

## Statement for the Protection of Rights of Foreign Domestic Workers(FDW)

To all participants, including government representatives of labour sending and receiving countries, present at the Labour Ministers Conference 21-22 January 2008:

The women of Asia move outside of and within the region to find work to support themselves and their families. Hundreds of thousands of women work in private households as domestic workers. It is essential work and it is valuable work. Several thousand households would face adverse consequences without these workers. They enable the men and women of the household to engage in rewarding economic activity by taking care of the cooking, housework, cleaning, and childcare. In Asia and the Middle East, or elsewhere, foreign domestic workers are at the very heart of a dynamic economic process in the countries they work.

BUT, their work is not recognized as work by law.

Domestic workers are not protected by the National Labour Laws of most countries. Domestic workers cannot enjoy wages paid on time nor access social security systems of host societies. Domestic workers cannot bargain, or form unions and associations. Without recognition and protection as workers, domestic workers are exposed to exploitation and discrimination, restrictions on their freedom of movement, and barriers to access legal remedies.

Governments of both labour sending and receiving countries have to recognize and respect foreign domestic workers rights by adopting legal measures to provide for enforcement of contractual obligations of their employers. Women have the right to move and work, and countries should not put age limits regulating migration flow. Women domestic workers who fall into irregular conditions must be given a chance to restore their legal status before the law in the destination countries.

In conjunction with the Labour Ministers Conference in Abu Dhabi, the Foreign Domestic Workers Taskforce of CARAM Asia calls for the following to be included in the Abu Dhabi Declaration:

- The recognition of domestic work as work by including domestic work under national labour laws
- The protection of human and health rights of foreign domestic workers
- The removal of sponsorship systems that make domestic workers completely dependent on their employers and abolition of the “Kafhala” system, replaced with enforceable contracts of employment to cover agreed wages, social security, termination benefits, and one day off per week
- The speedy settlement of any grievances and establishment of a Conciliation Centre or Safe House to assist those migrants who are in need of protection until their cases are settled or they are able to go home.

**Women workers are major contributors to the well-being of their families and families of host societies.**

**Women workers in host societies are indispensable to middle class women and men in receiving countries who seek advancement**

**Women workers contribute to the society they work in as they care for the children and the elderly**

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