrant workers worldwide.

*The Steering Committee is a global alliance of domestic workers' organizations, unions and advocates united around a global campaign to win an ILO Convention for Domestic Workers in June 2011.*

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