

This statement has been developed in collaboration with the following non-government organizations for the purpose of a joint position on the need for just work for all.

	International Catholic Migration Commission - ICMC		Caritas Internationalis	
	KOLPING INTERNATIONAL		International Young Christian Workers – JOCI/YCW	
	International Movement of Catholic Agricultural and Rural Youth - MIJARC			
	International Coordination of Young Christian Workers – CIJOC		PAX ROMANA - ICMICA	

Statement of the International Inspired Catholic Group in the International Labour Organization (ILO)

We are a group of Catholic-inspired non-government organizations striving for just work for all workers. We work at the grassroots level and to provide context to this statement, the two stories that follow are from migrant workers, describing some of their experiences while working abroad.

The first story is from Jemma, 28 years old and a Filipina, working as a domestic worker in Hong Kong: *“I left my family to help my husband support our children in our financial needs and their education. In my first contract, I did not have my own room and I had to sleep in the living room. A few months later I experienced sexual harassment from my male employer and broke my contract with them. I asked for the help of my agency to send me back to the Philippines. The agency didn’t help me at all. I had to find my own way and I was lucky that I got the support of friends.”*

The second story is from an Indonesian migrant worker in Europe: *“Due to a job-offer, I migrated from Indonesia to Belgium and I worked there for four years – the duration of the contract. My employer and I paid all social security-fees. Before finishing my contract, I tried to find another job in Belgium. As I could not find any other jobs, I decided I needed to go back to my home-country. But I had to wait for the end of the school term so my children could finish their school year. But for the period between ending the contract and leaving for home, surviving was difficult. I was told I would not receive any unemployment benefits because I am not European. This is not logical. If a worker has worked for years in a country and all social security fees have been paid, how can the social benefit be denied?”*

These are two stories that reflect many, many more. In the report for the International Labour Conference, the International Labour Organization estimates that there were 150 million migrant workers in 2013. We see them leaving their families and homes, searching for a better life for themselves and their families. As the report emphasizes, labour migration has many positive impacts on a society, in both countries of origin and destination. Yet many migrant workers face discrimination, harassment and racism. The professional degrees a migrant worker obtains in their home country are not necessarily acknowledged or recognized and the rights of many migrant workers are not respected, particularly concerning minimum wages and regulations and conditions regarding working hours. In more than a few countries, employers have even blocked migrant workers from leaving their workplace by keeping their passports and in many countries, migrant workers are denied their right to organize or join trade unions.

Working informally often results in migrant workers unable to use working complaints mechanisms. But as we see in the testimonies above, even working legally and formally does not guarantee respect of a worker’s rights, nor full access to social security.

These features of labour migration challenge all of us today. They contradict human dignity and they contradict human rights, workers’ rights, international law and common values of equality. Workers’ rights must be respected. This includes the right to a decent living wage, the right to decent working hours, the right to organize, and the right to free and transformative social protection for all migrant workers!

In particular, we strive for:

1. Social protection and social security for all.
2. Labour Inspections to guarantee respect of the labour law and its implementation world-wide. It must also tackle sectors that are difficult to inspect, e.g. domestic work and the work of fishers.
3. Effective and consistent mechanisms to prosecute, sanction and provide fair compensation or other remedies to migrant workers and their families to prevent discrimination, labour law violations, and crimes against them, both in and outside the workplace.
4. Complaints about workers’ rights abuses to be de-linked from “residency status” enforcement.
5. Long-term working contracts rather than temporary models for all workers, and policies combating precarious work for local workers and the society. They are a pre-condition of attracting qualified migrant workers as well as of the integration of migrant workers into society.
6. Labour rights for all workers – nationals and migrants – including the right to be organized and join trade unions or worker associations.

As Catholic-inspired non-government organizations, we call on and will continue to work with the members of the International Labour Conference to implement these demands, as well as promote them within our sphere of influence for just work, dignity and equality for all!