

Presentation for the UN Summit for Refugees and Migrants, during the Round Table 2: “Addressing drivers of migration, particularly large movements, and highlighting the positive contributions of migrants”

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Jille Belisario, Commission for Filipino Migrant Workers (CFMW), Amsterdam, The Netherlands



Commission for Filipino Migrant Workers

Good morning everyone. I would like to thank the Office of the President of the General Assembly for inviting me and I would also like to thank NGLS and the co-facilitators in your commitment to include migrants and refugees and our organisations in the different stages of this process. I am an example of that effort and for me as a person/refugee/migrant and for my organisation, the Commission for Filipino Migrant Workers, taking part in this process is giving me inspiration. I am a Human rights educator and organiser among our transnational migrant communities. But most importantly my goal is that my input will inspire you to think critically about our current discourse on Migration Governance. Before I will share the story of Tina I would like to mention that I am part of a larger community of migrants and refugees and in coalition with Global Coalition of Migration, Women in Migration, and in Europe of the Transnational Migrant Platform – together we we hope to achieve equality of rights and social and economic justice.

Instead of sharing my migration story I would like to share the story of Tina (which is not her real name). Tina is a Migrant Domestic Worker in the private household whom I have been working with in the Netherlands. Her migration journey started in the Middle East – Kuwait – even during the war in 1992, then Cyprus and then in the Netherlands. During a Forum theatre workshop, she was sharing the following:

“As Migrant Domestic Workers working in the Private household in the Netherlands we have organised ourselves - to empower ourselves and understand our position in Netherlands, helping each other in terms of sharing work, shelter and also to learn from each others experience. Thru this Forum Theatre we are able to develop our capacity to negotiate with our employers and have a dialogue with the Dutch Public and have placed our issue in the agenda of the politicians and the Trade Union. The main goal in our campaign is to be recognised with respect because we know that our work allows the parents in our families to balance their work and family life. We are there to give love to their children while they are at work and make sure that their households are organized and that they can represent themselves with neatly ironed clothes at work, listen to them when they need a shoulder to cry on. Our campaign aim is not only about changing our situation in the Dutch society but also for all the women and men working in the domestic sector in the Netherlands. We are united, and full of strength with total awareness of our rights, dignity and capacities as human beings. Finally, even as we prioritise the MDW rights campaign, we also get involved in the wider struggle for migrant rights against racism and discrimination.”

Since her arrival to the Netherlands she has not been able to be reunited with her family because of lack of regular status and has been working irregularly for more than 20 years. Recently her daughter joined her in the Netherlands. Although her daughter was able to finish her study as a physiotherapist, because of lack of prospects in the Philippines her daughter migrated to Netherlands and is also working as a domestic worker

First of all I want to put here the issue of equality - to be specific gender equality. Most probably many of you who are here now, have a domestic worker in their homes. But why are our working condition and our possibility to move cross borders different form Tina and her daughter? Tina and her daughter are workers too, just like you and me. But because domestic work is not recognised to be contributing economically in many countries domestic work-despite the adoption of ILO C189 –

(Decent work for Domestic Workers) not recognized as proper work and in many countries not a category for regular channel for migration and Tina is not an expat but a migrant. On developing mechanisms to protect all migrants we need to allow all people from all countries to move across borders for purposes including: to work, to look for work, to have paths to residency and citizenship, to return home, to return to a job, to get education or training, to reunite with family.

Also in developing mechanisms we need to consider the role of all actors in the migration industry. It is particularly relevant at this time to consider how the role of Private Military Corporations and Private Security Companies are shaping migration policies and how these corporations are actively encouraging a growing securitisation of borders. Securitization frameworks that prevent regular entry, criminalize irregular entry, and detain migrants will fuel criminalization of migrant communities; intensify racist and xenophobic narratives that demonize migrants and refugees. We need to look at the issue from the perspective of mobility and development achieving the social cohesion and economic inclusion.

Tina said that she did not want to leave her children 30 years ago. Why is her daughter compelled to do the same and leaving her son in the Philippines? We need to be comprehensive that the pressure to migrate is a very complex phenomena and that the large movements of people today are 'mixed flows' of people. The prospects of the daughter of Tina finding job in the Philippines, refugees fleeing war and environmental degradation and disasters are very much related to our foreign policies, economic, trade and investment agreements – in particular those many agreements (such as the proposed TTIP and TTP) which privilege corporate profit and interests above peoples rights. Competition and the drive for market efficiency, and the systemic erosion of social models of our countries during the global crisis have facilitated commodification in every aspect of our life and our environment. This has resulted into massive displacement of people and the explosive growth of precarious wage labour and subjected to pressures and experiences that lead to a precarious existence, of living in the present, without a secure identity or sense of development achieved through work. This is leading to a type of economic war for access to fossil fuel and mineral resources. But in the current global situation it is also linked to actual and real hot war, especially in the Middel East. As refugees and migrants we believe that these realities, together with accelerating climate change have to be considered as part of the contributing factors to the major movements of peoples that we are currently witnessing.

To leave no one behind - we a more intense effort to work with civil societies reclaiming areas of development and that governments at state and UN level should promote policy coherence across the spectrum of development, trade and investment and peace and safe movement of peoples across borders. The realities of these major drivers of migration and refugee movement which we all face today (whether in government or in civil society) bring us new challenges as migrants and refugees. We see ourselves as transnational migrant actors making significant contributions to the economic and political and cultural development of the societies where we live and work as well as to our home countries. Even as we campaign for the rights of Migrants and Refugees and the implementation of the UN & ILO Conventions which protect our rights, we also see common grounds with other sectors of civil society and social movements who are proposing alternatives to respect and safeguard the right of people to work in their own territories and defend their environment and natural resources, such as the current "mandate to elaborate an international legally binding instrument on Transnational Corporations and Other Business Enterprises with respect to human rights." And the ongoing work of the Open-Ended Intergovernmental Working Group on a United Nations Declaration on Rights of Peasants & Other People Working in Rural Areas.

As migrants and refugees, we believe that the protection of the rights of migrants and refugees will be best ensured when these are seen in an integrated way as part of peoples human rights – whether we are women, indigenous peoples, migrants and refugees or workers and peasants. The UN has a major role and responsibility to ensure this integrated approach to the challenges facing the global human rights agenda.



Transnational Migrant Platform (TMP)