



Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats

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Dr. Raden Mohammad Marty Muliana Natalegawa

Minister of Foreign Affairs
Republic of Indonesia

Dear Dr. Marty Natalegawa:

We are writing to focus your attention to the ongoing and growing concerns about migrant workers in the ASEAN region, and to encourage you to include this issue as part of the ASEAN agenda now that Indonesia serves as chair of the regional body.

Southeast Asia continues to be one of the world's fastest growing regions, with substantial flows of migrant workers both within and outside its regional borders. In spite of this fact, the labour laws and regulations of ASEAN countries are largely inadequate in scope and implementation when it comes to protecting the rights of migrant workers and their families.

As a result, migrant workers throughout the region are often subject to mistreatment and abuse at all stages of the migration cycle – pre-departure, onsite in countries of destination, and upon their return. They suffer from gross exploitation at the hands of employers and recruitment agencies, and have to endure physical, psychological, and sexual abuse. Many work in high-risk occupations, receiving substandard wages, and often working under inhuman conditions.

A large proportion of the migrant workers in the region are women, most of whom are employed as domestic workers. These women migrants come from Indonesia, the Philippines, Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, and Cambodia, and work in wealthier countries across Asia and the Middle East. Most receiving countries do not have the legislative means to protect migrant domestic workers, and in most cases domestic work is not considered to be work. Migrant domestic workers are often subject to abuse and discrimination at the hands of employers and recruiters, compounded by legislative and social systems that enable this kind of treatment.

ASEAN must build a migration regime that successfully combines mobility with human and labour rights protection. To that end, we call on the ASEAN Committee on Migrant Workers to fast-track progress on the ASEAN Declaration on the Protection & Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers, and to uphold the provisions of the ASEAN Declaration on Migrant Workers. In this regard, we welcome the pronouncement of

Philippine President Benigno Simeon Aquino III noting that migrant worker's protection would be one of his advocacies in the upcoming ASEAN Summit in Bali, Indonesia.


We believe too that ASEAN as a body should address the problems of migrant workers in other countries too. It is crucial that efforts be taken at the ASEAN level to address the unacceptable rights abuses continually faced by migrant workers from ASEAN and within ASEAN.

Thank you very much for your kind attention to this matter.

Very truly yours,



Rajiva Wijesinha, MP
Chairperson



J.R. Nereus Acosta, PhD
Secretary General