

# Initial Statement of Migrante International to the United Nations Committee on Migrant Workers

*on its tenth session, 23 April 2009*  
United Nations, Geneva, Switzerland

**M**igrante International\* (Migrante) welcomes its first opportunity to participate in a session of the UN Committee on Migrant Workers. The statement draws largely from eleven years of experience of Migrante in the promotion and protection of the rights and welfare of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs), in the Philippines and abroad, and incorporates the inputs of its member organizations. Migrante has read and wished to respond to the Initial Report of the Philippine State to the UN Committee dated 25 January 2008 and to the written replies by the Philippine state on the list of issues received by the UN Committee regarding the said initial report dated 2 February 2009.

## Introduction

In an initial report submitted by the Arroyo government to the Committee on Migrant Workers on 7 March 2008 (CMW/C/PHL/1), the Philippines proudly declared that, in 2005, the documented overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) had breached the one million mark in deployment. Succeeding years saw the rate increasing further with the Philippine state setting the mark at two million by 2010.

Deployment averages 3,000 workers a day, pushing the Philippines to rank third as a top-sending country. Filipinos numbering 8 million, or approximately a tenth of the population, now live and work in 194 countries and territories around the world, with concentrations in North America, Middle East, Asia-Pacific and Europe.

This migration which started by waves in the course of Philippine history has become an almost daily phenomenon since the government initiated its labor export program (LEP) in the 1970s. What was initially meant as a temporary measure to address the country's unemployment problem has become a regular fixture, massive and systematic in scope, and bruted about as a tool for national development. This is because remittances from migrants have kept the Philippine economy continuously afloat. From \$659 million in 1984 these remittances have grown to a staggering \$16 billion dollars by the end of 2008.

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*\*Migrante is the single largest global alliance of Filipino migrants and their families with currently over 100 organizations in 22 countries, and with its center based in the Philippines.*

*Thirteen years after it was founded in 1996, Migrante leads the fight for Filipino migrants such as the landmark case of Flor Contemplacion, a domestic worker in Singapore, who was unjustly hanged for a murder she did not commit. Sparking indignation and outrage in the Philippines and globally, the case led to the enactment of Republic Act (RA) 8042, otherwise known as the Migrant Workers and Filipinos Act of 1995.*

*Up to this day, Migrante launches campaigns and mass mobilizations to bring to public attention the issues of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) many of which are human rights violations. It also works in solidarity with migrants of other races and nationalities leading to the formation of the International Migrants Alliance (IMA) in 2008. Apart from these, Migrante undertakes the following:*

- a. Education and training to raise awareness on rights of OFWs and their families;*
- b. Media campaigns to highlight specific issues confronting OFWs;*
- c. Lobby/advocacy work with Congress and other migrant-focused government agencies;*
- d. Dialogues with foreign employers, recruitment agencies, embassies, schools, etc.; and*
- e. Services from legal to paralegal assistance, counseling, shelter.*

*Migrante has become a vital force in creating public awareness about the plight of migrant workers. It takes a very critical stance against the Philippine government's labor export program which turns OFWs into the country's primary commodity for export and its principal dollar earner.*

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The value of these remittances cannot be underestimated. Aside from supporting domestic demand mostly for food, education and real estate, labor export is the number one dollar earner in the country. Remittances amounting to \$16.4 billion in 2008 contributed to 10.2% of the GDP, had offset the growing trade deficit (-\$7.5 billion in 2008 versus -\$5 billion in 2007), and helped the current account in surplus. However, one thing is apparent – these remittances were earned at tremendous costs to Filipino migrants and their families who had to endure long years of separation and suffer from various forms of exploitation, abuse, discrimination, violence and terrorism.

As millions of lives are put on the line, a rights-based approach to migrant issues such as the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrants and Members of their Families is significant for being timely and comprehensive. That the Philippine state had signed the Convention is a welcome move.

Yet, despite its avowed adherence to the Convention, the Philippine state has left out so many things in practice and many times had been caught red-handed over the abuse and criminal neglect of its own citizens. Members and advocates of Migrante International from many parts of the globe attest to this with their own life experiences on an almost daily basis. The last five years prior to the Philippine state's report to the Committee had seen this neglect mounting.

### **The Migration Context**

Examples are presented below. But one must also go beyond the mere violation of rights and see the underlying context that makes migrants vulnerable to abuse. This is the socio-economic situation in the Philippines coupled with LEP that has become the breeding ground for rights abuse. A pre-industrial, backward and agrarian economy with all its attendant iniquitous structures cannot provide enough jobs, food, and homes for its growing population. So preparing its citizens to work abroad has become a priority. In the words of Manila Archbishop Gaudencio Rosales, this is a clear indication of “government's economic failure.” On top of this is a government that has earned notoriety for violating the human rights of its own citizens and adjudged by the World Bank as the most corrupt in Asia.

Conditions are bound to get even worse as the global financial and economic crisis hits industrial and underdeveloped nations. Already, migrant workers are starting to come home as a result of retrenchment since October 2008. In the Asia-Pacific alone, about 60,000 are expected to come home from Taiwan, 50,000 from South Korea, 10,000 from Japan, and 7,000 from Macau.

But local jobs have become even more precarious. The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) said that about 39,000 jobs had already been lost in the Philippines from October 2008 to January 2009. Still around 420,000 workers from the electronics industry are bound to lose their jobs and 120,000 from the garments industry. The export processing zones such as in Cavite and Subic are hardest hit with the closure of factories and foreign companies such as FedEx locating their business instead in cheaper locales such as China. Work rotations, reduced work week, wage cuts, and contractualization are starting to be the norm, apart from layoffs. Then, there are 800,000 fresh graduates joining the labor force each year. An over-supply of nursing graduates is already making a beeline to call centers, if not racing to leave on student visas abroad or applying as caregivers.

Despite the global crisis, deployment is up by 25.3% in end January, higher than last year's. Remittances according to the Central Bank may slow down by 4% during the year in as much as the crunch is felt by migrants abroad. But government merely shrugs this off, and drives even harder to sound optimistic.

All in all it seemed the Arroyo government is confident that net deployment will remain strong. The POEA claims 400,000 unfilled positions abroad for Filipino migrants and predicts that only 50,000 Filipinos will be sent home this year due to layoffs. Also, it is assumed that demand for service workers such as nurses, domestic helpers and caregivers will continue to be high in the context of aging populations in developed countries and shortages of healthcare and other services in the Middle East. Just recently the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia sought to hire 5,000 nurses and other medical practitioners. Such high demand is seen as offsetting the decrease of Filipino workers in other occupations.

All these indicate that the Philippine state is ever more unlikely to turn inward and develop the national and local economy especially in the face of the global economic crisis. People's clamor for a true agrarian reform

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and building a strong industrial base for the country to ensure jobs and livelihood for its people remain pipe dreams. There is no self-sustaining economy to speak of. Also, while other countries of the world are taking stock of their options and turning protectionist, this government is selling Philippine labor cheaper than before to an ever widening labor market (cite seafarers unified contract). But the reason is not just economics. Not to be glossed over is the fact that a recourse to labor migration is necessary to defuse social tensions that may arise from a vast and widening army of unemployed in the country.

Four decades have passed since the Philippine state resorted to overseas employment as a temporary solution. The global financial and economic crisis has manifested in clearer terms that labor deployment is a perpetual strategy. Yet despite years of deployment, and massive flows of remittances, the country is far worse off than before (check indicators). Worse, the export of human resources has caused dependency on foreign markets and exposed the widespread violation of the rights of migrants and their families.

By this time, it is almost unimaginable how the Arroyo government— weakened by corruption, questions of legitimacy, and charges of human rights violations — can come to the protection and rescue of migrants and their families. Millions of OFWs are scattered in 194 countries and vulnerable to abuse before, during, and after the course of migration. Cases of distress handled by the state come nowhere near one percent of total OFWs deployed, not because problems are few but that government's lack of personnel, inefficiency, corruption, and negligence is common knowledge to OFWs. Yet the state's comprehensive infrastructure for overseas deployment seemed the envy of other labor-sending states. And maybe only because the state has used its machinery to effect efficient collection of fees rather than to monitor and address the plight of migrants and their families

For all the problems that migrants and their families are suffering, Migrante International dares to put the responsibility squarely and principally in the hands of the Philippine state. That it continues to rely on overseas employment as a pillar for national development is bad enough. That it promotes labor migration yet cannot protect the rights of its citizens abroad is horrifying, if only for the migrants' sheer numbers and impact.

In the end, despite ratifying the Convention, the Philippine state under the Arroyo administration continues to pay lip service to this landmark document and in many instances contravenes its parts, unsurprisingly even its own Philippine laws, as shown below.

## **Comments on the Initial Report of the Philippine Government**

### **Part I: General Information**

The GRP report (cited as the Report here) listed several laws, executive and administrative orders, that fulfill its obligations to the Convention. However, upon perusal, many of these laws are contravened by the aggressive promotion by government of overseas employment.

In its most recent directive, Presidential Administrative order 247 dated 04 December 2008 challenges POEA into "crafting aggressive overseas employment strategies that defy the trend of a constricting job market." This directive is in breach of Section (2) of RA8042 which states that "While recognizing the significant contribution of Filipino migrant workers to the national economy through their foreign exchange remittance, the State does not promote overseas employment as a means to sustain economic growth and achieve national development."

With deepening global and financial crisis, the Arroyo government now considers its labor export policy (LEP) as the cornerstone of its economic life-saving program. Of course, the LEP is nothing new, perpetrated and intensified by past and present administrations. Marcos incorporated overseas employment in the 1974 Labor Code purportedly as a measure to curb unemployment and to generate revenues for the country's balance of payment deficits. Aquino further integrated the LEP in its economic recovery program. Ramos, through its Medium-Term Philippine Development Program (MTPDP) (4), practically conscripted migrant Filipinos as commodities or products to be sold and bought at the whim of those who benefit from cheap and docile labor, and did so under the guise of "internationally-shared human resources". Estrada continued to pursue this course. And now Arroyo is openly marketing Filipino labor as its number one vendor.

The Report also hardly reflects the grim realities of Philippine migration: increasing feminization of overseas labor, increasing number of irregular migrants and the social costs of migration. Hardly a day passes without any news being reported about a case of an OFW whose right has been violated or abused or discriminated upon.

## **Part II: General Principles**

### ***A. Articles 1 and 7: Principle of non-discrimination***

LEP is in violation of the right of overseas Filipino workers to full protection of labor as embodied in Sec. 2. of the Declaration of Policies of RA8042, or known as the Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995. When LEP was implemented in 1974, the State had already absolved itself of its responsibility to migrant workers and made the OFWs pay for their own services and benefits. In the beginning, it set up a Welfare Fund for Overseas Workers at US\$25 per OFW for lifetime membership, but later collecting the same amount on a per contract basis from the employers and OFWs under the OWWA (Overseas Workers Welfare Administration) Omnibus Policies issued by the OWWA Board of Trustees on 19 September 2003. This meant excluding undocumented migrants and those whose contracts are inactive from the OWWA trust fund.

### ***B. Article 83: Right to an effective remedy, par. 77-87***

Once again, the Report mentions several laws and mechanisms that show off government's effective remedies but a wide gap exists between words and practice. In truth, OFWs have very little opportunity to avail of effective remedies from the State.

The government, in particular the Department of Foreign Affairs, has been remiss in providing legal assistance to many OFWs in distress such as the beheading of Jenifer Bidoya. Brought to national attention during the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) in Manila, this case showed another incidence of government's "criminal neglect." No less than Consul General Ezzedin Tago in a radio interview admitted that Bidoya, accused of killing an Arab for attempted rape, was just provided with a translator, not a lawyer, during his trial.

The Report is also silent on what remedies relatives of the distressed OFWs can take, especially in the light of POEA rules that recognize dealings only with the victim. This is very limiting especially when the OFW is merely transmitting its cries of help through text messages to the family.

In addition, in cases of illegal recruitment and deployment violations and other related offenses by recruitment agencies, the POEA can only apply sanctions on administrative cases such as suspension or cancellation of licenses. The conciliation/mediation program at POEA puts OFW victims always under duress and at a disadvantage. Once a victim has entered into settlement, he/she signs a waiver not to pursue other remedies such as monetary claims of salaries and benefits with the National Labor Relations Committee. Slow as the process is, OFW victims either withdraw their case or accept whatever one-sided settlement maybe reached during the conciliation.

Runaways, particularly in the Middle East, are usually advised by the Philippine Embassy or Consulate officials either to go back to their employers or pay deployment costs in exchange for their release and eventual repatriation. For criminal cases such as rape or murder, Philippine posts normally dissuade victims such as the case of "Grace" in Qatar. When she ran to the Philippine embassy after being raped by her employer, she was not even brought to the hospital for treatment nor was a case filed against the rapist. In another case, Normina Piang in Kuwait who had ran away from her abusive employer and sought refuge at the Philippine Embassy was turned over to the Police for absconding, and was subsequently raped in jail by three Kuwait policemen.

### ***C. Article 84: Duty to Implement Convention, par. 87-93***

It must be noted that RA8042 was hastily enacted by the Ramos government on 7 June 1995 to dampen an intense and growing social unrest. This was because of the State's bungling and negligence over the hanging of Flor Contemplacion, and NOT because of any obligation by the State to implement any of the Conventions of the UN. And though the Report outlines various mechanisms to promote migrants rights, it does not refer to its obligations in implementing the Convention.

**PART III: Human Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families**

***A. Article 8: Right to leave any country including own and to return, par.94-107***

The Report totally evades the issue of forced migration, a phenomenon in the Philippines and other undeveloped countries. The great number of people leaving the country because of extreme poverty and joblessness is not at all consistent with the spirit of the provision in the Convention nor is it in consonance with our own laws.

The report also is silent about the cases of many OFWs, especially in the Middle East, whose passports are held by employers. This practice infringes on the right to return to one's own country and RA8239 or the Philippine Passport Act of 1996. Section 3 (d) of the Act states: "Passport means a document issued by the Philippine government to its citizens and requesting other governments to allow its citizens to pass safely and freely, and in case of need to give his/her all lawful aid and protection." The practice of Philippine embassies to issue travel exits, in lieu of passports which they allow to be held by employers, to OFWs who have run away because of abusive employers, manifests the inutility of the Philippine government to protect the rights of its citizens in other countries.

It must also be mentioned that a new requirement for OFWs leaving the country, apart from a passport and work permits, is a Commission on Election certificate of registration. This again infringes on the right to travel.

***B. Articles 9-10: Right to be protected by law; Right to life; prohibition of torture; prohibition of inhuman or degrading treatment, par. 108-158***

The report reveals the complacency of government regarding the protection by law of migrant workers. Once again, the need to go through RA8042 is recommended as enactment of the law and compliance with the enacted law are two different things. It must be noted that many OFWs have turned to non-government organizations to seek assistance AFTER they have been frustrated by migrant related government agencies.

Meanwhile, the government's compliance regarding Article 10 is highly questionable. The human rights record of the government, as summarized in the Alston report has been exposed as one of the worst records in protecting human rights. Thus, it is no wonder that in cases of mysterious deaths where foul play seems to be involved or of cases of OFWs in deathrow, government does not even raise a squeak. The case of Edison Gonzales is one example. His allegations that he had been tortured by Saudi police did not push embassy officials to ask for an investigation of the case. After 2 years in detention in a Jeddah jail, it was only in December of last year that Edison was provided a lawyer by government. We assert that in most of such cases, no due process has been observed even by our Philippine embassies/consuls and government agencies at home.

***C. Article 11: Prohibition of slavery and forced labor***

Once again, compliance to Philippine laws AND the Convention is under question here. For example, the DOLE under then Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) called the Unified Contract with Saudi National Recruitment Committee and the Council of Saudi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SANARCOM). The MOU practically prohibits OFWs to leave their jobs even under objectionable working conditions. The House Committee on Labor and Employment Report of the 13th Congress on the unified contract found that the MOU violated RA8042 and POEA Standard Contract because it obligated the OFW to "accept whatever work, salary and benefits is given , even if those are already in violation of the terms in the POEA contract."

The report of the Women's Rights Division of the Human Rights Watch , "As If I Am Not Human': Abuses against Asian Domestic Workers in Saudi Arabia, on the conditions of migrant workers in Saudi Arabia exposed the continued existence of slavery and forced labor for domestic workers. Yet Saudi Arabia remains to be a top destination of OFWs and accommodates over a million Filipinos, many of them, domestic workers. Saudi is not a signatory to the Convention.

Cases of illegal recruitment also abound. The notorious Sentosa case proves that government has not done anything about illegal recruitment. Over 27++ nurses recruited in the United States of America(USA) signed a contract with a specific agency in the Philippines but were assigned to different health care facilities once in the USA. Moreover, the work demanded from them were different from what their contracts stipulated. The cases they filed in the Philippines were dismissed. In a dialogue initiated by Migrante and families of the nurses with

then POEA Administrator Rosalinda Baldoz, she admitted that there could be cause for illegal recruitment but government is more concerned about the case affecting the “thousands of jobs in the pipeline.”

***D. Articles 12, 13 & 26: Freedom of opinion and expression; freedom of thought, conscience and religion; right to join a trade union***

The report failed to mention the Calibrated Pre-emptive Response and PP1017 which curtailed the basis rights mentioned in Article 12, 13 and 26. A Migrante rally at Mendiola to condemn the continued criminal neglect of the Arroyo government on migrant workers last June 7, 2006, the day when Republic Act 8042 was enacted in 1995 after the hanging of Flor Contemplacion, a domestic helper, in Singapore, was not allowed. In fact, to hold rallies and demonstrations in Mendiola is not allowed.

Overseas, migrant workers cannot at all exercise these rights especially in the Middle East as Philippine Embassies and Consulates prohibit them from doing so. In 2005, more than 40 stranded OFWs held a rally inside the Philippine Consulate in Jeddah which ended with a Migrante leader and other OFW women housed at FWRC being badly beaten by Consulate personnel.

***E. Articles 14 & 15: Prohibition of arbitrary or unlawful interference with privacy, home, correspondence and other communications; prohibition of arbitrary deprivation of property, Articles 16 (1-4), 17, 24: right to liberty and security of persons, safeguards against arbitrary arrest and detention; recognition as a person before the law***

This section brings into mind once again the dismal record of the Philippines regarding the protection of human rights. Thus, it goes without saying that government’s obligation to protect its OFWs leaves much to be desired.

In the case of the raids conducted by Malaysian authorities on irregular migrants in Sabah, government hardly raised an eyebrow even as news reports raised excessive use of abuse on OFWs such as arbitrary arrest, forcible separation of children from their parents, etc.

Many OFWs in distress around the world have reported that they hesitate to go to the Embassy and consular authorities because officials hardly provide any concrete assistance. This shows how negligent government is in protecting OFWs in host countries and belies such mechanisms as the ATN which was described in the report as one of the 4 pillars of Philippine foreign policy.

***F. Article 16 (5-9), 18, 19: Right to Procedural Guarantees***

Philippines Embassies and Consulates are representatives of governments overseas mandated to ensure protection to all Filipino citizens overseas. However, in the Middle East, government officials turn over runaways, who were maltreated, raped and abused, to the Police authorities of receiving countries, instead of providing assistance to them. Those jailed with offenses are not readily provided with lawyers nor the barest of legal assistance. Detained OFWs are deprived of regular visitation and information regarding their cases by Philippine Embassy and Consulate officials. Families are not informed of the predicaments and developments of the case by the Office of the Undersecretary for Migrant Workers Affairs. The accused and their families are denied access to legal documents regarding the case.

In Sabah, Malaysia, during crackdowns, undocumented migrants are totally neglected. There is no Philippine consular representation for those arrested, detained and deported to ensure that their rights are ensured and protected. In a report made by 3 Fact Finding Missions in 2002, 2005 and 2008 by Migrante, undocumented migrants were detained in crowded detention cells. Muslim women were forced to undress by women jail guards before entering the detention cell for inspection. Some of them produced handicrafts that were sold outside without them receiving profits derived from the sale.

Men inside the prison are maltreated. At the slightest or no provocation at all, the Malaysian Police punished them by whipping their butts with rattan sticks. They were fed spoiled foods and were only given 1 glass/day. Their cash, jewelries, watches, etc. were arbitrarily confiscated. Medical attention was only available to the seriously ill or dying persons. Other violations include: no proper information to the immediate relatives of their arrest and they were made to sleep on a bare floor.

Government’s record in fulfilling its obligations under these provisions is recommended.

***G Article 20: Prohibition of imprisonment, deprivation of authorization of residence or work permit and expulsion merely on the ground of failure to fulfill a contractual obligation***

The cited DOLE provision is contrary to the Article 20 provision. How Philippine government officials protect OFWs should be investigated. Many OFW runaways are rendered 'undocumented' because their work permits have been canceled arbitrarily by employers in host countries. This is particularly true for OFWs in Saudi Arabia because of the existence of the MOU on the Unified Contract where the GRP actually ALLOWS Saudi employers to cancel work permits.

***H. Articles 21, 22 & 23: Protection from confiscation and/or destruction of ID and other documents; protection against arbitrary expulsion; right to recourse to consular or diplomatic protection***

The report focused on laws in the protection of the rights of aliens but hardly mentions anything about how it protects our OFWs abroad when they are being arbitrarily expelled from the host country. Apart from the case of the 'undocumented' in Sabah and runaways in the Middle East, another case to cite would be the experience of the retrenched workers from Taiwan whose rights were violated with no protest at all from the Philippine government officials in Taiwan. The more than 100 workers who were illegally/arbitrarily dismissed from work because of the crisis did not receive their just entitlements due them, nor did the company or the agency pay for their transport fare back home, contrary to Philippine law and the contract. Filipino government officials were not able to do anything to force the companies and agencies to honor the contract.

***I. Articles 25, 27 & 28: Principle of equality of treatment in respect of remuneration and other conditions of work and terms of employment; social security; and right to receive urgent medical attention***

The standard employment contract of the POEA varies from country to country based on the negotiations made between two countries. In 2007, POEA implemented the New POEA Guidelines on the Deployment of Household Service Workers (HSWs) which sets the minimum salary from US\$200 to US\$400. The rest are set based on the prevailing market forces and the existing minimum wage of the receiving country provided that it is not below the minimum wage in the Philippines and not based on the international standards.

Based on the cases handled by Migrante International, most of the complaints are underpayment or non-payment of salaries and benefits. Domestic migrant workers are live-in and; therefore, work long hours. Many have no day-offs and are uncompensated. Cases filed at the POEA and NLRC are not usually decided in favor of the victims as POEA's mechanism on conciliation favors recruitment agencies.

The POEA contract does not ensure security of tenure nor just and humane conditions of work. An OFW is tied to the two-year contract for land-based and 8-10 months for seafarers and to the immigration laws of host countries.

POEA has conceded to the conditions of host countries, recruitment agencies and employers on live-in arrangements and other employment provisions which are detrimental to OFWs making them more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. Employers can terminate contracts arbitrarily and work permits are immediately canceled. In Hong Kong, once an OFW is terminated s/he can only stay for 14 days. In Saudi Arabia, once an OFW leaves his/her employer for reasonable cause, he/she can be accused of absconding which is punishable by law. This conditions leads to more undocumented workers being detained and stranded.

The OWWA Omnibus Policies can be described as onerous for OFWs for several reasons:

a. OWWA Omnibus Policies allow gave a free hand to the Office of the President to easily access the money of OFWs entrusted to OWWA. MI has made several exposes on how the OWWA funds were used by the President for political objectives:

- In a handwritten instruction to OWWA Administrator Virgilio Angelo, The President ordered the questionable and unauthorized release of US\$293,500 from OWWA funds to General Cimat, head of the Middle East Disaster-Preparedness Team in 2003;

- The anomalous investment of P850 million pesos in the Smokey Mountain Participation Project Certificate where interest income was not fully collected until now. The investment was anomalous as it was only signed and decided by then OWWA Administrator Wilhelm Soriano.

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b. The OWWA Omnibus Policies practically stripped off salient programs of OWWA such as the medicare services and legal assistance program. It also scrapped the General Financial Assistance Program and the Pre-Departure Loan.

c. The OWWA Medicare Fund amounting to P530,382,446 from the P4 billion Trust Fund was transferred to the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PHIC). The first attempt was to transfer the whole P4 billion. As indicated by the Memorandum issued by then PHIC CEO/President Francisco Duque, the proposed transfer had a significant bearing on the 2000 elections and President Arroyo's program to distribute free PHIC cards to 8 million indigents. OFWs have to shell out a yearly contribution of P900/annum separate from the \$25 fee they pay OWWA for membership fees.

d. The OWWA Omnibus Policies allowed the OWWA Board of Trustees to decide on the use of OWWA Funds without any consultation with OFWs regarding the use of their money. To date, P6.8B each have been transferred to the Development Bank of the Philippines and the Land Bank of the Philippines at P3.4 billion each.

e. Thousands of OFWs who have tried to avail from OWWA benefits have been subjected to red tape and bureaucratic processes. They say that it is more difficult to get their rightful benefits from OWWA than looking for a needle in a haystack.

### **Bilateral Social Security Agreements**

The agreement on social security entered by the Government is hardly known by OFWs as information dissemination of same is very minimal, if not absent.

What is also significant in this report is the fact that the Philippines has not forged any similar agreements with any of the top destination countries of OFWs. Moreover, the government has forged other agreements such as the Unified Contract which contravenes laws that protect labor and migrant rights.

A more thorough study be made on the abuse of the au pair system wherein the au pairs are treated as domestic helpers and for the government to lift the ban on au pair deployment in Europe and engage pair receiving countries in talks towards the protection of the au pairs. A recent news report ([www.gmanews.tv](http://www.gmanews.tv)) cited that though there is a ban on sending au pairs, many OFWs end up in said countries as au pairs with no social benefits at all.

### ***J. Articles 29, 30 & 31: Right of a child of a migrant worker to a name; registration of birth and nationality; access to education on the basis of equality of treatment; respect for cultural identity of migrant workers and members of their family***

The children of the 'undocumented' deported from Sabah by Malaysian authorities in 2002, 2005 and 2007 are prime examples of how remiss the Philippine government is in implementing the Phil. Constitution and meeting its obligations to the Convention especially on the right of a child to a nationality. Children of parents with clearly Filipino parentage have not been recognized at all as Filipinos by Philippine government authorities, even while they were interned at the temporary shelter in Zamboanga City, Philippines. The DSWD, the agency that operates the center, do not have any records of these 'stateless' children and could not cite how many children they had in their shelter, much less their names and ages.

Meanwhile, children of migrant workers abroad cannot enroll in the PSO's and the Filipino Education and Heritage Program which are being managed by the Commission on Filipinos Overseas because they cannot afford the tuition fees. Moreover, only a limited number of schools are operative, and mostly in Middle East countries and less are even accredited by the Department of Education.

### ***K. Article 32: Right to transfer to the state of origin their earnings, savings and personal belongings***

What is noteworthy in this section is the MANDATORY obligation of OFWs to remit their earnings; for land-based: 50-70% and for sea-based: 80%, as stated in Executive Order No. 857 and provided in Article 22 of the Philippine Labor Code.

**PART IV: Rights of Migrant Workers and Their Families  
who are Documented or in a Regular Situation**

***A. Article 37: Right to be informed before departure of the conditions of admission to the State of employment and of their remunerated activities, par. 299 –***

The report of government highlights the PDOS and the PEOS as their information mechanisms for OFWs. Pre-Department Orientation Seminar (PDOS) does not provide sufficient, or none at all, information and knowledge on culture, migration policies of the receiving countries and existing grievance mechanisms if they encounter problems of their employment among others. OWWA accredits recruitment agencies as PDOS providers. Under their supervision, PDOS has become another moneymaking activity. Resource persons/sponsors come from the banks, real estate businesses which prioritize in raking in more profits rather than the welfare of OFWs. PDOS is also conducted in the last stage of the deployment process. PEOS and PEOP are just mechanisms to facilitate, promote and systematize recruitment and deployment of OFWs and not to provide helpful information to the OFW.

***B. Articles 38-39: Right to be temporarily absent without effect upon authorization to stay or work; right to liberty of movement and to choose the residence in the territory of the State of employment***

Once again, the report should be juxtaposed with the actual implementation. In the states of employment, many OFWs do not have the right to liberty of movement. Household workers in many Middle East countries cannot just go out because they are not in possession of their travel documents which are with their employers. The Philippine government, through the Unified contract, has implicitly surrendered its obligation to provide its citizens this right.

***C. Article 40: Right to form associations and trade unions; right to participate in public affairs of their State of origin, to vote and be elected at elections of that State; procedure and institutions taking care of the needs of migrant workers and possible enjoyment of political rights in the State of employment, par. 320-331:***

The right to vote of migrant workers is seriously hampered by the implementation of RA 9189 of 2003. For one, voters' education is very limited, especially with regards to the Party-List system. There is no absentee voting for local elective positions. For another, the registration period is short, despite the numerous demands of OFWs to lengthen the period. A third limitation is the fact that the number of voting centers is few and inaccessible to many OFWs. Even as the COMELEC has allowed voting by email, it is only applicable in certain countries. Out of the millions of OFWs scattered around the world, only more than 500,000 have registered and less than 1/3 of those who registered have voted in the 2007 elections.

***D. Article 43, 54 & 55: Principle of equality of treatment with nationals of the State of employment in relation to the issues indicated; equality of treatment as to protection against dismissal, unemployment benefits and access to public work schemes and alternative employment; equality of treatment in the exercise of a remunerated activity; par. 332***

It must be reiterated here that the GRP has done very little in protecting OFWs who have been dismissed unreasonably/unjustly from their current employment. The case of the retrenched workers from Taiwan exposed how of Philippine officials in Taiwan were convincing workers to accept unfair labor terms. Officials also advised them to go home even if the unexpired portion of their contract was not paid and allowed OFWs to shoulder their own transport back home.

There are also reports from OFWs from Korea that the Employment Permit System is currently being renegotiated between South Korea and the Philippines. OFWs fear that certain provisions such as free housing will be stricken out of the agreement.

***E. Articles 51 & 52: Right to seek alternative employment in case of termination of the remunerated activity for migrant workers not authorized to freely choose their remunerated activity; conditions and restrictions for migrant workers who can freely choose their remunerated activity***

This section reveals how aliens in our country are allowed to seek alternative employment; but the government requires onerous conditions for its very own OFWs in seeking alternative employment. Once the contract is canceled, the work permit is revoked thus giving rise to a situation where the OFW can be considered stranded and an 'irregular migrant.' Another burdensome and anomalous regulation which violates the Convention is the

POEA Memorandum Circular # 4 (MC04) which requires OFWs to go back home for every new contract, no matter how short. The MC04 has been criticized as another “extortion scheme” by government for OFWs.

**PART VI: Promotion of Sound, Equitable, Humane and Lawful Conditions in connection with International Migration of Workers and Members of Their Families**

***A. Article 65: Establishment of appropriate services to deal with questions concerning international migration of workers and members of their families***

FWRCs only cater to women. The centers ONLY accommodate between 50-60 OFWs but actually housed as many as 200-500. There is poor ventilation, scarce water supply (1 big bottle for one day) and insufficient food. Their cell phones which are the only connection with their families are confiscated. They sleep in a crowded room and in a sitting position.

Quality of services is poor. Officials usually advise runaways to go back to their employers or to their agencies, no matter how abusive. Legal assistance is hardly provided. Monitoring of daily situations, circumstances and activities affecting migrant workers and other overseas Filipinos is also severely limited. Many imprisoned OFWS, especially those in death row, always complain of how embassy officials/consuls neglect them. Migrante has pushed for a legislative inquiry on the conduct of inutile, abusive and ineffective embassy and POLO officials.

***B. Article 67: Measures regarding the orderly return of migrant workers and members of their families to the State of origin, their resettlement and cultural reintegration***

The report fails to mention the miserable record of the Philippine government in repatriating its citizens, especially OFWs in distress. Numerous cases abound to strike out the claims of government regarding its repatriation program. Last year, Migrante’s Middle East chapter has documented many requests of OFWs who need to be repatriated but have not been given attention by embassy officials. Thus, in Saudi, OFWs would rather live under the Khandara Bridge with the hopes of Saudi immigration officers picking them up and sending them home. Even then, their response of embassy officials are so delayed that the OFW to be repatriated has to extend his/her sufferings as a detainee. OFWs also have to shell out their own money (either buried or raised by concerned individuals) for their transport back home.

In 2006, there were 34,400 trapped in Lebanon crisis. The evacuation and repatriation were delayed because there was a debate among government agencies as to who would shoulder the costs? At the Senate hearing presided by Sen. Jinggoy Estrada, chairman of the Committee on Labor, Labor and Human Resource Development, the OWWA Administrator committed to release P500 million but later reduced it to P50 million. According to him, 75 percent of the 34,400 OFWs were undocumented, thus, were not covered by the welfare services. During the hearing, OWWA’s in-house auditor admitted that P6.8B of OWWA funds cannot be touched as they were invested and that only about P700 million was left at OWWA. Is OWWA an investment institution or a service institution?

Similarly, the reintegration program of the government seems to be designed to demand more money from the OFWs. Every process in the reintegration program, from the training to the release of loan assistance funds for livelihood programs requires a fee. There is a need to look further into this reintegration program of government and study its impact and effectivity.

The service for the psycho-social needs of OFWs mentioned in the report is not at all being implemented. Counseling services for the families of OFWs in distress are also non-existent.

***C. Article 68: Measures aimed at the prevention and elimination of illegal clandestine movements and employment of migrant workers in irregular situations***

The report cites measures on the prevention of illegal recruitment. However, there are questions that need to be asked:

1. Why are there numerous accounts of OFWs from Kuwait who can enter Iraq despite the ban? There are also accounts that embassy officials are able to monitor them crossing the border but have not done anything to enforce the ban.

2. The case of Gil Lebria, and eight other OFWs, holds a POEA stamped contract with the Woolim Company in Qatar, but once in Qatar, the Ministry of Labor deemed it an illegal contract. There was no Arabic translation which was required by the Qatar government. How did it get stamped by the POEA as a valid contract?

3. Why hasn't the practice of overcharging not been curbed and is openly being practiced by POEA-licensed recruitment agencies? The thousands of cases of overcharging which falls under the provision that defines illegal recruitment in RA8042 have not been resolved at all. The POEA's approach is to settle cases by asking OFWs to settle for payment much less than what they have paid as placement fees. Moreover, many companies are only meted out mild disciplinary actions such as suspension or in case of cancellation of their licenses are allowed to just apply for a new license.

***D. Article 70: Measures taken to ensure that living conditions of migrant workers and members of their families in a regular situation are in keeping with standards of fitness, safety, health and principles of human dignity***

The admittance of the GRP in the report that there is no mechanism to monitor the living conditions only serves to highlight another gap in their protection of the rights and welfare of OFWs.

***E. Article 71: Repatriation of the bodies of deceased migrant workers or members of their families and compensation matters relating to death***

A prime example of how negligent government is in implementing this particular provision of the Covenant would be the case of Eugenia Baja, an OFW who died in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. She died under mysterious circumstances and yet the government meekly accepted contradictory reports from the Saudi police and the hospital. Numerous requests by the family to the OWWA and the DFA to bring home the body were unheeded for many months. It was only when the family and Migrante campaigned that her body was brought home. OWWA did not shell out any repatriation funds to bring her body to her home province.

## **Migrante Alert: Issues Raised**

The following are current issues that Migrante deems urgent but remains largely unanswered, ignored or abandoned by the Philippine government.

### **1. Death Row Victims**

Thirty-five OFWs are currently languishing in death row: one (1) in Brunei, one (1) in the US, two (2) in China, four (4) in Kuwait, nine (9) in Saudi Arabia, and ten (10) in Malaysia. Four of these are women (however, Marilou Ranario's death sentence was suspended and later commuted after protests exploded). Three of these OFWs jailed in Saudi Arabia, brothers Edison and Rolando Gonzales and Eduardo Arcilla, have openly declared that they had no lawyers and that there was no representative from the Philippine embassy during their first hearing as well as their sentencing. Saudi Arabia holds the highest record of OFW beheadings, eight since 1999, the latest being Jenifer Bidoya in 2008.

Migrante shares Amnesty International's concern that these OFWs are at risk of execution after trials which do not comply with internationally recognized standards for trial, such as Article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and Resolution 1984/50 adopted by the Economic and Social Council on safeguards guaranteeing the protection of those facing the death penalty.

### **2. Stranded Workers in Middle East**

Migrante's Middle East chapter estimates that some 10,000 OFWs are currently stranded in the Middle East, particularly in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Lebanon, Jordan, Libya and Syria. The numbers, though, are climbing everyday. Most of them are runaways, escaping from abusive employers or illegal recruiters or stuck because of retrenchment or unexpected change in visa rules. Three-hundred sixty (360) of them in 2007-2008 were repatriated home upon Migrante's intervention and assistance but thousands more were awaiting government help especially those brought in detention or deportation cells, in camp-outs under bridges or in consular/embassy premises.

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The Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995 stipulates that if a recruitment agency fails to give OFWs return tickets, the OWWA (under the Omnibus Rules and Regulations Implementing RA 8042) “may advance the cost of repatriation with recourse to the agency and/or employer.” These funds can be taken from OWWA’S P100 MILLION EMERGENCY REPATRIATION FUND. But it happens that government refuses to part with the fund and urges families instead to produce the money for the tickets, as in the case of six OFWs repatriated in March 2008 who insisted on reimbursement from government.

### **3. OWWA Omnibus Policies**

Migrante calls for the scrapping of the OWWA Omnibus Policies (adopted on 19 September 2003) that allowed government to take full control of the workers’ fund which comes exclusively from contributions collected from employers and overseas workers.

It is a trust fund and not a general government fund. Neither is it a discretionary fund for the President’s use. However in a criminal case lodged at the Office of the Ombudsman against Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and others in 2004, lawyer Frank Chavez as a complainant charged that the President conspired with respondents to orchestrate a systematic raid of the OWWA fund. “The OWWA fund financed the acquisitions made by several diplomatic posts in the Middle East, the humanitarian assistance to Iraq, and the re-election bid of President Arroyo.”

As a consequence, certain major services were suspended such as stopping the acceptance and processing of OFW claims, limiting the services to “contributing members only,” and requiring OFWs to pay US\$25 on a “per contract basis” which effectively disenfranchised other types of OFWs. Government responsibility for the repatriation of distressed migrants was also limited only to times of crisis, epidemics and wars.

### **4. Direct Hiring**

Migrante opposes the ban on direct-hiring especially for land-based workers, as stipulated in Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) Circular No.04, series of 2007. Henceforth, all hiring will be coursed through the POEA and recruitment agencies licensed by POEA. No direct hiring will be allowed, except for members of the diplomatic corps, international organizations, and those allowed by the Secretary of Labor.

Already MC-04 has put severe restrictions on name-hired and direct-hired OFWs. Loss of jobs and employment opportunities ensue for OFWs who instead of just renewing or pre-terminating their contracts still have to go through recruitment agencies. Worse, coming under the control of recruitment agencies make them even more vulnerable to overcharging and other malpractices. Ninety percent of 743 cases at one time handled by the Mission for Migrant Workers in Hong Kong went through recruitment agencies. Giving the recruitment agencies a preferential edge in overseas employment is a sign of government’s abdication of responsibility as it deregulates the Philippine labor export industry.

### **5. “Supermaids” Training**

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has coined the word “Supermaids” and this catchphrase was immediately translated into the new POEA guidelines for Filipino Household Service Workers (MC No.10). Simply put, this means improving the skills of Filipino domestic helpers to make them more competitive, or let them fetch higher wages at a minimum of \$400 a month .

But the training requirement is a financial burden, if not an outright racket for extortion. About P10,000 to P15,000 is charged to every household worker to earn a certificate from TESDA (Technical Education and Skills Development Authority) and another certificate of attendance from OWWA (Overseas Workers Welfare Administration) for a country-specific language and culture certificate of competence. This is apart from the PDOS (pre-departure orientation seminar) certificate and other fees exacted from every worker, from passport to authentication fees.

On the other hand there is no certainty, mechanisms nor procedures, that can enforce the \$400 minimum wage, which by Hong Kong standards is even below the allowable minimum wage. At the same time, the promise of no

placement fees runs right smack against MC-04 that puts hiring under recruitment agencies, which by law can charge the equivalent of one month salary in host country as placement fee.

## **6. Employment Contracts**

Migrante takes issue with several unjust, one-sided, and unequal employment contracts in host countries and entered into with concurrence by the Philippine government. Among these are:

In Korea, the Employment Permit System (EPS) passed in 2003 stipulates that while employers can renew migrant workers visa yearly, the OFWs have no right to change employers. Also, undocumented migrants (numbering 290,000 in Migrante's estimates) in South Korea who stayed between three to four years may re-enter after leaving the country while those over four years have to leave altogether. Those who did not voluntarily exit by 16 November 2004 were the target of crackdowns.

In the United Arab Emirates, the Employment Agreement for Domestic Workers and Sponsors signed between GRP and UAE in 2007 gives undue advantage to UAE as it does not honor any employment contract signed in the Philippines between the worker and the recruitment agency. As the OFW arrives in the UAE, a new employment contract between the employer and worker is signed and approved by the UAE Ministry of Labor. Domestic workers are called "servants" and fall under the Naturalization and Residence Department and are not covered by labor laws. There is no guarantee for paid day off and the "servant" has to pass a four-month probationary period before the wage is fixed.

Worse, when a conflict occurs between "servant" and employer, the "servants" rights are null and void if she absconds.

In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the "Unified Contract" of 2002 which is purportedly a private contract between Saudi recruiters belonging to SANARCOM and Philippine recruiters have the blessings of both the royal kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the GRP. However even representatives of government agencies, Philippine labor recruiters, and nongovernment organizations in a series of meetings in 2003 and 2004 had agreed that the contract violates existing laws, particularly RA 8042 of the Migrant Workers Act as well as rules and regulations of the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration.

For one thing the Saudi-bound OFW gets to see the contract before his or her departure, but a contract which can still be substituted legally in Saudi Arabia. Also, salaries and benefits will be dictated by the employer, without the worker or even his recruiter having the option to bargain. Calls for the recall of the contract were issued by several sectors but these fell on deaf ears.

## **7. Illegal Recruiters**

Migrante has constantly urged the Philippine government to penalize illegal recruiters that continue to function despite complaints and record of malpractice such as the case of the Sentosa Recruitment Agency. Sentosa recruited over 20 nurses for the United States under false pretenses. The nurses fought back and charged Sentosa for illegal recruitment but the case was dropped by the government's Justice and Labor departments.

Migrante has also cited the case of 54 OFWs from Taiwan who returned home because they were conned by their recruiters namely Forever Manpower Services (FMS), Network Management Resources Corporation, Filsino Manpower Services, MIP International Services (MIP), and Flourish International Manpower. Each OFW was overcharged by P100,000.

More importantly, Migrante called for a congressional investigation of POEA itself when the chief of the Immigration Bureau exposed POEA as engaging in large scale illegal recruitment and human trafficking victimizing at least 10,000 OFWs monthly. By this, the POEA becomes the biggest illegal recruitment syndicate in the country.

## **8. State Exactions**

A study made by Migrante revealed that a departing OFW pays a minimum of P17,000 for processing fees. Also, even as the government officially reduced the placement fee to one month salary in a host country, recruitment

agencies dismiss government threats and continue to charge excessive fees for applicants. In fact, the “No Agency Fee” has been easily circumvented by unlimited fees for mandatory training as required by law.

## **9. Sabah Refugees**

After a fact-finding mission in 2002, 2005 and 2008 to look into the situation of Filipino deportees, including women and children, from Sabah Malaysia, Migrante is even more resolved to file charges of neglect and human rights violations against the Philippine and Malaysian governments before the UN Commission on Human Rights. The refugees fled the Philippines for Sabah using the back door because of armed conflict and poverty.

However while in Sabah the Malaysian government would raid them in their villages, bringing them to precincts and asking for their travel documents. If the search turns negative, they are out-rightly detained, with their children or family in tow. Cases of deaths, suicide and violations of human rights were left unrecorded especially if this occurred during detention in Malaysia. About 200,000 are expected to be deported by the end of the year.

## **10. Sex Trafficking and Marriage Migrants**

Migrante laments that the feminization of migration has led to a burgeoning flesh trade. In the guise of hiring women for domestic help, factory workers and entertainers, sex traffickers posing as recruiters have lured their victims with promises of good pay and benefits abroad only to be abused or sold for profit. Known international destinations for sex trafficking victims include Australia, Germany, United States, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, New Zealand, Middle East and the Northern Marianas Islands.

Migrante has worked closely with the largest women’s alliance in the Philippines, GABRIELA, to combat sex trafficking. Despite numerous cases of trafficked women, the Department of Foreign Affairs recently listed 235 cases, but rarely are traffickers arrested or charged. Tenaganita (Women’s Force) of Malaysia also reported that of the 210 rescued in 2008, 75 percent were Filipino women and no one was charged for this. Furthermore, despite RA 6955 (An Act Declaring Unlawful the Practice of Matching Filipino Women for Marriage to Foreign Nationals on Mail-Order) passed in 1986, the continuous increase in the number of mail-order brides, or marriage migrants, has been noted.

The State does not even impose any form of control on such practices proliferating in the internet. In many cases, brides suffer in the hands of their newfound husbands. They become not only domestic slaves but sex slaves as well. Cases of mail-order brides eventually being sold or rented out either as domestic help or sex slaves have likewise been reported. It is estimated that there are 20,000 Filipina mail-order brides in Australia alone and that 5,000 Filipinas enter the US annually as mail-order brides.

## **11. Undocumented Workers**

The global financial and economic crisis is sure to fan the war against undocumented workers. Stringent new rules on immigration are bound to criminalize — round up, detain, and deport — irregular workers in hundreds and thousands. Already the likes of these are seen in countries from the Asia-Pacific to Europe and to North America.

Under the Bossi-Fini Law of 2002 in Italy, for example, the government could detain undocumented workers up to 60 days (from the previous 30 days) before repatriation. Migrants who are arrested a second time are detained for 6 months to 1 year in a prison facility; a third arrest means imprisonment of 1 to 4 years.

The law also prohibits local agencies, including Caritas, from giving housing or facilities to undocumented workers – even in emergency situations. But the worse is yet to come with the Europe Return Directive in which detention could extend up to 18 months and a five-year ban for people who are expelled. Some 100,000 Filipino undocumented workers could readily be affected by this.

Migrante has called on the Arroyo government to do something and stop being an apologist of other countries while they adversely affect Filipino workers who are just trying to earn a decent living. Whether undocumented or not, the rights of migrants must be upheld.

# List of Endorsing Organizations and Individuals

## 1. AUSTRALIA

Action for Peace and Development in the Philippines  
(Solidarity Group - Australia)  
Gabriela Australia  
Lingap Migrante  
Migrante Australia  
Migrante Melbourne  
Migrante Perth  
Migrante Sydney Neighbourhood Association  
Philippines-Australia Women's Association (PAWA)  
Philippine Australia Solidarity Association

## 2. CANADA

BAYAN Canada  
Canada-Philippine Solidarity for Human Rights (Vancouver,  
BC Canada)  
Centre for Philippine Concerns  
Damayan Manitoba  
Damayan/SEAS  
Filipino Migrant Workers Movement  
Filipino Workers Support Group  
Immigrant Workers Center  
International Migrants Alliance Canada  
Migrant Family Resource Center  
Migrante BC  
MIGRANTE EUROPE  
Migrante Ontario  
Migrante Youth  
Philippine Advocacy Through Arts and Culture  
Pilipinong Migrante sa Barrie  
Pilipinong Migrante Sa Canada  
PINAY  
South Asian Women's Community Centre in Montreal

## 3. EUROPE

MIGRANTE-Europe  
MIGRANTE-Netherlands  
MIGRANTE-Switzerland  
Ugnayan sa Radyo Pinoy, Denmark  
UMANGAT, Rome

## 4. HONG KONG

Abra Migrant Workers Welfare Association (AMWWA)  
Abra Tinguian Ilocano Society – Hong Kong (ATIS-HK)  
Annak ti Maeng-Tubo  
Asia Pacific Mission for Migrants (APMM)  
Asia Pacific Students and Youth Association (ASA)  
Association of Concerned Filipinos (ACFIL)  
Balungao Overseas Workers Association  
Bangued Hong Kong Organization  
Barangays and Concerned Interactive Group-La Paz  
Bethune House Migrant Women's Refuge  
Binalonan Migrant Workers Organization (BMWO)  
Bucay Migrant Workers  
Bucloc Hong Kong Organization

Conner Apayao Migrant Workers Assn  
Cordillera Alliance in Hong Kong (CORALL-HK)  
Cuyapo Association in Hong Kong  
Damamasu  
Divine Word Migrants Apostolate  
Filipino Fellowship Methodist International Church  
Filipino Friends-Hong Kong (FFHK)  
Filipino Migrant Association (FMA)  
Filipino Migrant Workers' Union-Hong Kong (FMWU-HK)  
Filipino Women Migrant Workers Association (FILWOM)  
FMWU- Chater Road Chapter  
FMWU- Forum Chapter  
FMWU-Chater Garden Chapter  
Friends of Bethune House (FBH)  
Gabriela Chater Road Chapter  
Gabriela HSBC Chapter  
Gabriela Lyttleton Chapter  
Ganagan San Juan Association  
Hingyon Organization  
Hong Kong Villiasinian Association  
Ifugao Association  
Ikmin Valley Organization-Boliney  
Janiuaynon Association in Hong Kong  
Justice and Peace (Evangelization Family)  
Kabayan Overseas Workers Assn  
Kadaklan Overseas Workers Assn  
KAJEM  
Kalinga Province Hong Kong Workers Association  
La Trinidad Valley (LATRIVA)  
Lagayan Overseas Workers Association  
Licuan Hong Kong Association  
Likha Filipino Migrant Cultural Organization  
Luna Apayao HK Organization  
Mabama Organization Malibcong  
Maeng Tribe of Abra-Luba-Tubo Hong Kong  
Manabo Hong Kong Organization  
Methodist Church Filipino Migrants  
Migrant Association of San Isidro Abra  
Migrante Hong Kong Bank Chapter  
Migrante Naguilian Chapter  
Migrante Nueva Vizcaya Chapter  
Migrante Shatin Chapter  
Migrants Action for the Protection of Rights and Livelihood  
(MAPRL)  
Mission for Migrant Workers (MFMW)  
Mission Volunteers (MOVERS)  
Municipality of Lacub  
Natividad Association Hong Kong  
Overseas Sons and Daughters of Lagangilang-PANABA  
Philippine Independent Church (PIC) Choir  
Pinatud A Saleng Ti Umili (PSU)  
Poliwes San Vicente Baguio City Organization  
Rosales Association in Hong Kong  
Sadanga Organization  
Sagada Municipal Association  
Sallapadan Manicbel Association  
SMOWF  
Southern Sabangan Organization  
St. John's Filipino Fellowship

## Initial Statement of Migrante International to the United Nations Committee on Migrant Workers

Sta. Maria de Pila Association Tayug Pangasinan Hong Kong (TPHK) Timpuyog ti Tayum Tineg Overseas Worker Association United Filipinos in Hong Kong (UNIFIL-MIGRANTE-HK) United Mangkayan Workers Association United Migrant Teachers of Cordillera United Pangasinan Hong Kong (UPHK) United Pidigan Association Ward Methodist Filipino Mission Women of PIC-Antique World Student Christian Federation-Asia Pacific	11. PHILIPPINES  ARCSEA Batibot Early Learning Center Center for Women's Resources Children's Rehabilitation Center GABRIELA Gabriela Women's Party Inter-faith, Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Network KARAPATAN Migrante-Cordillera National Council of Churches in the Philippines Parents Alternative, Inc. Promotion of Church People's Response SALINLAHI (organization working with children) Task Force Urban Conscientization-Association of Major Religious Superiors in the Philippines (TFUC-AMRSP),
5. JAPAN  Anakbayan-Japan Dulaang Bayan (DUYAN) Dulaang Bayan sa Nagoya, Japan Filipina Circle for Advancement and Progress (FICAP)- Aichi, Japan Filipino Migrant Center-Nagoya, Japan KAFIN-Akushima KAFIN-Nagano. Migrante-Japan Philippine Society in Japan	12. THAILAND  Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development
6. KOREA  Agumang Kapampangan in Korea Bicol Association KASAMMA-KO New Era Foundation Osan Migrants Center	13. UNITED KINGDOM  Kanlungan Alliance (UK) Migrante UK
7. MALAYSIA  TENAGANITA (Women's Force)	14. UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  BAYAN-USA Philforum
8. MIDDLE EAST  Kapatiran sa Gitnang Silangan-Dawadmi (KSA) Kapatiran sa Gitnang Silangan-Migrante Al Jouf (KSA) Kapatiran sa Gitnang Silangan-Migrante Riyadh (KSA) Kapisanan ng Manggagawang Pilipino Migrante Eastern Province (KSA) Migrante-Eastern Region Organizing Committee Migrante-Jeddah (KSA) Migrante-Qatar Organizing Committee Migrante-Saudi Arabia Migrante-United Arab Emirates Samahan ng Manggagawa sa Saudi Arabia	15. INDIVIDUALS  ❖ Sister Ma. Luz F. Mijares, OSA, Superior General, Congregation of Augustinian Sisters of Our Lady of Consolation ❖ Sister Emelina Villegas, ICM Provincial Superior, Missionary Sister of the Immaculate Heart of Mary ❖ Sister Maureen Catabian, Religious of the Good Shepherd ❖ Chito Quijano, Member of the International Coordinating Committee, International League of Peoples' Struggle (USA) ❖ Dr. Robyn Magalit Rodriguez Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Sociology, Rutgers University
9. NEPAL  Nepal Labour Organization (NLO) International Migrant Alliance Nepal Chapter (IMAN)	
10. NEW ZEALAND  Auckland Philippines Solidarity Migrante Aotearoa New Zealand	