



INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION

Statement

A Human Rights Approach to Combating Human Trafficking: Challenges and Opportunities

Implementing the Recommended Principles and Guidelines on Human Rights and Human Trafficking

Seminar 27 – 28 May 2010, Geneva

1. From the perspective of ILO standards, trafficked victims have experienced a violation of their most basic human and labour rights, including the right to choose employment freely without coercion or deception, to join trade unions and to bargain collectively, to be free from discrimination, and to enjoy what the ILO has called “decent work”. Children in particular have to be protected from the “worst forms of child labour”.
2. In 2005, the ILO published legal guidance on mutually reinforcing standards to prevent and punish trafficking for forced labour. The guide expressly refers to the “Recommended principles and guidelines on human rights”, and highlights the link between ILO’s fundamental labour rights and the Palermo Protocol.
3. Given its mandate and tripartite structure, which brings together representatives of governments, employers and workers, the ILO approaches trafficking from a labour market perspective. It thereby seeks to develop and promote responses to tackle the root causes, such as the lack of decent work, deficiencies in labour market and migration governance, discrimination and lack of social dialogue.

4. ILO programmes against trafficking of children, women and men have resulted in ten years of learning as to how best to promote a rights-based approach. It is of paramount importance to build strong alliances between enforcement agencies, civil society and agencies responsible for the monitoring of workplaces where exploitation is pervasive. It is equally important to empower migrants and vulnerable workers to claim their rights. Fighting discrimination and providing vulnerable groups with access to basic socio-economic services, including decent work opportunities, is also key. Access to trade unions and other organisations offering basic services, in particular for marginalized groups, can help prevent the worst abuses. Outreach assistance to children should include education for children below minimum working age and skills training as well as job placement services for youth. Stronger action needs to be taken to better regulate private recruitment agencies that may exploit vulnerable prospective migrant workers.

5. Despite significant progress, many challenges remain regarding the full implementation of ILO standards and the Recommended Principles and Guidelines on Human Rights and Human Trafficking. There needs to be stronger commitment by member States to identify and protect victims of trafficking for forced labour, including children trafficked into the worst forms of child labour. Stronger commitment is also required to prevent trafficking by tackling systemic failures of labour market and migration governance.