

PRESS RELEASE

Embargo till June 20th, 2011



PRESS STATEMENT ON ILO DOMESTIC WORKER CONVENTION 2011

On June 16th 2011, history was made at the 100th International Labour Conference, as the International Labour Organization adopted Convention 189: Decent Work for Domestic Workers with 396 voting in favour, 16 against and 63 abstentions. This is a turning point in the history of the world of work, and will change the lives of at least 100 million workers globally.

The Convention bestows upon domestic workers, most of whom are women and girls, the same labour rights and standards as are extended to any other workers. The Convention recognizes that domestic workers have the right to join and form trade unions; to be informed of their terms of employment, including hours of work, compensation, rest days, and public holidays; to retain their travel and identity documents; to work in safe and healthy workplaces which are subject to labour inspections; to be afforded social protection benefits, including maternity rights; and the right not to be subject to mandatory HIV testing, as is the current practice in many countries.

As HOME celebrates the adoption of the ILO Convention on Domestic Work and the news from Geneva that Singapore will ratify the ILO Maritime Labour Convention, we are equally disappointed that Singapore was one among nine governments who did not vote for the Domestic Worker Convention. Singapore is home to 200,000 migrant domestic workers and should be making protection of their rights a priority. HOME urges Singapore not to discriminate against migrant domestic workers and to align its laws to international standards by including them under the Employment Act. There is no justifiable reason for Singapore, as a first world country and a State member of the International Labour Organization, not to ratify the Convention and not to provide those terms and conditions of employment which are enshrined under the articles of the Convention on Domestic Work.

Hence, let us not lose sight of the reality that there is a long road ahead. Unfortunately for many domestic workers around the world, their conditions of work are unregulated. Many are abused and mistreated by their employers and agents. Many live in isolation – behind the closed doors of private family homes, beyond the reach of labour inspectors and state authorities. They are not covered by the labour laws of the countries in which they work, they are paid paltry wages, they do not enjoy social protection and their contributions to both their host and home societies go unrecognized and unappreciated.

Let Singapore not be among those countries who continue to resist what is right and fair for workers in domestic work and be in solidarity with the world to declare that “Domestic work is work not slavery!”

Media Enquiries For more information on H.O.M.E. please contact Jolovan Wham, Executive Director, H.O.M.E. jolovan.home@gmail.com; Tel: +65-6743 9277 or Bridget Tan, President, H.O.M.E.; Tel: +65 94505966