The role of UNI Global Union regarding Migrant Work

UNI Global Union’s Malaysia Liaison Council and ASPEK Indonesia have signed a Memorandum of Agreement for migrant workers to be represented and protected in labour-receiving countries.

- In cooperation with ASPEK, the Indonesian UNI Migrant Union - UNIMIG - organizes migrant workers before they travel to other countries and provides them with pre-departure information about their rights.

- The UNI Malaysia Help Desk assists in the fight for fair and equal treatment of migrant workers, both for men and women.

At its World Congress, UNI passed a resolution on migrant work that will:

- Promote the ratification of International Labour Conventions on the protection of migrant workers.
- Set up cooperation with the Council of Global Unions, the ITUC, other Global Union Federations and migrant organisation to fight human trafficking.
- Encourage and assist affiliates to play a more visible and active role in promoting migrant workers’ rights through Collective Bargaining.
- Develop an effective regional collaborative mechanism to work on issues of worker migration and human trafficking, focusing on the problems faced undocumented migrant workers and their families and by stateless persons.
- Unite with civil society organizations and other groups providing assistance and protection to migrant workers.
- Conduct research on gender-trade-migrant issues.
- Work with like-minded groups to establish a multilateral framework for migration in the global economy.

Thousands of migrant workers are still waiting for their rights to be recognized.

Migrant work today, a key issue for the union movement.
Migrant Work Today

Every year, millions of men and women leave their homes and cross international borders seeking better pay and job opportunities. They are also spurred by hunger, natural disasters, violent conflicts, persecution or simply by the lack of decent work in their home countries.

Both labour-sending and labour-receiving countries have benefited economically from worker migration: the former in terms of earnings from abroad and reductions in unemployment rates and the latter in terms of imported intellectual talent and manual labour. Many migrant workers are subjected to various forms of discrimination and exploitation. They are subjected to human trafficking, which in some countries is exacerbated by the failure of governments to recognize International Labour Conventions that protect the rights of migrant workers and extend the protective mantle of domestic labour laws and regulations to migrant workers.

Migration Facts

The estimated 214 million international migrant workers in 2010 represent 3% of the world population.

- Almost 50% of these international migrant workers are women.
- Migrant workers, defined as people who migrate to look for a job, and their families represent around 90% of the total number of international migrants.
- In 2010 there were 105 million migrant workers.

Feminization of Migration

Women have always been present in migrant flows—traditionally as wives, daughters or dependents of male migrants. Today, women are migrating more frequently than before as theirs is the main source of income in their homes. They migrate alone to search for jobs to support their families.

At present, women represent 50% of the migrant flow. However the rates vary from country to country and are as high as 70 to 80% in some cases.

This feminization of migration has also given birth to specific types of female migration, including domestic workers and caretakers, women trafficked for sex and organised migration for pre-arranged marriages.

Migrant women are key in the development of destination countries and make a contribution that is both undervalued and not sufficiently recognised.

A Challenge to the Union Movement

Migrant workers’ rights must be respected and workers should be granted the same status as any other worker no matter their nationality. Violence against migrant women in the context of human trafficking and forced labour represents an extreme case of human rights violation, which must also be addressed.

The union movement must address this issue by promoting the ratification and implementation of the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, which complements the UN Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers and their Families in all countries.