Statement Submitted to the
United Nations Second High Level Dialogue
on International Migration and Development – Roundtable Discussion 4[1]
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Your Excellencies, as we conclude the two-day meeting of the Second High Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, we wish to share with you three historical moments that inspire us to continue the advocacy for migrants' rights.

First, and most apt, as we are in the US – was the adoption of the 13th amendment to the US Constitution on December 18, 1865. The 13th amendment put an end to the centuries-old practice of slave trading, bonded labor and involuntary servitude. It serves as the inspiration for us to continue the advocacy to eradicate bonded labor, not only in the US but globally as migrants today continue to find themselves in similar situations – migrants who, in order to get jobs abroad, have no choice but to work in slavery-like conditions and bonded-labor.

The second historical moment was the adoption of the UN Convention for the Protection of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families also on the same day -- December 18 –albeit more than a century later in 1990. The UN took up the issue of migrant workers protection following reports in 1972 of clandestine transportation of migrants into Europe and the exploitation of workers from Africa in conditions "akin to slavery and forced labor". Responding to the situation, in 1976, a report of the UN Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities recommended among others the crafting of a UN Convention for the rights of migrant workers. On December 18, 1990, the UN General Assembly adopted, without a vote, the UN Convention for the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

The third historical moment occurred two years ago – the adoption of the Convention 189 at the centennial gathering of the international labor conference of the ILO in June 2011. Convention 189 formally recognized domestic work as work and that domestic workers – local and migrants - are entitled to ALL rights afforded to all workers generally.

These inspiring moments took place in a span of almost one and half century. These moments are milestones in the struggle for human dignity and migrants rights as these clearly proved that we –the People – and the States as duty bearers – are capable of standing up and rising to the occasion to change policies and develop programs to respond to the realities and demands of the times. This is our legacy.

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1   Statement was not read out during the RTD for lack of time.

As we continue to persevere in our work, it is imperative that we reference and benchmark our action with those already set forth by the UN and ILO as universally-accepted minimum standards of protection.

We urge Your Excellencies to continue the engagement with social partners and other states – bilateral, regional and multilateral – in the spirit of state-cooperation and collaboration – in order to harmonise migration policies.

Your Excellencies, the massive migration that we see today is primarily a consequence of failed economic development agenda in the origin countries which are resulting in deeper poverty and higher unemployment. Hence again, it is imperative that our efforts in the migrants rights front are interconnected with efforts to effect sustainable, people-centered holistic development in the countries of origin.

Your Excellencies, colleagues in migrant communities, trade unions and CSOs we all know the five year eight point proposal which was submitted to the governments which called for the protection of the rights of migrants and the integration of migration into the development agenda. We also need to institutionalise mechanisms, identify benchmarks, and monitor the progress of implementation of these proposals. Together, we can make it happen. Together, as partners, we can courageously build "The Future We Want."

Thank you.