



STATEMENTS 2010

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ASEAN Forum on Improving Overseas Employment Administration

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Greetings

Undersecretary Danilo Cruz of the Department of Labor and Employment

Administrator Jennifer Manalili of the Philippine Overseas Employment
Administration

Delegations from ASEAN member countries

Ladies and gentlemen

Good morning!

It is a pleasure to address you today on behalf of our Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific, Sachiko Yamamoto.

The International Labour Organization is honoured to be a partner of the ASEAN and the Philippine Government in this significant endeavour. Let me congratulate the Philippine Government for hosting this regional meeting.

The Philippines has many experiences to share in the field of labour migration and overseas employment administration.

Likewise, this is an opportunity to learn from other ASEAN countries. In just a few days, the world will observe the International Migrants Day.

Many people around the world are on the move, with a large portion from the Asian region moving within and across the region. There are an estimated 214 million migrants in the world today where about 106 million of these are moving to work in countries other than their countries of birth or residence. These movements are driven by a desire to find new and better opportunities for themselves and their families which in turn can benefit both countries of origin and destination.

International migration has remained at an estimated 3 per cent of the world's population. The continued migration of people for work, often results from two major labour market forces:

1) Many people of working age cannot find decent and productive employment needed to support themselves and their families in their own countries;

2) and there are countries in the world that have a shortage of workers to fill positions in various sectors of their economies.

Other factors include demographic shifts, socio-economic, political and environmental crisis, as well as widening earning disparity.

The ILO believes that migrants are less vulnerable when they are not moving out of necessity but out of choice.

Effective management of labour migration requires coherent, comprehensive, consistent and transparent policies in ways that are beneficial to all migrant workers and their families and to origin and destination countries as well. Such policies need to be designed according to international labour standards and human rights principles, and be placed within national economic and employment agenda while ensure coordination among relevant ministries and stakeholders.

As early as 1919, the ILO expressed the need to protect migrant workers. The promotion and protection of the rights of migrant workers should be an overarching concern. It is imperative that we collectively prevent abusive recruitment practices – including trafficking, and protect migrant workers from becoming victims.

Special attention is required to vulnerable migrants such as those in irregular status and women who often face discrimination and abuse in the migration process. Reintegration of returning migrant workers is also a critical element often overlooked. Measures are necessary to ensure that migrant workers can return safely and happily to their families.

It is also vital to develop programmes that will assist migrant workers in maximizing gains and benefits acquired through migration. These include:

- Promotion of migrants' investments,
- Social security for migrants,
- Enterprise creation that generate job opportunities as well
- Remittance investments support schemes that will support the migrant work and their home communities.

The ILO established the earliest international standards and norms on the treatment of migrant workers. The most recent of these is the ILO Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration. International migration policy is still largely set by the destination countries, which decide who they will admit and for what purposes. However, many have discovered that it is better to manage migration in cooperation with countries of origin, through various types of international agreement.

The ILO Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration offers the most comprehensive international agreement. The ILO Framework highlights principles and guidelines to help countries develop more effective labour migration policies. Our colleague from

Bangkok will elaborate further in one of the sessions today. In all of these, cooperation among countries of both destination and origin is crucial.

The adoption by the ASEAN of the Declaration on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Migrant Workers in December 2007 in Cebu, is an expression of a collective desire to advance both labour migration policies and migrants' rights protection within the region.

Continuing dialogues and discussions in the region should be sustained and held in consultation with relevant stakeholders towards achieving regional cooperation to manage labour migration.

I am confident that it is in this same spirit of regional cooperation that this meeting is convened to improve overseas employment policies and programmes particularly for labour sending countries through sharing of good practices.

As you are aware, the global economic crisis resulted in layoffs which include migrant workers in many countries. The crisis and its aftermath have affected many economies in varying degrees. It has caused hardship to many working women and men, their families and their communities, impacting the ranks of the working poor and vulnerably employed throughout the world.

In June 2009, the ILO through governments, employers' and workers' organizations adopted the Global Jobs Pact. As a global policy instrument, the Pact addresses the social and employment impact of the crisis. The Pact promotes a sustained and productive recovery centred on investments, employment and social protection. The Pact is currently being used in many countries to guide national and international policies. It is about promoting jobs and protecting people.

The Global Jobs Pact recognizes the need to enhance support to vulnerable women and men hit hard by the crisis including:

- **youth who are often at risk as they first enter the labour market,**
- **vulnerably employed who often lack social protection and the skill need to obtain decent and productive employment, and**
- **migrant workers**

It is a call for urgent worldwide action at the: local, national, regional and global levels.

Within the United Nations, the ILO has a clear mandate on the protection of labour migration. As such, the ILO will be actively involved to ensure protection of human rights of men and women migrant workers and the promotion of decent work for all.

I wish you all success in your two-day discussion.

Before assuming the position as Director of the ILO Manila in July, I had the pleasure of visiting Manila a few times during the holiday season as the Chief of the Employment Trends Department and on a personal note I would like to encourage you to find time to feel the warmth and the festive air of Manila.

Thank you and Mabuhay!