

International Women's Day

A dozen countries in Asia-Pacific say 'yes' in principle to international labour standard for domestic workers - global discussion at ILC in June

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Press Release

Bangkok (ILO News): Governments, worker and employer organizations in Asia and the Pacific have indicated their general support – in principle – of setting a new international labour standard which could offer better social protection to millions of domestic workers – defined as women and men – who earn their living by working in the homes of others.

An ILO report, “*Decent Work for Domestic Workers*,” carries the responses of 75 member States to a Questionnaire on the idea of an international labour standard for domestic workers. It includes the replies from 13 Governments of member States from the Asia and Pacific region. Responses were received from 32 worker and employer organizations across the region.

The document was published in preparation of a formal discussion at the International Labour Conference this June on the subject. This annual Conference brings together Governments, Worker and Employer Organizations from more than 180 member States – the only tripartite meeting of its kind within the UN system – to discuss critical issues in the world of work.

The setting of an international standard for domestic workers would be an historic move to recognize and protect an occupation often under-acknowledged by society. In Asia and the Pacific many domestic workers face indifference at best by the public and can be subject to outright physical and sexual abuse by their employers who are often beyond the pale of labour inspections or redress under national labour laws. Migrant domestic workers are especially vulnerable.

The publishing of the report comes just a few days in advance of International Women’s Day (8 March). This year the various themes to mark the occasion focus on progress for equal rights and equal opportunities in society and in the workplace.

“It is encouraging and timely to see the positive comments coming from member States here in Asia and the Pacific,” said Ms Sachiko Yamamoto, the ILO’s Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific. “Judging by the responses received so far, the indication is that there should be an international standard to better protect domestic workers in Asia and the Pacific.”

If the June ILC decides that it is advisable to adopt one or more international instruments, the International Labour Office will draw up, on the basis of the conclusions adopted by the Conference, one or more draft international labour instruments to be considered. It will then be for the Conference to make a final decision on the subject at a future session.

The report, including the comments of various Governments, worker and employer organizations from Asia and the Pacific, can be found online at the ILO’s Website at:

http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_123731.pdf

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