Inter-regional Expert’s Meeting on Realizing a Fair Migration Agenda: Labour Flows between Asia and the Arab States

Annapurna Hotel, Kathmandu, Nepal, 3-4 December 2014

A two day Inter-regional Experts Meeting on Realizing a Fair Migration Agenda: Labour Flows between Asia and the Arab States was held on 3-4 December 2014, in Kathmandu Nepal. The meeting was an opportunity for scholars, officials, employers and trade unionists to examine – in an informal setting – the potential for reform and discuss ways forward on a Fair Migration Agenda.

The Fair Migration Agenda, as outlined by ILO Director General Guy Ryder at the International Labour Conference (ILC) in June this year, calls for “constructing an agenda for fair migration which not only respects the fundamental rights of migrant workers but also offers them real opportunities for decent work.” A Fair Migration Agenda is one in which there is a fair sharing of the prosperity that migrants help to create. This can be achieved through building migration regimes that respond equitably to the interests of countries of origin and destination, migrant workers, employers and nationals.

The largest migrant flows from South Asia and parts of Southeast Asia are to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states, who currently rely on foreign labour to fill almost 90 per cent of private sector jobs, often in construction or domestic work. In total there are now over 22 million migrant workers in the GCC countries, most of them from South and Southeast Asia. Every year more than two million workers go to the GCC from South Asia. These numbers will likely rise further given the dearth of enough work opportunities in the home countries and labour force growth, combined with employment opportunities and labour shortages in the GCC due to for instance massive infrastructure projects such as those associated with the Qatar World Cup 2022 and the UAE World Expo 2020.

The expert meeting was structured around five themes: fair recruitment; decent employment and working conditions for domestic workers and construction workers; recognizing the skills of potential and returning workers; increasing the development impact of migration; and promoting partnerships among government and social partners. These topics were covered in a background report that served as a basis for discussions during the meeting. Leading experts in the region made a technical assessment of key issues and the way forward to realise a fair migration agenda. A good degree of consensus was reached among technical experts to improve the management of labour migration flows and ensure better protection of women and men workers in these flows. A report of proceedings of the meeting is forthcoming.

Following on from the experts’ meeting, working groups will be established; and within Asia and the GCC there will be meetings with ILO constituents to disseminate the highlights of the discussions and common points, and develop an action-plan around the five themes. The results of these technical meetings will inform the planning and deliberations of the inter-regional ministerial meeting planned for the last quarter of 2015.

For further information please contact:

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