



5th Asian Inter-Parliamentary Caucus on Labour Migration
The Sustainable Development Agenda:
The role of parliaments in translating global goals to concrete actions
13-14 November 2015, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia



Introduction

On 13-14 November 2015 Members of the Asian Inter-Parliamentary Caucus on Labour Migration from Bangladesh, Cambodia, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, South Korea and Sri Lanka gathered together for its 5th Annual Meeting. Also present were select members of civil society organisations and trade unions in Malaysia.

With the central theme “The Sustainable Development Agenda: The role of parliaments in translating global goals to concrete actions”, participants deliberated on the current regional developments and discussions at the global and how they could play a role in these processes.

The discussions on Day 1 focused on members’ updates, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda for Social ASEAN. Meanwhile, Day 2, centered on regional consultative processes and moving forward in terms of next steps and the future direction of the Caucus. A special session on the link between the executive and legislative branches was also presented.

The 2-day meeting was opened by a panel discussion on the proposed Agenda for Social ASEAN which is being pushed by a group of individuals, civil society organisations and trade unions from ASEAN. The panel was composed of Hon. Charles Santiago, Member of the Advisory Committee; Ms. Marina Christina, ASETUC and; Ms. Maris De La Cruz, Network for Transformative Social Protection (NTSP), all of whom spoke of the need to have a Social Agenda to be integrated in the ASEAN Economic Community.

The opening panel was followed by a sharing of updates from the Caucus Members. The discussion was started by Hon. Sabiha Nazer from Pakistan who she shared about the result of the visits of the Advisory Committee to Brussels and Berlin. The visits were found informative and useful for the work of the Caucus. A similar program was proposed for future programming of the Caucus.

The next session was a presentation from Mr. Paul Tacon of UN ESCAP on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Mr. Tacon explained the link between migration and development, where migration is in the sustainable development agenda and the opportunities where Caucus members could engage particularly in its implementation. Mr. Tacon affirmed the positive contribution of migration to development to both countries of origin and destination.

The last session was a presentation from Agnes Matienzo from Migrant Forum in Asia. Ms. Matienzo shared the result of MFA’s engagement around the sustainable development agenda and the key issues and areas that came out of the series of consultations MFA organised where the migration agenda could be lobbied with governments.

The second day of the meeting was opened by a Special Session provided by Hon. Thalatha Atukorale, a Caucus member and now sits as the Minister of Sri Lanka’s Foreign Employment Promotion and Welfare. Hon. Atukorale shared her role as the new Minister and the legislative and policy measures to promote the welfare and protection of migrant workers.

The next session was a planning discussion where participants were grouped by country and sub-region to discuss potential actions/plans and how they could contribute to the mainstreaming of migration in parliamentary debate, in engaging their governments and in doing their oversight function.

Following the planning session, participants heard updates on regional and global inter-governmental discussions. Updates on ASEA, SAARC, Abu Dhabi Dialogue and the Global Forum on Migration were provided by Hon. Pemba Lama (SAARC), Hon. Thalatha Atukorale (Colombo Process and Abu Dhabi Dialogue) and Hon. Israfil Alam (Bangladesh). The last session was spent on discussing the future of the Caucus. Prior to this session, a discussion on the pre-drafted Caucus Statement took place. Please see Annex 1 for the Caucus Statement.

I. Summary of key points from the experts/group work

The Need for a Social ASEAN Agenda

- **Hon. Charles Santiago**, Advisory Committee Member and Member of Malaysian Parliament: Talked about the concept of ASEAN Economic Community, the impact of the ASEAN Economic Integration, key issues in the region and the rationale for a Social ASEAN Agenda.
- **Ms. Marina Christina, ASETUC**: Shared about the One ASEAN Agreement and how it will benefit the peoples of ASEAN including migrant workers.
- **Ms. Maris de la Cruz**, Network for Transformative Social Protection (NTSP): Introduced the campaign for a comprehensive social protection that applies to all peoples of ASEAN and appealed for support from the Caucus and other stakeholders.

EU Information Exchange Visit / Caucus updates

Hon. Sabiha Nazir, Advisory Committee and Member of Pakistan National Assembly: Shared about the result of the EU Information exchange visit and proposed that a similar activity could be explored for part of the future work of the Caucus. EU migration policies continue to be restrictive and leaning more towards border security which causes higher level of irregularity in the migration process. This in turn fuels further exploitation and abuse in the recruitment process as well as trafficking.

Interventions from the participants stressed the need to balance the discourse between the rights of local workers and migrant workers. The Caucus should maximize the parliament in mainstreaming pressing issues concerning migrant workers as in the case of the Philippines.

The Sustainable Development Agenda: An overview and what role for parliamentarians

- **Mr. Paul Tacon**, UN ESCAP, discussed about the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and where migration situates. What was adopted as an Outcome Document was not a binding-instrument but it is a political statement that governments are opened to cooperating to address poverty and ensure the sustainable development for the future generations. Opportunities where Caucus members could engage particularly in its implementation
- **Ms. Agnes Matienzo**, Migrant Forum in Asia, shared MFA's engagement on the post-2015 development debate. Migration could be integrated in all 17 Goals and not only in the 7 targets that explicitly mention migrants and migration. The Caucus could identify which of these goals and targets are more relevant to their context. MFA has already developed migration specific targets and indicators which they could use for dialogue with their respective governments. Opportunities to work with MFA partners were also shared.

Special Session: Protecting Migrant Workers – Cooperation between the Executive and Legislative

- **Hon. Thalatha Atukorale**, Minister of Sri Foreign Employment Promotion and Welfare, shared about her work with the Ministry in protecting Sri Lankan migrant workers abroad and the need for countries of origin to have a unified voice as a way to address abuse and exploitation of women migrant workers.

Multiculturalism and its link to Goal 16 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

- **Hon. Jasmine Lee**, Member National Assembly of Korea, shared about her involvement on the SDGs as well as her work on multi-culturalism and how it could contribute to the achievement of Goal 16. She also shared about the other targets on Goal 16 that she is working on.

Results of Groupwork

- While some expressed skepticism on the credibility of government to deliver, the Caucus affirmed the need to engage the post-2015 development agenda. Specific goals and targets which the members could potentially follow-up or focus in terms of pushing the migration agenda at the national level were identified.
- Action points at regional level affirmed the need to engage with regional consultative processes and with the Global Forum on Migration and Development by engaging governments at country level.
- Identified key issues for policy discussions

II. Key recommendations/action points emanating from the presentation and from the discussions

Agenda for a Social ASEAN

- Support the campaigns for a Social Agenda for ASEAN, the ONE ASEAN agreement and comprehensive social protection through dialogue with their respective governments and parliaments
- Institutionalisation of social protection among ASEAN countries through adoption of domestic legislations.
- A follow-up program with parliamentarians to further deliberate on the need for a comprehensive social protection policies and programs.
- Ensure that legislations introduced by Caucus members serve the interest of workers
- Key policy issues that need to be lobbied with ASEAN countries to achieve a Social Agenda and to contribute to the achievement of the sustainable development agenda include the following- job security, stop contractualization and outsourcing; job creation, social protection and portability of social security benefits and access to essential public services.
- There is a need to promote greater vigilance on how G2G is being implemented in the countries of destination. In the case of Bangladesh-Malaysia agreement, while the agreement is between the two countries, the recruitment of workers happen between the brokers from Malaysia and Bangladesh. These brokers are influential and could bribe anyone in the process. MPs have a role to play in this issue. MPs need to exert more effort to perform their oversight function. MPs need to look into the situation of their workers in countries of destination and initiate parliamentary debate on how to address issues faced by their workers abroad.
- Multi-stakeholder cooperation is needed.

Work of the Caucus

- Conduct similar program such as EU information exchange visit
- Addressing decent work deficits experienced by local workers to counter anti-migrant sentiments

Engagement with the Sustainable Development Agenda

Overall, recommendations and action points on the SDG revolve around monitoring of implementation, introduction of bills, and parliamentary debate on key migration issues and budget discussion on relevant migration indicators / measures

National level

- Use the parliament as a platform to introduce key migration issues relevant to the achievement of SDGs particularly on migration; also use it as a platform to counter negative perceptions of migration and migrants.

- Initiate a Parliamentary Forum /join existing SDGs Committee within the Parliament to be able to proactively engage in the implementation of the SDGs and to ensure that migrants and migration are included in parliamentary debates.
- MPs from country of destination may consider developing policies on multi-culturalism as a way to implement the SDGs particularly Goal 16. Multiculturalism is one way to reduce social disparities including those experienced by foreign workers. Caucus members from countries of destination, may also look into Target 16.9 which focuses on providing legal identity for all, including birth registration by 2030. She drafted a new bill protecting the rights of all migrant children below 18 years of age, including the right to register their birth, even those who are undocumented.
- Cambodia, Philippines and Thailand will focus on Goal 10. In order to advance Goal 10, they will focus on the following policy issues- introduction of fair/ progressive tax system; living wage; job creation by encouraging small-medium enterprises and; social protection. In the case of Cambodia, the following actions will be taken- 1. *submit a bill to the parliament*; 2. *Coordinate with the Social Welfare Ministry and encourage them to take up the above issues* and 3. *Collaborate with NGOs that are already working on these issues*
- MPs from Nepal will focus on Goals 1, 4, 5, 8, 10 & 17. Work around these goals include policy review and amendments on relevant laws which fall under these Goals; establishment of a good monitoring mechanism within the parliament. Specific on migrant workers, key issues that will be introduced for parliamentary debate will focus on productive utilization of remittances, reduction of migration cost and labour agreements with countries of destination. A campaign to mainstream migration in the national development plans. Moreso, MPs from Nepal will bring the issues discussed in the Caucus meeting as they engage in the discussions on possible amendment of the Foreign Employment Act.
- Pakistan will focus on Goal 5 which is on gender equality and empowerment of women and girls. Gender inequality in Pakistan is a major concern. Coordination with the existing women parliamentary caucus.
- Bangladesh will focus on Goals and targets that explicitly mention migrants and migration. These includes Target 4b on Goal 4, Target 5.2 on Goal 5, Target 8.8 on Goal 8, Target 10.7 on Goal 10, Target 10 c on Goal 10, Target 16.2 on Goal 16, and Target 17.8 on Goal 17. This is in support of the position of the government of Bangladesh. Aside from the migration specific targets, Bangladesh will also work on Goal 13 on climate change which is also very relevant to migration.

Sub-regional /Regional

- Advocacy at the ASEAN level includes particularly in promoting global partnership, this means the following: 1. Emerging economies such as Singapore and Malaysia to invest in developing countries e.g. Singapore's Tiger Beer in Cambodia; 2. Provide support in ASEAN member countries through legal, infrastructure development and capital; 3. Free flow of all workers with equal protection, welfare and services; 4. Explore the possibility of coming up with a common "currency" and; 5. Adopt ASEAN agreement on the protection of migrant workers
- MFA to share the result of country specific indicators on migration to the Caucus and connect them to the MFA members for coordinated action

Engaging Regional Blocs, Regional Consultative Processes and the Global Forum on Migration and Development

- MPs to support the call for regional minimum standards to ensure that migrant workers irrespective of nationality will enjoy the same rights and equal protection. SAARC and Colombo Process are spaces to discuss these issues.
- MPs to support formalization of informal sectors. The ILO has adopted a Recommendation concerning the transition from the informal to formal economy.

- MPs to initiate discussions with relevant government ministries regarding the five thematic areas¹ that will be discussed in next year's Colombo Process so they can also influence the governments' agenda.
- Monitor implementation of the ASEAN Convention on Trafficking
- Caucus members to engage in the Global Forum on Migration and Development through their governments in preparation for 2016 GFMD in Bangladesh.
- Strong pressure outside is needed to push Malaysia to deliver on its international commitments and in particular as the current Chair of the ASEAN Summit.
- MPs to be able to influence discussions on Free Trade Agreements that their governments sign and ensure that there are positive provisions concerning workers. MPs should also ensure provisions are included concerning enforcement and monitoring mechanism.
- MPs to ensure that their domestic labour laws are aligned with ILO standards to ensure that TPPA will not overshadow domestic labour legislations.
- Specific on SAARC, Caucus Members from Pakistan, will update the Caucus on the preparations for next year's SAARC Summit

Networking/Cooperation with relevant stakeholders

- Parliamentarians to work closely with the Executive branch of government to ensure policy coherence and good governance
- Work with UN agencies at country level in monitoring all relevant UN Conventions.
- Work with trade unions and civil society organisations. At the regional level, the Caucus could work with SARTUC (SAARC) and ASETUC (ASEAs the current Chair, Sri Lanka has conducted 3 Senior Officials

Strengthening the Caucus/Moving Forward

- A South Asia inter-parliamentary forum to provide space for MPs to provide space for information exchange and learn from each other's' experience in pushing the migrants' agenda. The first meeting will be held in Kathmandu on 10-11 December 2015.
- Pursue the agenda of having a National level parliamentary Caucus on Labour migration which will serve as a platform for more discussion on labour migration. This has been one of the recommendations from the last two years.
- Potential issues to be tabled for the next 2-3 years: Impact of trade agreements on migrant workers; Government-to-government agreements; Recruitment
- In terms of structure/modalities, it was suggested to provide space for interaction with CSOs ; bring together CSOs and the Caucus members in succeeding meetings
- Organise country visits/dialogues between MPs from countries of origin and destination

III. Record of key points made during the discussions (including identified problems/challenges and good practices)

Presentation on the Agenda for a Social ASEAN

The Agenda for a Social ASEAN is an initiative of civil society, trade unions, and progressive parliamentarians from ASEAN which was conceived against the backdrop of ASEAN economic integration. The Agenda for a Social ASEAN

¹ The five thematic areas include the following: 1). Review of the qualification recognition processes including transnational accreditation and monitoring

2.) Promote cheaper, faster & safer transfer of remittances; 3.) Ethical labour recruitment practices; 4.) Effective pre-departure orientation and empowerment and; 5.) Developing a database on the economic trends in the destination countries

seeks to fill the missing component for a genuine economic integration which the ASEAN region will launch by the end of 2015. The Agenda aims to promote a strong social dimension into the current ASEAN integration process to address issues of inequality and race to the bottom.

Hon. Charles Santiago, Advisory Committee Member and Member of Malaysian Parliament, introduced the Agenda for Social ASEAN which aimed to address the missing social dimension in the ASEAN Economic Community. The Agenda seeks to address the race to the bottom and to ensure fair and equitable distribution of wealth among the ASEAN countries. He criticized the idea of ASEAN economic integration as it will only benefit multi-nationals and big businesses in ASEAN and will only widen the existing inequitable economic growth within and between countries.

The economic integration being envisioned is liberalization of goods, services and investments and skilled labour. The integration will only serve the interests of businesses and economic giants vying for the markets of ASEAN. It is blind to the issues of ASEAN people particularly workers in the informal sector and migrant workers. Despite of the so many declarations adopted, the interest of the business community is of paramount importance that its people. He also raised the issue of outsourcing which stripped workers of their labour rights particularly on job security and work related problems. He shared sample cases of migrant workers particularly in Malaysia to illustrate how outsourcing violates the labour rights of migrant workers.

He reiterated that economic development should go hand in hand with social development. A fair balance of labor and capital between business ASEAN and social ASEAN is necessary. He concluded his presentation by introducing the key elements of the Agenda which includes 1. Region-wide implementation of all ILO Core Labour Standards; 2. Access to Social Protection; 3. Institutionalisation of Democratic and Participatory and 4. Processes at National and Regional Levels.

Ms. Marina Christina, ASETUC, introduced the work of ASETUC in particular its engagement with ASEAN processes. She critiqued ASEAN's working mechanism and its less regard for consultative approach. While challenged by the way ASEAN works, ASETUC has to create its own platform where its constituents could openly discuss important issues concerning the labour sector especially in reaching out to those countries where unionization is not allowed. ASETUC engages governments both national and regional levels.

She then introduced the draft ASEAN agreement for all workers which was initiated by the Law Reform Commission of Thailand which ASETUC which is meant to have a regional labour standard that applies to all workers of ASEAN including migrant workers. The draft agreement calls for the integration of social and labour policies based on ILO standards in its integration process. The agreement if adopted will contribute to the betterment of the peoples of ASEAN and lessen the gap between countries of origin and destination. To popularize the agreement, ASETUC organised tripartite national and regional consultations. The agenda is also supported by the ASEAN Confederation of Employers. She appealed to the participants to support the agreement.

She concluded her presentation through a video explaining the draft agreement and what purpose it will serve for the peoples of ASEAN.

Ms. Maris de la Cruz, Network for Transformative Social Protection (NTSP), spoke about the poverty situation in ASEAN and how it could be addressed through a comprehensive social protection. She affirmed the statements of the previous speakers that the planned economic integration will only serve the interest of the few and the impoverishment of the majority. The ASEAN should not only imagine a better life business people but also imagine a life of dignity for all.

A life of dignity means being able to enjoy one's rights- right to decent work, right to social dialogue and right to social security and access to essential services among others. Everyone should imagine a comprehensive social protection not only for formal workers but also for those in the informal sector, the elderly, the disabled and the children. Social protection for all is one important factor to realise a social agenda for ASEAN.

To realise a life of dignity, a strong policy framework and convergence among the peoples of ASEAN is required. Groups from different social movements need to make a unified demand and talk beyond one's political spaces. Alliance building needs to be intensified.

Parliamentarians play a key role for this aspiration becomes a reality. Policy for social protection among ASEAN countries need to be institutionalised. The media is also another important sector to influence as they could help in building pressure and in raising public awareness to make this issue more visible. Mobilising different groups to lobby their respective parliaments is equally important.

Moving forward, one potential activity she suggested is to a follow-up program with parliamentarians to further deliberate on the issue. The issue of social protection will also be tabled in the APEC Peoples' Forum in Manila.

Interventions from the participants affirmed that the ASEAN Economic Integration will not benefit low-skilled and semi-skilled migrant workers. It will also further intensify brain drain as it will encourage freer movement of high-skilled workers. In order to address inequality among and within countries, participants recommended the following:

- ASEAN Economic Integration should also be able to provide more work in developing countries so that people will have an option to stay.
- Ensure that legislations introduced by Caucus members serve the interest of workers.

With respect to government-to-government agreement, there is a need to promote greater vigilance on how G2G is being implemented in the countries of destination. In the case of Bangladesh-Malaysia agreement, while the agreement is between the two countries, the recruitment of workers happen between the brokers from Malaysia and Bangladesh. These brokers are influential and could bribe anyone in the process. MPs have a role to play in this issue. MPs need to exert more effort to perform their oversight function. MPs need to look into the situation of their workers in countries of destination and initiate parliamentary debate on how to address issues faced by their workers abroad.

EU Information Exchange Visit/Updates on the work of the Caucus and its members

Hon. Sabiha Nazir, Advisory Committee and Member of Pakistan National Assembly, shared the result of the Advisory Committee Members to Brussels and Berlin on 15-19 June 2015. The information visit conducted in Brussels and Berlin came out of the meeting of the AC following the Caucus meeting in Kathmandu last year. The visit was initiated- to better understand specific challenges and identify possible solutions to create decent living and working conditions for all workers. The visit by the delegation of the Asian Inter-Parliamentary Caucus on Labour Migration provided an opportunity for fruitful exchanges between delegation members and Members of the European and German Parliament, officials, experts and trade unionists.

Key issues discussed during the visit were also shared. These issues included the following: 1. the various aspects of free movements of EU citizens; 2. migration of non-EU nationals to the EU; 3. EU's cooperation with third countries in this area and; 4. Situation of migrant domestic workers and undocumented migrant workers in the EU.

Free movements of EU citizens and migration are two different concepts. EU citizens moving to any EU Member States are not regarded as migrant workers. Migrant workers are those from the 3rd-country nationals. EU has no single migration policy and most of EU's migration policies biased for high skilled migrant workers.

EU policy framework for low-skilled migrants continue to be restrictive and leaning more towards border security which causes higher level of irregularity in the migration process which is a major factors for exploitation and abuse in the recruitment process as well as trafficking. EU's efforts in combatting trafficking and cooperation with third country

nationals are designed to protect its borders and prevent irregular migration and influx of low-skilled that threaten social cohesion. The only option for undocumented migrant workers is to return.

The anti-immigrant sentiments are not only triggered by xenophobia and with the rise of right wing parties but also because of the serious decent work deficits that even EU citizens experience particularly those at the lowest end of the labour sector.

In addition, Julia Mueller, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, said parliamentarians who are also passionate with the issue of migration face the dilemma of striking a balance between protecting their votes and pushing the agenda for migrants' rights. Having a migration agenda means losing the election.

Hon. Nazir concluded her presentation by showing newspaper clippings with a title "EU will get tough on migrant who will seek for a better life" which confirmed the reflections above.

Following the presentation, participants from Malaysia and the Philippines also gave their inputs and updates.

Taking off from the presentation of Hon. Nazir, the intervention from Malaysia stressed the need to balance the discourse in terms of recognizing the rights of local workers and migrant workers. There is a need to also look at the serious decent work deficits experienced by local workers to address the issue of anti-migrant sentiments. In the case of Malaysia where migrants' population constitute 40% of its workforce, local workers resent the presence of migrant workers because they take away jobs from them. This is because large companies prefer to hire migrant workers for cheap labour. This in turn affects local workers because they have to compete with migrant workers for low wages. Given the challenge in securing employment, the effect of low wages also affect local workers.

With respect to the Philippines, the work of the Committee on Overseas Workers Affairs (COWA) focused on the 3 bills that they have introduced in 2013 and support on on-going campaigns concerning OFWs. Two of these bills were passed – OWWA Charter and Credit Assistance Program. The OWWA Charter provides rules and procedures on the operation and administration of OWWA to improve its delivery of programs and services to OFWS. Meanwhile the Credit Assistance Program seeks to alleviate the financial plight of the overseas workers and their families during the first few months of the former's absence. The Magna Carta for the Seafarers bill is pending for approval.

COWA also initiated Committee hearings on some of the pressing issues faced by OFWS. These include the following:

- Stop of monopoly of all medical examination
- Integration of Terminal Fee. Migrant workers are exempted from paying terminal fee. However, because of the new policy of integration of terminal fee on airtickets, OFWs need to line up for refund. In most cases, OFWs are not able to get refund. The issue, where do unclaimed refunds go?
- Balikbayan boxes. The Bureau of Customs has released a memorandum to open OFW Balikbayan Boxes which opened for corruption. A strong campaign is on-going to prohibit the Customs from opening Balikbayan boxes
- Laglag-Bala. Carrying one single bullet is punishable by law. To extort money from departing OFWs, cases of "laglag bala" (putting bullets inside OFW's hand carried bags) have been reported. OFWs are detained and were asked for money to fix the situation.

The Sustainable Development Agenda: An overview and what role for parliamentarians

Mr. Paul Tacon, UN ESCAP, presented the history of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its where migration situates. Opportunities where Caucus members could engage particularly in its implementation were also discussed. The migration landscape in the Asia-Pacific was shared first to be able to connect how important migration is in the context of the sustainable development agenda.

Migration is an integral part of development and its positive contribution to the development of both countries of origin and destination cannot be refuted. Aside from remittances, migrants fill up the needed labour shortages in the destination countries. However, despite of the positive contribution of migrants, evidences show that migrants continued to be abused and exploited. Among others, these exploitations emanate from governance failures such as restrictive immigration policies that result to irregular migration and legal frameworks that permit exploitation of migrant workers. To ensure the maximum benefits of migration for development, improving migration governance is crucial.

Migration was not featured in the Millennium Development Goals. However, as the discussion on the sustainable development agenda began, there was a strong push from governments that migration should be included in the agenda. This was demonstrated in key governmental meetings such as the Rio+ 20, UN Task Force Report and the 2013 UN High Level Dialogue on Migration and Development.

The final Goals adopted by UN Member States do not include a stand-alone goal on migration, however. specific references to migration in the draft SDGs of the Open Working Group and the final Goals were featured on Goal 4, Goal 5, Goal 8, Goal 10, Goal 16 and Goal 17.

Mr. Tacon then focused on Goal 10 and the specific target relevant to migration and what it requires to implement this target which he summarized into three- international dialogue, respect for the rights of migrants and immigration policies that are in line with national development needs.

The Sustainable Development Goals are not binding but it is a political statement that governments are willing to cooperate with each other. The SDGs create a space for discussion and raise our concerns. For parliamentarians, this means advocating for action, monitoring implementation, budgeting for relevant measures, and using platform to counter negative perceptions of migration and migrants.

Ms. Agnes Matienzo, Migrant Forum in Asia, shared MFA's engagement on the post-2015 development debate and the result of the discussions from the series of consultations MFA organized in coming up migration agenda within the sustainable development agenda.

She explained that the series of consultations were meant to socialise the issue among its grassroots partners to ensure that there is no disconnect with the discussions at the global level and from the level where the partners and migrant workers operate.

Key focus areas of the set of migration specific targets and indicators developed from the consultations were shared to the participants. These areas were presented by categories- executive, legislative and judicial. Issues/demands identified resonate with the Agenda for a Social ASEAN particularly in the area of labour rights, decent work and social protection.

Ms. Matienzo reminded the participants that specific migration targets and indicators based from these key areas will be shared to the participants as a follow-up action. At the national level the agency tasked to develop, is the national statistics office-focus on quantitative information. What civil society can bring is to provide qualitative indicators.

Parliamentarians from each country could work with the MFA members in lobbying with governments to ensure that migration targets and indicators developed for each national consultation will be considered by the governments concerned. Concretely, this means working with relevant government ministries which look into the SDGs and see which of the issues or migration specific indicators governments could realistically work on in collaboration with civil society. This means, getting governments to commit and deliver. The Caucus has a strong role to play here.

Special Session: Protecting Migrant Workers – Cooperation between the Executive and Legislative

Hon. Thalatha Atukorale, Minister of Sri Foreign Employment Promotion and Welfare, shared about her work with the Ministry in protecting Sri Lankan migrant workers abroad.

Accordingly, there are about 5.6 million Sri Lankan migrant workers and 300,000 leave the country annually. Most of them are low-skilled and work in the construction and domestic work. Migrants' remittances account for 8% of Sri Lanka's GDP.

Migrants' issues increasingly receive attention not only because it's economic contribution but also because of increasing number of abuses committed against Sri Lankan migrant workers.

In response to the above, the role of the executive is to ensure that Sri Lankans abroad are protected. Beginning in 2007, the government has focused on sending high skilled workers and controlled migration of women in domestic work. The government has signed MOUs with destination countries to promote productivity and human dignity. It is also the responsibility of the Ministry to ensure the implementation of the migration policy which was legislated in 2008 particularly in the areas of service provision

The Ministry also established a national council composed of different committee that will look into each priority area to provide policy coherence and to safeguard the welfare of Sri Lankan migrant workers abroad.

To further protect its women, the Ministry also came up with some policies such as restrictions to those women who have under 5-year old children to work abroad, age ban for those under 21 years of age and background check to the family of the potential employer. The Ministry also created a database which contains all relevant information of migrant workers.

Sri Lanka also signed a number of bilateral agreements with receiving countries. She noted the challenges they encounter in negotiating BLAs with receiving countries due to different country contexts. Countries of origin to work together and have common demands would be a step forward to address abuse and exploitation of women migrant workers.

With respect to the role of parliamentarians in Sri Lanka, accordingly, those parliamentarians who are not part of the coalition are also sympathetic to the issues of migrant workers and have been cooperative as well. The legislative and executive branches of government should work collaboratively for effective policy response and program implementation.

Interventions from the participants raised the issue of the effectiveness of age bans and bilateral agreements in protecting migrant workers particularly women migrant workers.

Hon. Jasmine Lee, Member National Assembly of Korea, shared about her involvement on the SDGs as well as her work on multi-culturalism as the first naturalized Korean who has been part of the South Korea's parliament.

Lee is a member of the National Assembly of Korea's UN SDG's Forum, a platform initiated by the parliament to encourage and ensure that the legislators, the country and the different sectors of the society are doing their share to implement the 17 SDG's. The Forum started with 44 members and has grown significantly since its establishment in 2014. Accordingly, the Forum is a first of its kind being led by the

parliament and could be developed as a model according to Sec. Gen Ban Ki Moon for all other parliaments to initiate the same process to ensure the success of the implementation of the SDGs. The Forum will be registered as a formal organization next year. South Korea's model is one way to demonstrate parliamentarians important role in the implementation of the SDGs.

Multiculturalism can help develop certain policies to implement the SDGs. While multiculturalism is a new phenomenon in S. Korea and given the country's pride for homogeneity, promoting multiculturalism is a challenging task. However, given the increasing number of foreign population in the country (almost 5% and in some districts have more than 10%), introducing multiculturalism is a valid response. The concept of multiculturalism in S.Korea was introduced in 2000 when the country faced problems with the growing number of marriage migrants which was a project by local government units to tackle the issue of low birth growth. To date, the country continues to face declining birth growth and fast ageing population. The 3rd basic plan of the government which is set to be announced in December 2015 will include marriage migrants. This issue is currently being addressed through MOUs with 3 countries with the most number of marriage migrants – Mongolia, Vietnam and Thailand. One Under the MOU, pre-departure orientation for those marrying Korean nationals is required.

Looking at Goal 16 of the SDGs, S.Korea's response is to address the difficulties the country experience of being an inclusive multicultural society. In her role as an MP, she drafted and passed a bill on the promotion of multiculturalism to improve the perception of people regarding diversity. It includes providing lectures about multiculturalism and diversity in schools and in trainings for teachers and government employees. Multiculturalism is one way to reduce social disparities including those experienced by foreign workers.

Hon. Lee is also working on two targets under Goal 16 – Target 16.2 and Target 16.9. Target 16.2 refers to ending of abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children. In line with this, on 23rd November at the UN Headquarters, will be launching the International Parliamentary Coalition for Victims of Sexual Slavery. The purpose of the group is to cooperate as parliamentarians of our respective countries to raise the awareness of the international community to the issue of the infringement of human rights and the continuing sexual violence against all persons in conflict zones, and affected regions of natural disasters, murder and trafficking of persons for sexual exploitation ending sexual violence in all its forms. Members of the Caucuse were invited to be part of the Coalition. Lee represents S.Korea in the Steering Committee.

Target 16.9 focuses on providing legal identity for all, including birth registration by 2030. She drafted a new bill protecting the rights of all migrant children below 18 years of age, including the right to register their birth, even those who are undocumented. The bill is still under discussion within the committee and is facing negative feedback from people.

Groupwork 1: Country-level actions to contribute to the implementation of the SDGs particularly in the area of migration

The result of Groupwork 1 focused on the specific SDGs goals that the Members of the Caucus will push with their respective governments and parliaments. Concrete steps were also identified to move forward the migration agenda in the SDGs.

Group 1: Cambodia, Philippines and Thailand

Representatives from Cambodia, the Philippines and Thailand identified Goal 10 of the SDGs on reducing inequality within and among countries as an area of focus.

At country of origin, this goal could be attained through the following:

1. Introduction of fair/ progressive tax system;
2. Living wage;
3. Job creation by encouraging small-medium enterprises and;
4. Social protection

At the ASEAN level particularly in promoting global partnership, this means the following:

1. Emerging economies such as Singapore and Malaysia to invest in developing countries e.g. Singapore's Tiger Beer company in Cambodia which provides employment to Cambodia migrant workers. If more jobs are created in countries of origin, the number of migrant workers will potentially decrease. This also means less cost for migrant workers and governments of both countries of origin and destination.
2. Provide support in ASEAN member countries through legal, infrastructure development and capital
3. Free flow of all workers with equal protection, welfare and services
4. Explore the possibility of coming up with a common "currency"
5. Adopt ASEAN agreement on the protection of migrant workers

Concrete actions:

- Submit a bill to the parliament
- Coordinate with the Social Welfare Ministry and encourage them to take up the above issues
- Collaborate with NGOs that are already working on these issues

Group 2: Nepal

Group 2 was composed of MPs from Nepal, identified Goals 1, 4, 5, 8, 10 & 17 for their work around the SDGs. These goals resonate to the pressing needs of Nepali migrant workers. The post-2015 development agenda is also an area for regional cooperation identified by SAARC countries during its meeting in Kathmandu in 2014. With respect to migration, the following goals were identified as most relevant to be pursued.

- Goal 1 is very close to the experience of migrant workers. The government of Nepal needs to address the issue of poverty which is one of the push factors of migration of Nepalese.
- The focus on Goal 4 relates to the need for skills development trainings or vocational training programmes to ensure that Nepali migrant workers are equipped with necessary skills before working abroad. The group noted that being unskilled opens opportunities for exploitation.
- Goal 5 is also very relevant to the context of Nepal. The government needs to step up efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls including trafficking.
- Goal 8 also supports the call for the promotion and protection of the labour rights and safe working conditions for all workers including migrant workers. This goal also recognizes the rights of workers in precarious employment which most of Nepali migrant workers are found working.
- Goal 10 also tries to address the high recruitment cost that Nepali migrant workers have to bear in order to obtain employment abroad. It also recognizes the need to ensure that migrant workers are able to safely migrate which efforts to provide safe environment for migrant workers should be intensified,
- Goal 17 which supports effective collection of data is also an important area to monitor. For Nepali MPs, having effective database system is one step to developing sound migration policies.

Concrete steps include the following:

- To amend the prevailing laws and make necessary amendment, review policies in parliament.
- Introducing relevant motions in parliament social security etc.
- To make the parliamentary committee more effective.
- To develop good monitoring mechanism within parliament with.
- To make productive use of remittance.
- To reduce the cost of migration process.
- Labour agreements.

Group 3: Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh

For group 3, only Bangladesh and Pakistan had an action plan on SDGs because Hon. Atukorale had to leave for her flight. Hon. Sabiha Nazir will focus on Goal 5 which is on gender equality and empowerment of women and girls. Gender inequality in Pakistan is a major concern. In the last election in 2008, women in remote areas were not allowed to vote. Education is only for boys. Harassment on women is also prevalent.

A women parliamentary caucus to implement gender equality was established to address the concern of women who have been experiencing domestic violence.

For Bangladesh, the post-2015 development agenda is an issue that the government of Bangladesh strongly supports particularly in the area of migration. The government has set up mechanisms to monitor the working conditions of Bangladeshi migrant workers and to ensure their security and safety. The government also takes steps to ensure that remittances reach to the families of migrant workers. These initiatives will be continued and improved in relation to Bangladesh's commitment to implementing the SDGs particularly to those that relate to migration.

Specific on Goal 10 which focuses on reducing inequalities within and among countries, Hon. Alam shared Bangladesh's focus areas in terms of migration particularly in ensuring safe migration, data collection, bilateral labour agreements to protect Bangladesh migrant workers, reducing remittance cost and support to the Bangladesh Missions abroad.

A South Asia inter-parliamentary forum to provide space for MPs to provide space for information exchange and learn from each other's' experience in pushing the migrants agenda.

MPs to support the call for regional minimum standards to ensure that migrant workers irrespective of nationality will enjoy the same rights and equal protection; SAARC and Colombo Process are spaces to discuss these issues.

Groupwork 2: Concrete steps at regional level

Hon. Pemba Lama, Member Constitutional Assembly of Nepal, gave updates on SAARC particularly on Point 12 (Post -2015 Development Agenda) and Point 21 (labour migration) of the 2014 Kathmandu Declaration.

With respect to the post-2015 development agenda, SAARC focuses on addressing trafficking as an issue that is commonly shared by SAARC countries.

With regard to migration, Lama, shared the efforts being done by her government to address the issues concerning Nepali migrant workers. She noted that with the new constitution, discussions are going to amend the foreign employment act. This is a window where MPs could seize and ensure that issues raised in the Caucus meeting could be raised. The government of Nepal also drafted an Action Plan to implement Point 21. The Action Plan was

circulated to concerned ministries of other SAARC Countries for review. The Action Plan will be tabled in next year's SAARC Summit.

Hon. Lama also proposed some actions which MPs could consider in order to push the integration of migration in the national development plans and further the migration agenda among SAARC countries. These include the following:

- A campaign to mainstream migration in the national development plans. Decent work, job generation and effective use of remittances should be lobbied.
- Formalization of informal sectors is another area that MPs could support. The ILO has adopted a Recommendation concerning the transition from the informal to formal economy.
- Push the agenda of having a National level parliamentary Caucus on Labour migration which will serve as a platform for more discussion on labour migration.
- Mobilization of the UN agency to monitor all relevant UN Conventions.
- Work with trade unions and civil society organisations. At the regional level, the Caucus could work with SARTUC (SAARC) and ASETUC (ASEAN)

Given that the next SAARC Summit will be hosted by Pakistan, Hon. Nazir, will update the Caucus on the preparations for next year's SAARC Summit.

Hon. Thalatha Atukorale, gave updates about the Colombo process and informed participants that Sri Lanka currently sits as the Chair of the Colombo Process.

Before proceeding with the updates, she gave a quick overview of the Colombo Process. The Colombo Process is a forum for Asian labour sending countries to discuss issues concerning labour migration that are of common interest and concern.

Under Sri Lanka's Chairmanship, the focus of the CP will center on:

- Review of the qualification recognition processes including transnational accreditation and monitoring
- Promote cheaper, faster & safer transfer of remittances
- Ethical labour recruitment practices
- Effective pre-departure orientation and empowerment
- Developing a database on the economic trends in the destination countries

As the current Chair, Sri Lanka has conducted 3 Senior Officials Meetings (SOM). The last SOM meeting held in Colombo reiterated the need for developing framework for skills training and recognition aligned with the destination countries. It also affirmed the need to advance fair and ethical recruitment. The meeting also endorsed the implementation of Comprehensive Information and Orientation Programmes for migrant workers which shall include awareness of health and well-being. It also affirmed the development of regional modules for pre-departure training and regional guide for the pre-departure modules and discussed ways on how enhance further joint activities supported by the Abu Dhabi Dialogue and the CP on common thematic areas including the need to identify national focal points relevant to the thematic areas of the ADD on the labour mobility and recruitment among others

As the overseas workers population increases in number and diversify in terms of destination and source, there impact is increasingly felt. Hence, the Colombo Process becomes an important space for dialogue among sending countries and expand the discussion with the participation of receiving countries.

Atukorale shared the sending countries do share common concerns and thus the need to work together for the benefit of migrant workers is a must. She recommended MPs to initiate dialogues with concerned government ministries and share ideas on how to effectively implement the five thematic areas.

Israfil Alam, Member of Bangladesh Parliament, shared that the government of Bangladesh will host the 9th Global Forum on Migration and Development in December 2016. Bangladesh as a country of origin has been actively participating in this Forum since its beginning. Migration is an important issue for Bangladesh given the increasing number of Bangladesh migrant workers abroad. In the context of Bangladesh, migration is an important alternative to provide people with employment. Migrant workers remittances have contributed immensely to the development of Bangladesh. During its Chairmanship, Bangladesh commits to pursuing migration in the sustainable development agenda and to ensure discussion on the rights of migrant workers and members of their families.

Alam appealed to the Caucus members to engage in this important dialogue through their national governments.

Hon. Charles Santiago, Member of Malaysian Parliament, shared about the developments in the ASEAN region. In addition to what he shared on Day 1, he reminded the participants that the ASEAN Member States on its November 2015 Summit will launch the ASEAN Community and reveal its vision beyond 2015 and the Summit also hopes to adopt two important documents on the trafficking convention and the migrant workers instrument.

He emphasized the need for binding agreement where monitoring process and enforcement mechanism are in placed together with some financial support coming for the nearest countries in South East Asia. If not of these 3 we are wasting our time.

With regard to the migrant instrument, he reiterated that Malaysia and Singapore are the biggest stumbling block in its adoption as they cannot agree on how the mobility of migrant workers within the region should be regulated. It is still on going and he thinks that CSOs have given up to this process as its going nowhere. He pointed out how the ASEAN process is highly influenced by the notion of non-interference and consensus.

With regard to the SDGs, Santiago is not very positive if (ASEAN) governments will be able to deliver. He gave Malaysia as an example. While Goal 4 of the SDGs talks about universal access to free education, budget for education in Malaysia was significantly cut. Achieving the SDGs in the region is problematic given how ASEAN governments' budget cuts on essential services and dependency on private sector.

A strong push from outside is needed if people want to Malaysia to deliver. Change is not going to come from the inside. He reiterated the huge responsibility on the part of CSO, progressive parliamentarians and trade unions and the journalism society to push for the changes.

He noted how countries of Southeast Asia compete with each other with some joining RCEP led by China and TTPA by the US which shows how labour for example is weak vis a vis capital.

Under the investment chapter of the Transpacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA), corporations can challenge or sue governments, the executive as well as the court decision. This gives them more power over governments. In the labour chapter, there is no enforcement mechanism. This trade agreement creates a powerful business class, business community, business ASEAN whereas the people's rights, labour workers' rights and migrants' rights are completely sidelined. This is a demonstration how governments directly or indirectly participate in the process which exploit its people.

Under the investment chapter of the Transpacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA), corporations can challenge or sue governments. This gives them more power over governments. In the labour chapter, there is no mechanism to empower migrant workers.

MPs should be able to influence discussion on FTAs and ensure that provisions that will safeguard workers' rights are included. In practice, most FTAs do not include provisions on labour if they do exist, they do not benefit workers but only the companies. FTAs should also have enforcement and monitoring mechanism to ensure that these agreements could be enforced in countries of destination. He reminded the participants that in most cases these

FTAs are more powerful than local/national laws. In some instances, national laws may be amended to accommodate the demands being made by powerful economies on how to regulate business e.g. using Japan's or China's model.

Hon. Santiago warned participants that if this TPPA is signed, the cost of basic commodities will significantly increase. He encouraged participants to review TPPA's labour section as it includes provisions on migrant workers. He also encouraged Caucus members to ensure that their domestic labour laws are aligned with ILO standards to ensure that TPPA will not overshadow domestic labour legislations. He also requested MFA to put together a paper consolidating all recommendations on labour which came out of the meeting which the Caucus could use to lobby with their respective governments.

IV .Analysis of key points and recommendations

The points raised by speakers on the Social ASEAN Agenda provided a greater understanding of the developments happening in the ASEAN region and how the economic integration will significantly impact migrant workers particularly the low-skilled and semi-skilled workers. The call for a Social Asean Agenda resonates with the goal of the sustainable development goal which is to ensure that no one is left behind. In the context of migration, this means that any regional economic integration should make migration work for all not only to a few. It should be opened to liberalising not only goods and capital but also the movement of ALL "natural persons" to ensure that all benefits from the integration and the missing social dimensions of development are addressed.

ASEAN's preferential treatment to high skilled labour and policy responses on irregular migration fail to recognize that much movement in the region is informal and concentrated in low-skilled sectors.

The key demands of the Social ASEAN Agenda align with the principles and demands of migrants' civil society in particular in terms of protecting the vulnerable sectors (in the case of migrant workers, the low-skilled) and protecting the human rights and labour rights of migrant workers.

The information received on the SDGs provided parliamentarians with an understanding of the process and how they could contribute in advancing the migration in the sustainable development agenda particularly at county-level. While some expressed skepticism on the credibility of government to deliver, the inclusion of migration in the post-2015 development opens an opportunity for parliamentarians to demand accountability from governments and monitor progress in terms of achieving the targets and goals related to migration that are more applicable to their country contexts.

Promoting multiculturalism is an area that is worth exploring to address the issue of racism and xenophobia and reduce social disparities. It will promote positive image about migrant workers and recognition of their contributions to the host countries which would have significant impact on how migrant worker will be treated. On one hand, unless governments seriously look into the erosion of workers' rights and address the serious decent work deficits that even local workers experience, migrant workers will continue to suffer from cheap wages and bad working conditions. Having a decisive role in policy making, it is important that MPs ensure that their domestic labour laws are aligned with ILO standards. Coordination with the executive is important to ensure that policies are effectively implemented. As currently exists in some countries, one platform where these issues could be discussed is through existing Committees on labour or migrant workers in the parliament.

In the case of SAARC, Nepal has taken an active role, an opportunity that the Caucus needs to seize. The Caucus has active members from the country but outside pressure from other SAARC countries is needed to ensure that SAARC governments deliver on its commitment to advance labour migration. It is in this juncture, that Caucus members need to make the issue of labour migration more visible in parliamentary debate.

The idea to pursue the establishment of a national parliamentary Caucus on Labour Migration is another proposal that is worth exploring.

The call for regional minimum (labour) standards affirmed the need to monitor discussions in key regional consultative processes because these are spaces where governments from both countries of origin and destination discuss issues concerning labour migration that are of common interest and concern.

Networking and Cooperation with relevant stakeholders such as civil society organisations and trade unions are important given their access to migrant workers and pressing issues they encounter. Civil society will be able to provide evidence-based information which MPs could use to make a strong case for introduce bills or amendments to existing legislations that will serve the best interest of migrant workers and members of their families. Further, information gathered could also be used in holding the executive to effectively implement policies and commitments made by governments.

With respect to the gains of the Caucus, participants including new members of the Caucus, found the program a worthy exercise which needs to be pursued as this gives them an opportunity to get a better understanding of the issues experienced by migrants, learn from the work of other MPs and collectively discuss on how they could use their mandate to pursue a rights agenda.

PRESS STATEMENT

5th Annual Assembly of the Asian Inter-Parliamentary Caucus on Labour Migration *The Sustainable Development Agenda: The role of parliaments in translating global goals to concrete actions*

Members of the Asian Inter-Parliamentary Caucus on Labour Migration representing Bangladesh, Cambodia, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, South Korea and Sri Lanka gathered in Kuala Lumpur on 13-14 November 2015 for its 5th Annual Assembly to discuss how they could actively engage in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that UN Member States adopted on 25 September 2015.

In the immediate aftermath, Members of the Caucus strongly condemn the terrorist attacks in Paris and stand in solidarity with the peoples of France. These incidents call for UN member states to “strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation, for building capacities at all levels to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime” as outlined in Goal 16² of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Caucus rejects the scapegoating of migrants in the aftermath of such incidents and highlights the ongoing experience of migrant workers vis-à-vis xenophobia and racial and religious profiling.

The Caucus welcomes the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in particular for finally recognizing migration as an integral part of national and regional development. Migrants and migration play an important role in the development of origin, transit and destination countries. The Caucus, however, would like to emphasise that aside from maximising the development benefits of migration, stakeholders³ must put premium on rights and protection. The fulfillment of all migrants’ rights and the protection and promotion of their well-being, including their families, are essential to maximise the benefits of migration.

Recognising the uneven distribution of wealth among countries in the region and the failure of the current economic development paradigm which created unemployment and a lack of decent employment making the movement of people a necessity rather than a choice, the Caucus calls on governments to commit to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that leaves no one behind.

The Caucus also highlights the need to ensure that vulnerable sectors of society should be given paramount importance, in particular migrant workers and women migrants, who because of their status as migrants are discriminated against and are excluded from social and legal protection, social support and welfare programs.

The Caucus calls on parliaments and parliamentarians to work with civil society and stakeholders in monitoring its effective implementation and to ensure that migration is included in national development agenda. Members of the Caucus also commit to strengthening their legislative power and oversight function to ensure governments’ accountability to implementing the Agenda and that policies that respect the human and labour rights of all workers including migrant workers are in place.

In anticipation of the ASEAN Economic Community, the Caucus urges ASEAN Member countries to prioritise a people-centered approach. The Caucus calls upon ASEAN governments to ensure that workers’ rights are protected and promoted and inequality addressed the context of the economic community. ASEAN must hold true to its vision of a sharing and caring ASEAN where the people’s rights and demands stand above markets and profits, and where the benefits of regional integration are distributed fairly among the people. ASEAN Economic Community should not sacrifice peoples’ rights over business and investment interests.

² Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

³ Government, trade unions, employers, employment agencies, private sector, regional bodies.

The Caucus welcomes the proposal for an Agenda for a Social ASEAN initiated by a group of individuals, civil society organisations and trade unions from ASEAN. The Agenda for a Social ASEAN aims to promote a strong social dimension into the current ASEAN integration process to address issues of inequality and race to the bottom. Among the core demands of the Agenda for a Social ASEAN are a region-wide implementation of all ILO core labour standards and access to social protection for all. It also calls for the urgent adoption of the ASEAN Framework Instrument on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers. The Agenda provides a base to democratize ASEAN. As such, it offers a genuine alternative model of development and regional integration.

The Caucus also endorses the draft ASEAN Agreement on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Workers proposed by Law Reform Commission of Thailand and supported by ASEAN Services Employees Trade Union Council (ASETUC). The draft agreement calls for the integration of social and labour policies based on ILO standards in its integration process.

The Caucus discussed the importance of equal treatment of migrant and local workers in bilateral labour agreements between countries of origin and destination and urges governments to make these agreements transparent, public and binding.

Finally, the Caucus calls on the South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation Council (SAARC) countries to develop a concrete plan of action on the implementation of Points 12 and 21 of the Kathmandu Declaration 2014.⁴

⁴ Point 12 of the Declaration states that SAARC will initiate an Inter-Governmental process to appropriately contextualize the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the regional level. Point 21 focuses on the collaboration and cooperation on safe, orderly and responsible management of labour migration from South Asia to ensure safety, security and wellbeing of their migrant workers in the destination countries outside the region.