



Special event to mark the observance of the
World Social Justice Day – 20 February 2018
Theme: Workers on the move: the quest for social justice
UN Headquarters, Conference Room 8
1:15-2:45 pm

World Social Justice Day

Social justice is an underlying principle for peaceful and prosperous coexistence within and among nations. We uphold the principles of social justice when we promote gender equality or the rights of indigenous peoples and migrants. We advance social justice when we remove barriers that people face because of gender, age, race, ethnicity, religion, culture or disability.

For the United Nations, the pursuit of social justice for all is at the core of our global mission to promote development and human dignity. The adoption of the Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization by the International Labour Organization is just one recent example of the UN system's commitment to social justice. The Declaration focuses on guaranteeing fair outcomes for all through employment, social protection, social dialogue, and fundamental principles and rights at work.

In 2007, the General Assembly proclaimed 20 February as the World Day of Social Justice, inviting Member States to devote the day to promoting national activities in accordance with the objectives and goals of the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth session of the General Assembly. Observance of World Day of Social Justice should support efforts of the international community in poverty eradication, the promotion of full employment and decent work, gender equity and access to social well-being and justice for all.

2018 Theme - Workers on the move: the quest for social justice

Most migration today is linked directly or indirectly to the search for decent work opportunities.¹ Even if employment is not the primary driver, it usually features in the migration process at some point.² There are an estimated 258 million international migrants.³ The ILO estimates that there are roughly 150 million migrant workers. Among migrant workers, 56 per cent are men and 44 per cent are women. Migrant workers account for 4.4 per cent of all workers, and have higher labour force participation rates than non-migrants globally (73 per cent and 64 per cent respectively).⁴

The quest for social justice has been an historical journey for migrant workers who are often exposed to the risk of exploitation in countries of origin, transit and destination. The lack of social justice, in particular for low-wage migrant workers, includes the risk of being trapped into jobs with poor wages

¹ILO: World of work report: Developing with jobs (Geneva, 2014).

²ILO-OECD-World Bank, *The Contribution of Labour Mobility to Economic Growth*, joint paper for the G20 Labour and Employment Ministers' Meeting, Ankara, Turkey, 3-4 September 2015, pp. 3-4.

³United Nations: Report of the Secretary – General, *Making migration work for all Report of the Secretary-General*(A/72/643).

⁴ILO: *Global estimates of migrant workers and migrant domestic workers: results and methodology* (Geneva: 2015).

and working conditions, often in the informal economy; exposure to violations of labour and other human rights; dangerous workplace and health hazards; child labour; forced labour; debt bondage; trafficking in persons; and other decent work deficits.⁵

Exploitative recruitment practices, at the very start of the migration process, add to the challenge through exorbitant recruitment fees and other costs charged to migrant workers. The mismatch of skills to the jobs available in destination countries; separation of families; and absence of social protection also contribute to the social and economic costs of migration.

Despite of the challenges faced by migrant workers in the labour markets, there is strong evidence about their positive contribution to hosting countries and communities alike. According to recent estimates by the McKinsey Global Institute, migrants contributed 9.4 per cent of global GDP, a value of US\$6.7 trillion in 2015. Moreover, in 2017 migrants sent home nearly \$600 billion in remittances. Well-governed labour migration contributes to balancing labour supply and demand, help develop and transfer skills at all skill levels, contribute to social protection systems, foster business innovation, and enrich communities both culturally and socially, all important aspects of decent work conditions as is also reflected in the Secretary General's report, "Making Migration Work for All".

The positive benefits of labour migration are both possible and achievable only if we adopt fair and effective labour migration governance. Governance of labour migration is applicable at all levels – global, regional and national. It requires a comprehensive, integrated and "whole of government" approach nationally, and strong cooperation across migration corridors and regions, rights based and grounded in social dialogue. These approaches should be guided by international labour standards, in particular the fundamental principles and rights at work and the relevant ILO and UN Conventions; policy frameworks, including the ILO Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration; and guidelines, such as the General Principles and Operational Guidelines for Fair Recruitment.

The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration offers the international community the opportunity to respond to this historical quest for social justice for migrant workers by contributing to enhance decent work outcomes for migrant workers.

The Special Event

This special event to mark the observance of World Social Justice Day – 20 February 2018, under the theme: **Workers on the move: the quest for social justice**, will bring together concrete stories and testimonies about the challenges of social justice and labour migration and possible policy responses to address these challenges.

The story tellers include journalists, winners of the ILO global media competition on labour migration for highlighting the positive contribution of migrant workers to countries of origin, transit, and destination as well as the key aspects such as their fair recruitment. The stories will be followed by an interactive exchange with policy makers, UN delegates negotiating the Global Compact on Migration, representatives of business, trade unions and civil society.

This event will contribute to the UN TOGETHER campaign (<https://together.un.org/>) which has the purpose of encouraging global action in promoting non-discrimination and addressing the problem of rising xenophobia against refugees and migrants.

Preliminary Program

⁵ILO, *Conclusions concerning fair and effective labour migration governance*, International Labour Conference, 106th Session, Geneva, 16 June 2017, para. 3.

1:15 Welcome remarks by H.E. Ms. Mirgul Moldoisaeva, Permanent Representative of the Kyrgyz Republic to the UN and sponsor of the World Social Justice Day UN resolution

1:20 Video message by Mr. Guy Ryder, ILO Director General

1:23 Key note intervention by Ms. Louise Arbour, UN Secretary General Special Representative for International Migration: ***Migration and the Quest for Social Justice***

1:30 Story-telling, testimonies

- ***Migration and separation: Stories of the barrel children in the Caribbean***, by Melissa Noel, award winning, independent multimedia journalist contributor to NBCNews, Huffpost and Caribbean Beat Magazine
- ***Mr. Ince and the Hope of Being Needed: A year and a half with a tireless Turkish day laborer in Berlin***, by Mario Kaiser, writer and independent journalist, former reporter and editor for Die Zeit and Der Spiegel
- ***The Hand that Feeds: Undocumented immigrant workers struggling for labour rights in the food sector***, by Rachel Lears, Director, filmmaker and producer of award winning documentary The Hand that Feeds.

2:00 Interactive exchange facilitated by Mrs Michelle Leighton, Chief of the ILO Labour Migration Branch,

2:45 Conclusion