

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION

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Launch of 20th anniversary Global Campaign for Migrants Rights Convention

Brussels, 14 December 2009 (ITUC OnLine): A global campaign to challenge countries to end abuse of migrants by protecting their human rights will be launched around the world on 18 December.

Events in Brussels, Cairo, Geneva, Kuala Lumpur, Nairobi, New York and Paris will kick off activities on all continents to mark the 20th anniversary year of the adoption by the United Nations General Assembly of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (ICRMW) in 1990.

The campaign will take to the streets and to parliaments the demand that governments act immediately to end the widespread violations of human rights suffered daily by migrants around the world, by ratifying this core UN instrument. UN estimates show that by 2010, 214 million people will be living outside their countries of birth or citizenship. Nearly half this number, some 95 million according to calculations of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), are economically active as migrant workers. Together with their families, they make up the large majority of all international migrants. Most countries experience migration either as origin, destination and/or transit countries. Many countries are all three of these. "Although, for many, migration is a positive experience, many others migrate under duress and face severe hardships", underlined Carla Edelenbos of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and coordinator of the Global Campaign Steering Committee. "Migrant workers all over the world suffer abuse, discrimination and exploitation by traffickers, smugglers and employers. The failure by States to effectively protect migrants against abusive practices demonstrates the urgent need for ratification",

The ICRMW provides legal standards for national law that recognise the specific vulnerabilities of migrants and promote humane and lawful working and living conditions. It provides guidance for migration policies which can only be effective if based on legal standards under the rule of law. Ratification of this convention is seen as vital to combat abuse and exploitation of migrants.⁴² States have ratified this Convention since adoption by the United Nations General Assembly in 1990, and another 15 have signed --signature being the preliminary step to ratification.

"Today FIDH's members and partners around the world have issued an appeal to their governments to ratify this Convention without further delay", stated Cynthia Gabriel, FIDH Vice-President and Director of CARAM Asia, "States must face up to their responsibilities and say no to exploitation and discrimination. We hope that on the 20th anniversary of the Convention we will be celebrating a record number of ratifications".

"We urge all those states that have not yet ratified the UN Convention to seize this occasion to send a strong message to the international community of their commitment to the protection of the human rights of all human beings, including migrant persons," added Guy Ryder, General Secretary, International Trade Union Confederation, "We also remind them of the importance of ratifying the ILO Conventions on Migrant Workers and of ensuring that the core ILO Conventions on freedom of association, the right to collective bargaining, and protection from discrimination and forced and child labour are fully applied to migrant workers", he concluded,

The campaign is launched by the International Steering Committee for the Campaign for Ratification of the Migrants Rights Convention, a unique network of UN agencies, international organizations and global civil society organizations.

Steering Committee members include the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), International Labour Office, International Organization for Migration (IOM), UNESCO, International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), International Trade Unions Confederation (ITUC), December 18, International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC), Human Rights Watch (HRW), International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR), Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA), Migrants Rights International (MRI), Public Services International (PSI), Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), World Council of Churches (WCC).

Many other international and regional bodies are joining the campaign, including CARAM Asia.

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