



**Council of  
Global Unions**  
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## GLOBAL UNIONS

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Geneva, 2011

### Labour migration is a decent work issue!

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Global Unions reject the current deregulatory economic approach to migration which exacerbates decent work deficits both in countries of origin and destination, and treats migrant workers as an ultra-flexible workforce that can be hired and fired according to business cycles.

Global Unions demand that governments shift their migration policies to ensure they contribute to decent work objectives. Labour migration, however, should not replace decent work opportunities in home countries. Governments must strive to provide quality public services and sustainable jobs in the place where people live, so that migration only becomes an option and not a dire necessity.

International migration flows must be regulated in the framework of the ILO's decent work agenda with the genuine participation of workers', employers' and migrants' organisations, the full respect of all workers' rights and a guarantee that the right to equal treatment between local and migrant workers will be protected. In particular, migrant workers must be afforded the same due process rights of other workers and not have the constant fear of termination loom over them due to threats to not renew visas.

The principles of equal treatment and non-discrimination at work, which are at the heart of the decent work agenda, must be the cornerstone of any migration policy. Their application reduces inequalities and promotes development, social inclusion and progress. Ignoring these principles creates injustice, leads to exploitation of migrant workers and induces a downward pressure on working conditions for all workers.

### A better governance of migration is urgently needed!

A clear institutional framework for migration at the global level is lacking and as a result migration flows are "managed" through inter-governmental trade or cooperation agreements. But labour is not a commodity and migrant workers must not be "traded" among countries like products or raw materials!

Informal settings like the GFMD lack a normative reference for the protection of individual rights and rely on unequal bargaining positions among states which ultimately allows the powerful to pick and choose the type of migration they want under conditions they themselves define. A world in which all high skilled migrants would go from developing to industrialised countries while lower skilled ones would stay in the developing countries is neither desirable nor sustainable.

The global governance of migration must be based within the UN system with a clear normative framework to oversee the implementation of states' obligations under international law. Multilateralism is important as it puts countries of origin and destination on an equal footing.

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The 2013 UN High-Level Dialogue on Migration and Development is an opportunity to redress the deficits in the current system and put the ILO, the only UN agency with a constitutional mandate to protect migrant workers, at the centre of a multilateral governance mechanism, reaffirming the centrality of decent work in migration issues.

### **Better integration of young and women migrant workers!**

Today half of migrant workers are women. The huge demand for health and care workers, as well as teachers and academics at the global level is a major factor in the feminisation of migration. Migrant women are particularly vulnerable to exploitation, discrimination and trafficking. This calls for gender responsive migration policies. Global Unions call for action and public policies that do not stigmatise them as victims but which recognise and ensure their rights. Women migrant workers can become powerful economic and social change agents when provided with their full human and trade union rights. Young people make up an important part of migrants worldwide due to the intolerable level of youth unemployment, and their strong desire to move across borders for education, family or work purposes. Employment and migration policies must better address their needs.

### **Join our campaign to support the rights of migrant domestic workers!**

Migrant domestic workers are among the most exploited category of workers. Their work is invisible, undervalued, underpaid and not respected. They are often excluded from the scope of labour legislation and suffer discrimination, exploitation, harassment and even violence. Let us put an end to modern-day slavery! Join the “12 by 12” **Global Campaign**, and help us get 12 countries to ratify ILO Convention No 189 on domestic workers by the end of 2012 ([www.ituc-csi.org/domesticworkers](http://www.ituc-csi.org/domesticworkers))

### **Undocumented migrant workers have rights!**

Relevant international instruments such as the 1990 UN Convention on the Rights of all Migrant workers and members of their families and ILO Conventions No 97 and 143 protect the labour and human rights of undocumented migrant workers. States must ratify these instruments, uphold their obligations under international treaties and ensure that undocumented migrant workers enjoy their fundamental rights both in law and in practice.

Workers in an irregular situation are particularly vulnerable to abuse and exploitation as fear of deportation often prevents them from seeking legal redress. Organizing undocumented workers in trade unions facilitates their access to justice. Unions are best placed to defend undocumented migrant workers against unscrupulous employers. The regularisation of undocumented workers is in practice, an important tool to put an end to exploitation and abuses. Long-staying irregular migrants must be offered a chance to earn regular status!

### **Regulate the activities of recruitment and supply agencies**

Global Unions call for the regulation of the activities of recruitment and supply agencies in order to prevent violations of migrant workers' rights and promote decent work for all. An end must be put to the activities of unscrupulous agencies that deny migrant workers employment rights and working conditions to which they are entitled, charge exorbitant fees and coerce workers into signing rigid contracts.