

## HOME Vibe

June 11, 2010

The Committee for Domestic Workers finally completed the twenty-one provisions of the convention. So onward, we proceeded to the other twenty-one provisions of the recommendations supplementing the convention. That should have been easy because they contained the non-binding section.

But not so as we soon got 'stucked' at provision 23. The employer proposed an amendment to provide for the employers' right to enjoy freedom of association and collective bargaining. The workers' objected and so did some government members who said that this was a Domestic Workers' Convention to protect domestic workers and not employers whose rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining were protected under other ILO conventions. Under much protest, the employers' spokesperson asked for a few minutes for him to consult with his members.

After which, Mr. Rahman asked the chair for a vote on the proposed amendment by show of hands. And yes, the voting process followed as hands went up for, against and abstain. The final count 250 for, 270 against and 44 abstained. So the chair declared that the amendment as proposed by the employers fell.

But Mr. Rahman rose to his feet to ask immediately for a record vote, i.e. where the voting process would be conducted again and a record kept on who was voting. Protests and arguments followed and the legal adviser of ILO was called upon to advise the committee on the legality of the proceedings. The adviser advised that the record voting called upon by the employers' was in order.

And at that point of the 'silent uproar' in my ears, I had to leave the room to attend a side event organized by our MFA delegation. The last, I heard was that the amendment fell through because the record vote taken had too many abstentions to form the needed quorum.

Finally before lunch, the provisions under recommendations were quickly adopted pending discussions at the next sitting next year. So 'bingo' all was done before lunch!

So what does all this mean to the millions of domestic workers around the world. According to the experts the adopted provisions of a Domestic Worker Convention supplemented by Recommendations will be on the agenda again next year. Hence the fight would continue to ensure that all the effort done this year would not be undone in 2011. On a very positive note, Nisha Varia of Human Rights Watch, smiled and said that it has been 'a really good start' on the road to decent work for domestic workers.

Yes, we would get our Domestic Worker Convention come, 2011 because our God of Justice is watching!

Bridget Tan, President  
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