



PRESS RELEASE

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EXPERTS LAY FOUNDATIONS FOR A COMPREHENSIVE MIGRATION POLICY FOR THAILAND

Bangkok, 15 September 2009 – Migration can contribute significantly to human development and economic growth, if it is supported by a strong and coherent policy framework. This was the basis of a development cooperation seminar today organised by the United Nations in partnership with Thailand's Ministry of Labour. Government officials, international organisations, academics, employers associations, trade unions and civil society discussed the present and future migration situation in Thailand, and how to address the challenges associated with the current system of migration management.

As a leading economy in Southeast Asia, Thailand has evolved into a global and regional migration hub for outgoing, incoming and transiting migrants in the region. Economic and demographic disparities have driven the movement of low-skilled migrants from weaker economies in neighbouring countries into Thailand, while a significant number of Thai workers are also migrating to stronger economies in Asia or the Middle East.

The two million or more low-skilled migrant workers currently employed in Thailand make a significant contribution to the local economy. In 2005 this contribution was estimated to be 1.25 per cent or US\$ 2 billion of Thailand's US\$ 177 billion GDP, and the figure is set to increase as Thailand's population ages rapidly and more migrants will be needed to fill gaps in the workforce left by senior citizens. In addition, as more of the country's younger work force gains a higher level of education, there will be a growing need for migrants to ensure an adequate supply of unskilled labour.

Khun Jiraporn Kesornsutjarit, Deputy Permanent Secretary of Thailand's Ministry of Labour, explained that the aim of the seminar was to exchange views and recommendations for the Royal Thai Government to consider in developing a coherent and comprehensive migration policy framework for Thailand.

"The Government recognizes the crucial role of migration in sustaining the economy. While Thailand is experiencing international labour migration into the country, we are also sending Thai workers overseas. The experience of migration management in Thailand over the past six years has shown that there are many gaps and challenges that the government needs to address to ensure safe and orderly migration. The Ministry of Labour hopes that this seminar will provide us with recommendations that will lead to the effective management of migration in Thailand. "There are many participants here today who can provide valuable input into developing a more effective migration policy. The Government is very interested in hearing the perspectives of all stakeholders, in particular on how to strengthen closer collaboration."

Mr. Bill Salter, United Nations Resident Coordinator a.i. for Thailand praised the Royal Thai Government for the considerable achievements made in recent years in managing migration and protecting the rights of migrants in Thailand.

"Thailand's progress in this area has been significant, but the situation suffers from a lack of coordination and inconsistent approaches among relevant government departments. I hope that this seminar can assist the process of developing an effective policy to manage migration in Thailand today and in the future, with a particular focus on managing low-skilled labour migration. Without such a policy, Thailand will miss the opportunity for development, growth and stability that migration can bring with it," he said.

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