

4-Aug-16



Remarks by Hiba Qasas

Distinguished panelists, colleagues ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon.

I'm very pleased to be here and provide the introductory remarks in this event, on a subject of particular importance to UN Women as it affects the lives and wellbeing of million women, globally.

At the outset, I'd like to thank our partners, the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Committee on Migrant Workers for co-hosting and I would also thank the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights for co-organizing this important side event.

We know that women make up approximately half of the 244 million people who work outside their countries of birth. We have also witnessed in recent years the increase in the autonomous migration of women for work, particularly in feminized sectors in labor importing countries in the north and south. This is in part the result of a lack of decent work for women across the globe, coupled with a rising demand for care work in developed and middle income countries.

We recognize that many women migrate in search of economic self-sufficiency, empowerment and gender equality, and in the process they contribute to the economies of both home and host countries.

We also know that migration is an area where women are as equally represented as men. Yet, it is important to remember that desperate migration has a woman's face too — we must remember that she may

be fleeing with or without her family, escaping conflict, exploitation, instability, deprivation, natural disaster, humanitarian crisis and violence including sexual violence and enslavement, and may be victimized by deceitful intermediaries and face greater dangers in transit and in destination countries.

In the face of all the challenges women migrant workers face, they show tremendous resilience and creativity that has seen them take global advocacy for women migrant workers' rights, and specifically domestic workers' rights, to a new level .

As UN Women we advocate for gender-sensitive, human rights-based migration governance that addresses the specific needs and vulnerabilities of women and girls. This side event is organized within the framework of a UN Women global initiative on "Promoting and Protecting Women Migrant Workers' labour and human rights and engaging with international, national human rights mechanisms to enhance accountability." Funded by the European Union, this is anchored in three pilot countries in this phase in: Mexico, Moldova and the Philippines and strives to promote women migrant worker (WMW) rights and protect them against exclusion and exploitation. And to strengthen strategic international human rights mechanisms, national oversight institutions and governments to ensure accountability to women migrant workers at all stages of migration.

It is evident that migration can be very positive – for the women, their families and the countries of origin, transit and destination. Migration can promote the empowerment of women and foster economic growth. Women migrant workers can substantially advance sustainable development through remittances and social and cultural contributions.

however we know that the positive contributions of women migrant workers can only be fully realized if their labour and human rights are

fully protected. All too often, migrant women face myriad forms of violation of their rights, including sexual and gender-based violence. They are subject to a gendered division of labor in which they are relegated to low-skill and low-paid feminized sectors, such as domestic work. It is therefore critical that their particular needs and vulnerabilities are addressed by gender-responsive policies at the national and global levels, ones that build on the provisions of existing international normative frameworks.

Today we are here to explore how the labour and human rights of migrant women workers can be promoted and protected by capitalizing on an important set of existing international commitments and the review processes of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on Migrant Workers as well as relevant ILO conventions.

The CEDAW General Recommendation 26 – GR26 – is a unique and comprehensive framework for the protection of women migrant workers. It provides a bridge with CEDAW’s broad guarantees against discrimination, as it relates to the distinct needs of women migrant workers, it addresses the particular human rights concerns of women throughout the migration cycle, and identifies and targets those women migrant workers who are especially at risk of human rights violations, such as those who migrate independently or do so to join spouses and family members.

The International Convention on the Rights of all Migrant Workers and their Families is the most comprehensive international treaty on migration, establishing minimum standards that State parties should apply to migrant workers and members of their families, irrespective of their migratory status.

Within the framework of our global initiative and with the support of the EU, UN Women is providing language to strengthen the gender perspective of the templates of the Convention on Migrant Workers, namely the List of issues prior to the submission of the initial periodic report of countries, and the Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

Of course it is key also to recall that the ILO Convention 189 on decent work for domestic workers addresses important sector-specific vulnerabilities and issues faced by domestic workers, and sets out guidelines for State Parties with the aim of providing a framework for private employment recruitment. Given that four-fifths of domestic workers worldwide are women, promoting and protecting the human rights of domestic workers is a key step towards gender equality and the achievement of Planet 50-50 by 2030.

Together, CEDAW GR26, the Convention on the Rights of all Migrant Workers, and ILO Convention 189 represent KEY frameworks for the full protection and promotion of the human rights of women migrants. It is critical that Member States ratify and implement these instruments with the support of international organizations and civil society.

The gap BETWEEN conventions and international commitments and their implementation must be bridged.

Women's leadership agency and voice and their full and equal participation are critical for ensuring that migration governance provides meaningful solutions to migrant women's specific needs. Women migrants and their representatives must be at the table when laws, policies and programmes are designed, implemented and monitored. The importance of this was demonstrated in the crucial role

that women migrants and their representatives played in advocating for ILO Convention 189 concerning Decent Work for Domestic Workers.

With these words, I am handing over to our distinguished panelists and look forward to a stimulating interactive discussion. Thank you.