

Celebrating International Labour Day 2020 During the Covid-19 Pandemic: **Protect Workers, Protect Human Rights**

For Immediate Release

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Seoul, Korea - As the world continues its fight against Covid-19, large swathes of human populations remain under lockdown. The Asia Democracy Network embraces and celebrates laborers from around the world who answered the call of duty and risked their lives to provide for those afflicted by the virus. The sacrifice of these frontline workers is a critical factor to ensure not only to the functioning of the world economy, but more importantly resuscitating the health of our societies. We call on governments to faithfully perform their duty of guaranteeing these workers' economic, social and physical welfare, in the same manner they protected us in this time of dire need.

The year 2020 has effectively seen the labor sector face one of its greatest challenges in a decade. As we memorialize the successes brought about by the continuing sacrifices of the labor movement, we also extend our solidarity to the millions of workers around the world who continue to face grave hardships due to this health crisis we are experiencing. Faced with physical distancing regulations and other containment strategies, entire industries were ground to a halt rendering millions of workers from around the world jobless. Those who managed to retain their jobs had to accept steep pay cuts, and face a growing uncertainty over their source of livelihood.

In the context of a globalized world, millions of migrant workers remain stranded in foreign nations with extremely limited access to healthcare and other necessities crucial to their survival. As migrant workers, they remain the foundation on which several economies are built, yet they remain largely excluded from existing social security nets. In ordinary times, these workers often rely on their communities and families back home; however stringent lockdown measures placed some barriers for them to access what can be considered as their most accessible form of support mechanism. Considering how important these workers have been to the growth and development of host and sending countries, all governments should, therefore, uphold the principle of rights equity, expand their social security nets to include

migrant labor, and establish a “new normal” on how we protect migrant rights.

The Asia Democracy Network echoes the position of the International Labour Organization when they stated that, “In the face of an infectious disease outbreak, how we protect our workers now clearly dictates how safe our communities are, and how resilient our businesses will be, as this pandemic evolves.”

We call on governments around the world to fulfill the rights of workers and provide protection to workers, to respect the spirit of the labor movement and its historic struggle by protecting workers now and after the easing of lockdowns. It is only through guaranteeing the safety and security of labor that we can prevent a second wave of the virus, and it is their welfare that will be critical to reinvigorating economies worldwide.

The Asia Democracy Network reiterates its commitment and urges government and businesses in ensuring the protection of social, economic, and political rights and stands in solidarity with the workers of the world, the lifeline of our societies.

Happy Labour Day, in solidarity.