

**PHILIPPINE WORKING GROUP ON GFMD  
and  
MIGRANTS' RIGHTS INTERNATIONAL**

**GLOBAL CALL TO ACTION  
1 June 2008**

***Join the "Peoples' Global Action on Migration, Development and Human Rights"  
22-30 October 2008, Manila, Philippines***

Government leaders from all over the world will hold the 2<sup>nd</sup> Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) on 29-30 October 2008 in Manila, Philippines. This follows the High Level Dialogue on Migration and Development convened by the United Nations in 2006 (New York), and the 1<sup>st</sup> GFMD hosted by the Belgian government in 2007 (Brussels).

In those previous global meetings, the governments chose to focus their attention on "maximizing the development benefits of migration" – by minimizing or excluding discussion on the human rights of migrants, the failed economic development programmes, and the underlying causes of labour migration. Indeed, the past global forums have concentrated on how to increase remittances; promote temporary, vulnerable labour migration, and in shifting the primary responsibility of providing basic social services and financing development from the governments to the migrants. In all these global forums, the migrants, civil society, and social movements have been marginalized, while the role of banks, remittance companies and the corporate sector have been enhanced. These are all consistent with the neoliberal agenda of making the people bear the burden of development, reducing government responsibility and accountability, and ensuring more profits for companies.

We shall continue to resist and struggle against these exploitative "migration and development" agendas, as we have done in the past. We, the representatives of migrant groups, peasant organizations, women, workers, urban and rural poor, fisherfolks, social movements and civil society organizations, will continue to assert the migrants' and people's perspectives and human rights.

We oppose the perspectives being promoted in the GFMD that perpetuate migrants' exploitation, reinforce gender oppression, undermine human rights, and surrender State responsibility for development. We oppose the perspective of making the GFMD an extension of neoliberal globalisation, so that it becomes an instrument of the World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank to promote corporate globalization, this time capitalizing on the migrant workers. After our global protests have stalled WTO's "Doha Development Agenda", neoliberal forces have been seeking other channels – e.g. economic partnership agreements (EPAs), free trade agreements (FTAs), and now the GFMD – to push for the same exploitative agenda of putting corporations' interests before that of the people.

After decades of corporate globalization, the evidence is stark that this has worsened poverty, job losses, food insecurity, indebtedness, displacement of communities, and has contributed to the current global climate crisis. These have caused massive labour migration, and migrants being used as cheaper, vulnerable, disposable workers to enhance global competitiveness, and further enrich companies, businesses and the economic elites.

Over 250 million people worldwide are migrants – living, working, raising families and building communities in places outside their country of origin. Total migrants' remittance transfers to their home communities are a staggering US\$300 billion a year, more than triple all international aid. However, migration policies and

practices are largely discriminatory and exploitative, and therefore fail to protect migrants' human rights and cause, reinforce, or intensify gender, class and systematic abuses.

As stated at the 1<sup>st</sup> GFMD (2007, Brussels), migration is increasingly treated by governments as a means to produce "mutual benefits to countries." The GFMD promotes "legal migration as an opportunity for both origin and destination countries" and suggests that remittances should be "leveraged through policies and actions by governments in partnership with the private sector", while migrants and other civil society are systematically excluded from the GFMD process. Special Representative to the UN on Migration and Development, and former WTO Director-General, Peter Sutherland further underscores "how migration can help meet [countries'] development goals." He advocates for countries "to manage migration more intelligently" through greater governmental and private sector cooperation, insisting that the GFMD process itself be focused on meeting the needs of governments – not migrants or civil society.

Instead of protecting migrants' safety and security, emphasis is being placed on more temporary and circular migration models, echoing the WTO's General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) Mode 4. GATS Mode 4 wants to prevent or restrict the movement of 'unskilled/low-skilled' migrant workers, thus increasing their vulnerability to abusive, irregular, or exploitative situations especially by recruiters and employers. The GFMD promotes agreements such as the EU-African models of governmental cooperation, but these agreements are notorious for causing the abuse, torture and deaths of countless migrants. Agreements such as the Italy-Libya and Spain-Morocco cooperative agreements, and the proposed Merida Initiative between the U.S. and Mexico, result in the expansion and militarization of borders, and increasing humanitarian crises along the coasts of Lampedusa and the Canary Islands, and along the U.S.-Mexico border.

Migrants' rights are guaranteed under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the core U.N. and ILO conventions, especially the UN 1990 Convention on Migrant Workers. However, no major host country in the Global North has ratified the UN 1990 Convention on Migrant Workers. In the current highly politicized state discourse on migration, migrants continue to experience widespread abuses, arbitrary arrests, detentions, torture, deportation and inhumane treatment. Such situations institutionalize the discrimination, exploitation and the vulnerability of migrants. The violators – government personnel, recruiters, employers, money lenders, remitters, etc. – go unpunished and therefore behave with impunity.

International trade, in the context of the WTO and neoliberal perspective, put profits before people, and degrade human rights, sustainable development, food security, livelihoods, decent work and natural resources. We assert that migration is not another form of trade (export/import of human labour); migration, like development, is a right. Working abroad should be a choice to enhance the dignity and opportunities of people, not a desperate bid for survival at the expense of human rights and dignity. The United Nations Declaration on the Right to Development (1986) states that the "right to development" is a basic and inalienable human right "by virtue of which every human person and all peoples are entitled to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development." The Declaration also states that people have the "inalienable right to full sovereignty over all their natural wealth and resources."

We also assert that debt domination is a major factor in the impoverishment of economies of the South. Debt domination breeds joblessness, underemployment and poverty, and force people to migrate and find employment abroad for survival. Even worse, the huge amount of taxes and fees collected from migrant workers, which should be used for the much needed services and programs that address the very same social ills that have forced them into migration, instead is being squandered to debt servicing.

We therefore commit ourselves to advance our struggle against exploitation and neoliberal globalization in all its forms. We demand to be heard by the GFMD and all international fora dealing with migration.

We reiterate our demand to make the GFMD a genuine forum among governments, migrants and people's movements to discuss models of migration policy that respects migrants' and all people's human rights, which will require exploration of the full range of issues involved in migration, including the underlying problems of development, poverty, joblessness, and how we can collectively address these. We affirm the principle that the State should be primarily responsible in protecting human rights, providing social services, and promoting people-centered development. We reiterate our call to put GFMD under the ambit of the United Nations to ensure that it adheres to, and builds upon, the existing human rights frameworks and obligations, including the Right to Development commitment. We call for migration and development policies built upon the principles of human security with dignity, justice and equality for all.

We shall continue to strengthen our global solidarity and intervene at the GFMD. We shall strengthen each other's campaigns and work together at the local, national, regional and international levels. As we have done in the past IMF, WB, WTO, APEC, ASEM and G-8 meetings, we will converge in October 2008 in Manila in order to challenge the GFMD. We shall continue to build and strengthen peoples' alternatives to corporate-led globalization. Another world is not only possible but necessary.

We shall initiate actions in our respective parts of the world, and converge in the "Peoples' Global Action on Migration, Development and Human Rights" in October 2008 in Manila!

***Join the Philippine launching of the Peoples' Global Action (17 June 2008, Manila)***

***Join the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Strategy Meeting on GFMD and the International Launching of the Peoples' Global Action (11-12 July 2008, Manila)***

***For more information, please contact:***

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### **Philippine Working Group on the GFMD Parallel Event**

**Convenor:**

Migrant Forum in Asia

**Members:**

Alliance of Progressive Labor (APL) \* ASEAN Trade Union Council (ATUC) \* Asian Migrant Center (AMC) \* Atikha \* Batis Center for Women \* Bukluran ng Manggagawang Pilipino(BMP) \* Center for Migrant Advocacy (CMA) \* Asia Pacific Forum on Women Law and Development (APWLD) \* Coalition Against Trafficking in Women in the Asia Pacific (CATW-AP) \* Daughters of Charity \* Focus on the Global South \* Freedom from Debt Coalition (FDC) \* Global Network Asia \* International Gender and Trade Network-Asia (IGTN) \* Jubilee South-Asia Pacific Movement on Debt and Development \* KAKAMMPI \* Kanlungan Center Foundation \* National Union of Building & Construction Workers/BWI \* Philippine Consortium on Migration and Development \* Public Services International (PSI/PSLINK) \* Solidaritas Migran Scalabrini-Philippines \* Stop the New Round \* UNI-APRO \* Unlad Kabayan Migrant Services Foundation \* Women and Gender Institute Mirriam College (WAGI).

**Migrants Rights International (MRI)**

**Endorsed by:**

\*Asian Domestic Workers Alliance (ADWA) \* Coalition for Migrants' Rights (Hong Kong)\* SAPA Working Group on Migration & Labour \*