



18 December 2017

International Migrants Day

Migrant Forum in Asia Statement

More than 247 million migrants are crossing international borders to search for safer and better future. Migrants are often exposed to situations that make them vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. As media and communication advance, the large movement of people has been magnified and is now recognized as an issue that needs international attention. World leaders must ensure inclusive global partnerships for migration to be a choice and not a necessity, and vow to end the abuses faced by migrant workers including situations of contemporary forms of slavery and forced labour.

Today, on International Migrants' Day, Migrant Forum in Asia dedicates its work to all migrants, returned migrants, potential migrants, migrants in crisis situations, and members of their families, as well as those advocating for the rights of migrants and their families. We commit to continue to engage with different actors and stakeholders at different levels to ensure that migrant workers and members of their families are not put in precarious situations and we commit continue to fight for stronger protection for the rights of migrant workers and their families.

Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration

On September 19, 2016, the United Nations General Assembly hosted a High-Level Summit in New York on the large movements of refugees and migrants. As a result of the high level summit, Member States committed to negotiating a global compact for refugees and a global compact for safe regular and orderly migration. In December 2017, the Stocktaking Phase (Phase II) of Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration has commenced and we commend the government of Mexico and Switzerland for their attempt to have an engaging and interactive Stocktaking meeting in Mexico, which encourages all stakeholders to continue the consultation phase.

Noting with deep concern that the Government of the United States of America has decided to pull out of the Global Compact for Migration, Migrant Forum in Asia calls upon the United States of America to recommit to the Global Compact, and for all other governments to continue to adopt a compact that is rights based. We affirm what is stated in the Civil Society 10 Acts for the Global Compact: The Compact must directly benefit migrants, refugees and societies, save lives, respond to needs, be rights-based, gender and age-sensitive, and oriented to human dignity and human development for all, regardless of migration status.¹

We call for a strong, inclusive, and substantive partnership among governments and stakeholders, including civil society in the process of creating the Global Compact, as well as its implementation, follow-up, and review.

ASEAN Consensus Document

During the 31st ASEAN Summit, the ten Member States signed the ASEAN Consensus on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers after a decade of negotiations. Amidst recognizing the contribution and rights of migrant workers, the ASEAN Member States need to provide more adequate people-centered and human rights-based mechanisms as the Consensus Document is not legally binding.

We express grave concern over the limitations of the consensus document covering only migrant workers who are nationals of ASEAN member states. This excludes a big number of migrant workers in the ASEAN who are nationals of non ASEAN member states. We also note the discriminatory provisions in Article 2 of the consensus document covering

¹ For more information please see: http://www.madenetwork.org/sites/default/files/Civil%20Society%20-%20Now%20and%20How%20TEN%20Acts_%20English.pdf

only migrant workers who are documented and those who become undocumented through no fault of their own. The scope of the provision is vague and leaves undocumented migrant workers vulnerable to more exploitation and abuse.

In line with the above Migrant Forum in Asia calls on ASEAN Member States to have an inclusive and substantive multi-stakeholder participation when drafting the proposed amendments, and the proposed action plan for the implementation of the ASEAN Consensus Document which should be people-centered and human rights-based.

Human Rights Defenders

Migrant Forum in Asia is dismayed by the shrinking of civic space in the region, the continuing limitations on the rights of human rights defenders and civil society that advocates for migrants' rights. We see evidence of growing restrictions to the work of individuals and organizations providing assistance and support for migrant workers in distress.

We call on governments to recognize those advocating for migrants' rights and migration issues as human rights defenders regardless of where they are located. We call on Governments to stop imposing legal or other restrictions on the work of migrant rights defenders.

Domestic Work

Amidst the existence of ILO Convention 189, domestic workers are still often subjected to human rights, violations such as long working hours for little to no pay, physical, sexual and mental abuse, to name a few. We appeal to UN Member States to step up the ratification of the ILO Convention 189 and for those who have ratified to follow through with implementation of the convention through national policies, taking into consideration the existing mechanisms of those working on the ground to recognize, protect, and promote the rights of domestic workers, both local and migrant.

On a day dedicated for international migrants we also recognize the capacity of migrant domestic worker and all domestic workers to organize and mobilize in fighting for their rights. We are in solidarity with all domestic workers in calling for the recognition of domestic work as work and calling for dignity and rights for all domestic workers.

Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA) is a network of grassroots organizations, trade unions, faith-based groups, migrants and their families and individual advocates in Asia working together for social justice for migrant workers and members of their families.

MFA members are organizing a number of activities across Asia to commemorate International Migrants' Day. To see the list of activities of MFA members, visit: <http://mfasia.org>