



EUROPEAN LEADERS URGED TO RATIFY THE MIGRANT WORKERS CONVENTION

Brussels, 16 December 2010

Yesterday, on the eve of International Migrants Day, a delegation of international, European and Belgian civil society organizations and trade unions delivered a petition to the Belgian EU Presidency urging the EU Member States to ratify the UN Migrant Workers Convention.

Over 6000 signatures were collected since July 2010, in a petition campaign that was launched by December 18 and the European Platform for Migrant Workers Rights (EPMWR). Amongst the signatories, a total of **68 Members of the European Parliament**, from 5 different political groups and from 24 Member States, signed the call for ratification. Furthermore, around one thousand civil society organisations, faith-based groups and trade unions working at the national, European or international level supported the petition.

Before meeting with the representative of Belgian Prime Minister Yves Leterme, **René Plaetevoet, Director of December 18**, stated that: "Ratification of the UN Migrant Workers Convention by EU Member States would show their commitment to the core values of the European Union and help to overcome the widespread abuse of migrant workers in Europe by effectively protecting their human rights." The Convention is one of nine core international human rights instruments. It has been ratified by 44 countries worldwide, but not in the European Union.

Conny Reuter, Secretary General of SOLIDAR, underlined that: "For most migrants, their principal motivation to migrate is the lack of job opportunities and decent pay or working conditions in their home countries. However, once they arrive in Europe, the working conditions can be very different from what they imagine. Migrant workers and their families are people too, and should be entitled to the same rights and conditions as EU citizens."

The **UN Migrant Workers Convention**, which this year marks its 20th anniversary, promotes decent working and living conditions for all migrant workers, lays down the rights of their often neglected accompanying family members, and encourages states to work together throughout the whole migration cycle. In addition it provides guidance on the elaboration of national migration policies, which can only be effective if they are based on the respect for human rights and the rule of law, and sets out provisions to combat the exploitation of migrant workers and members of their families in countries of origin, transit and destination.

"Non-ratification by EU Member States has a knock-on effect, undermines the EU's core principles and demonstrates a selective approach to the UN human rights architecture", declared **Dan Van Raemdonck, Vice-President of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)**, "The way in which the Member States of the EU approach the issue of migrants' human rights influences the way in which migrants are treated by third states. In addition, the refusal to ratify the Convention undermines the actions of the EU

encouraging third countries to ratify other UN human rights instruments.”

Joël Decaillon, Deputy Secretary General of the ETUC, furthermore emphasized that: “For trade unions equal rights for all workers is extremely important. Stopping the exploitation of migrant workers would be helped by the ratification of the UN Migrant Workers Convention. This is all the more urgent as the EU is preparing a set of directives on immigration – single permit, seasonal work and intra-corporate transfers. These directives should respect the international Conventions ”

Doris Peschke, Secretary General of the Churches’ Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) concluded: “Ratification of the Convention by EU Member States would underline that they are indeed supporting an international migration system based on fundamental rights which has been expressed in so many declarations over the past years.”

Note for Editors

- Official name of the UN Migrant Workers Convention: International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (ICRMW). Adopted on 18th December 1990.
- The full list of signatures can be found at www.migrantsconvention.eu
- More information on the Migrant Workers Convention can be found here:

http://www.december18.net/un_migrant_workers_convention

For further information

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