

## **ILO/Korea Partnership Programme on Managing labour migration in Asia**

National Workshop and Training on Recruitment and Preparation of Migrant Workers for Korea

Sri Lanka 21 – 22 August 2009

### ***Welcome Address by Tine Staermose, Director ILO Sri Lanka and the Maldives***

- Your Excellency, Mr. Choi Ki-Chul, Korean Ambassador to Sri Lanka
- Additional Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Employment Promotion and Welfare
- Representatives from the SLBFE
- Distinguished delegates from the Ministry of Labour in Korea
- ILO/Korea Partnership Programme Director in ILO Bangkok, Mr. Kim
- Mrs. Thetis Mangahas, ILO Sr. Specialist on Labour Migration, Bangkok Regional Office
  
- Ladies and gentlemen

On behalf of the international labour organization here in Sri Lanka, I am glad to welcome all of you to this two days interaction between officials from the competent authorities of recruitment and training of migrant workers from Korea and Sri Lanka respectively, facilitated by the ILO/Korea Partnership Programme.

In 2007, the Government of ROK and ILO agreed to implement a project entitled *Recognizing skills and managing labour migration in Asia*. The Project aims to contribute the productive and gainful employment of migrant workers in the region. The Project has dual strategies: one is to develop a regional model competency standard (RMCS) for skills recognition of migrant workers; and the other is to build capacity for better management of labour migration to ROK.

Under this partnership agreement, the ILO has been asked to contribute to the improvement of the system of recruitment and pre-departure training of workers from several participating countries. The ILO has so far organized working group meetings on the implementation of the ILO in Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam.

The overall purpose of the workshops is to make the system of recruitment and selection of workers for employment in Korea more efficient, fair, and transparent and to anticipate and find remedies to the problems that the migrant workers typically face when employed. Since conditions differ from one country to another, efforts are made to tailor each national workshop to the identified specific needs of each country.

From 2004 to the beginning of 2007 some 65,429 foreign workers have been admitted to Korea under the EPS. Of these workers 24% are from Viet Nam, 23% from the Philippines, 21% from Thailand, 15% from Mongolia, 9% from Indonesia and 8% from Sri Lanka. About 98% of the foreign workers work in the manufacturing industry and the second largest group work in agriculture (1.8%). Most of the workers (88%) are male.

The ILO, being the organization mandated to deal with all issues in relation to the world of work, has a special competency in bringing partners together in dialogue. Although the ILO is known for its strong tripartism between government, workers and employers organizations, the skill and the emphasis given by the ILO on dialogue is essential.

Labour migration connects two or more countries in transcending labour markets. When citizens from one country temporarily take up employment in another country, there are naturally a dearth of issues which require constant and constructive bilateral dialogues. Most of those we hear about are at highest

political levels, but the technical level is of equal importance if policies are to be implemented properly and to the benefit of both countries and their workers.

The ILO therefore considers these EPS dialogues between the technical level officials under the ILO/Korea programme as an emerging best practice example of how sending and receiving countries work together to improve the management of migration in the region.

The Government of Sri Lanka has developed a comprehensive policy on labour migration which takes into consideration the multilateral framework on labour migration. This framework consists of a set of non-binding guidelines including all international standards and treaties on the issues.

The Government of Korea has made a strong effort to improve its temporary work programs through bilateral cooperation agreements that outline and specify each country's obligations and responsibilities. But more important than many other MOUs and agreements, the Korean Government has followed with these workshops to monitor the performance and improve the efficiency and relevance of the system.

Korea has worked with the participating countries to establish clear principle for this EPS and its implementation. A clear example is the mandatory pre-departure training is one way to prepare workers better to work in Korea and to minimize difficulties in adjusting to life in Korea.

The Korean government prepared a standard pre-departure training curriculum and materials for the sending countries to use.

The Sri Lankan Government has set clear directions through its new labour migration policy. It pursues the promotion of more and better skilled migrants, to countries where their protection and decent working conditions are ensured.

The EPS dialogues offer an important opportunity to diversify the occupational profile of its migrant workers, with a heavier emphasis on industrial skills including construction, and in terms of destination areas, with expanding employment in East and South-east Asia.

We hope that the dialogue over the next couple of days will bear fruits for both countries.

Thank you