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Open Letter to United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon concerning Trade Union and Civil Society Inclusion at the High-level Dialogue on Migration and Development New York, October 3-4, 2013

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Your Excellency,

We submit this open letter to express our disappointment and serious concern with the process and substance of the second U.N. High-level Dialogue on Migration and Development (HLD), particularly the exclusion of civil society leaders representing a large constituency of migrant workers, their families and communities. At this HLD, we are representing more than 200 million members of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), Public Services International (PSI), Education International (EI), Building and Woodworkers International (BWI), and a number of national union federations and sector-based unions. Additionally, we stand with numerous rights-based civil society partners who work with and represent migrant communities from around the world.

There are 232 million migrants in the world today with the overwhelming majority of them migrating for economic reasons. These migrants are in search of decent work as a foundation for a better life. Therefore, the HLD is a critical forum to raise the perspectives of migrant workers, their families, and communities, particularly in the context of global economic and social development. Since the last HLD in 2006, trade unions and civil society have worked to move toward a rights-based global framework on migration. As the UN has continually stated, engaging civil society in this process is critical to the success of protecting migrant workers and communities and raising the role of migration in post-2015 development agenda.

Unfortunately, to date, our effective participation in this UN HLD has been fraught with difficulty. At every juncture in the process, civil society members have faced significant roadblocks. For over a year, hundreds of representatives from national, regional and international organizations met in over 20 preparatory events around the world and in a UN civil society hearing to develop our inputs to the HLD. Despite this great effort to achieve shared analyses, it appears those views will be ignored. To make matters worse, of the very limited number of civil society speakers invited to participate in the UN HLD, the UN and member states initially saw fit to include a major labour recruiter and a for-profit development firm, but not the civil society rapporteur selected in the July civil society hearings or representatives from organizations that represent workers.

While some of these issues have been addressed through great effort on the part of civil society, the turbulent agenda has been a source of frustration and has signaled a lack of respect for civil society organizations within the UN. We continue to hold that a rights-based approach based on the existing international normative framework governing international migration needs to be

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at the core of HLD discussions and in the post-HLD follow-up debate.

With the mandate of protecting workers rights, trade unions will continue to promote the Decent Work agenda and ensure that migrant worker rights, including Freedom of Association, are respected in these debates. While we participate in the GFMD, this forum has given precedence to bilateral agreements and not effectively prioritized Decent Work and migrant workers' rights. We look to the ILO to take a leadership role in the Global Migration Group, and see the ILO's tripartite mechanisms as being the most transparent, accountable, and substantive for future dialogue and cooperation on migration.

Your Excellency, you have been consistent in affirming the importance of civil society in the work of the United Nations, and articulating a sense of global leadership which includes civil society in working toward the collective global good. Migrant workers and worker rights advocates from around the world have come to the UN in hopes of being heard, and have invested considerable time and resources to get here. In return, they have experienced discouragement and a profound sense of disrespect.

We call on the United Nations and on governments to make inclusive social dialogue a reality by ensuring that civil society voices, including trade unions and those who represent migrant workers have a substantive role in the HLD and ongoing normative setting processes. We submit that what has transpired at this year's HLD must never occur again. Your Excellency, your recognition of the critical role of civil society in advancing human rights has been appreciated, and we look to you to address and remedy the concerns we are bringing forward to you today.

Civil Society and Trade Union Delegates from the International Trade Union Confederation, Public Services International, Education International, Building and Woodworkers International

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