

Resolution No.8

DECENT WORK FOR DOMESTIC WORKERS

Domestic work is one of the oldest, most important occupations for millions of women around the world. It is rooted in slavery, colonialism and other forms of servitude.

For the past two (2) decades, demand for domestic workers is on the rise due to influx of women into the labour market, ageing society, and lack of measures to reconcile work and family responsibilities among others. The demand is regardless of a country's development state – developing or industrialized.

In present times, domestic work is a modern form of slavery. Despite its crucial role in economic functioning of a society, it is reeking in abuse - physical, verbal, psychological and sexual; and discrimination and exploitation – undervalued, low pay, employment of child labour, and denial of human and trade union rights – the right for decent pay and decent working conditions, freedom of association and collective bargaining.

Specifically, the foremost issues and concerns of domestic workers are:

- recognition of domestic workers as workers;
- recognition of domestic work as work;
- recognition of the value of domestic work and the skills involved;
- vulnerability and slavery;
- unregulated recruitment and placement agencies;
- unregulated contracts of employment;
- indecent pay and working conditions;
- lack of social protection, job security and support services;
- uncoordinated labour and migration laws; and,
- elimination of violence against domestic workers.

The trade unions have long been advocating, pressing and asserting the protection of domestic workers at national and international levels. After a long wait, the ILO Governing body in a historic move in its March 2008 session, has finally decided to put the promotion of decent work for domestic workers in the agenda of the 2010 International Labour Conference (ILC) session and a second discussion in the agenda of the ILC 100th session in June 2011, which will decide to adopt or not to adopt an international standard – Convention supplemented by Recommendation - for the protection of the most vulnerable sector of workers. Its fate will depend on two-thirds vote of the representatives of Member-States, employers and trade unionists in favor of adoption of international standards to protect the rights of domestic workers.

It is internationally recognized that trade unions represent the workers - organized or unorganized. Therefore, as the most responsible and accountable organization to alleviate the plight of domestic workers, it should be at the forefront in establishing international standards that will provide the principles and rights, and a clear framework for their protection, rightful treatment and long overdue recognition.

As the discussion and vote is tripartite, workers delegates' in-depth preparedness is imperative – to be able to persuade government and employers to vote in favor of a strong Convention and Recommendation for the protection of domestic workers. Clearly, the fate of an international standard for decent work for domestic workers lies

heavily on the trade unions. It is the most opportune time for trade unions to show the world that it is still relevant and live up to what is expected of them especially in these final few weeks before the crucial ILC vote.

The Conference commits the ITUC-AP, working with affiliates and the GUFs to:

- continue organizing domestic workers and ensure their integration in the trade union movement;
- encourage and support, if not implement an all-out campaign towards adoption of international instruments for the protection of domestic workers carrying trade union demands including writing letter to heads of state or governments;
- contribute or give inputs towards in-depth preparedness of the workers representatives and delegation so that rightful strategies would be employed on tight situations that may arise during the conference;
- promote consultation of trade unions with their legal counsels on existing national laws which has implications on the proposed international standards, looking at when the international standards are ratified, as inputs to workers representatives in the ILC;
- encourage inclusion of domestic workers and/or their representatives in the trade unions' delegations;
- keenly monitor and be updated on government and employers emerging positions with a view to countervail including conveying information to workers representatives to the ILC;
- work for ratification and implementation of the Convention once adopted; and
- continue networking and building of solidarity between trade unions, domestic workers, migrant groups and CSOs in countries of origin and destination.