

Media Update

12 April 2016

ILO

Press Release



Promoting Safe Migration from Pakistan: Pakistan's First Ever Migrant Resource Centre Inaugurated in Islamabad

Tuesday 12 April, 2016

Islamabad (joint press release) – One of the most effective ways to combat common abuses of migrants such as underpayment of wages, confiscation of passports, substandard working conditions and confinement in the workplace, is to ensure that migrants are equipped with knowledge and strategies to safeguard their labour- and human rights throughout the migration cycle.

Recognizing this, the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development established the Migrant Resource Center (MRC) in Islamabad in 2015 with the support from the ILO-EU funded “South Asia Labour Migration Governance Project” (SALM) and the ICMPD-EU funded project “Silk Routes Partnership for Migration”. While MRCs already exists in other labour sending countries in South Asia, the center in Islamabad was the first ever to be established in Pakistan. The MRC provides a range of support services to (potential) migrants, migrant workers, and their families including information, counseling, referral and pre-departure orientation.

The Centre was inaugurated today by the Honourable Federal Secretary, Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development, Mr. Khizer Hayat Khan, along with the Ambassador of the European Union to Pakistan, H.E. Mr Jean-François Cautain;



Ambassador of Hungary to Pakistan, H. E. István Szabó; Ms. Ingrid Christensen, Country Director, International Labour Organization Country Office for Pakistan and Ms. Sedef Dearing, Senior Regional Advisor, Silk Routes, International Centre for Migration and Policy Development.

In his presentation on the MRC, **Mr. Manzoor Ahamd Kayani, Joint Secretary Emigration (MoOP&HRD)** mentioned that *“from 1971 till today about 9 million Pakistanis have proceeded abroad for employment, mostly go to GCC countries. The majority of workers are low skilled workers and lack of information on safe migration, access to support mechanisms and justice add to their vulnerabilities and thus they face exploitation and abuse during recruitment and employment process”*. He emphasised that *“the main purpose of the MRC is to provide accurate and timely information on safe and legal migration, referral and counselling, as well as raising awareness on irregular migration and the related serious risks”*.

Ms. Ingrid Christensen, Country Director, International Labour Organization (ILO) Country Office for Pakistan congratulated the the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development for the successful establishment of the Migrant Resource Centre in Islamabad. In her speech, she stated that *“The ILO is the only UN agency with a constitutional mandate to protect migrant workers. The ILO Constitution – which will be one hundred years old in 1919 – speaks to the needs of protection of the interests of workers when employed in countries other than their own, they should be treated as human beings not as a commodity”*. She also said that the government should consider the ratification of international standards related to labour migration, including the two ILO Conventions Nos. 97 and 143. She emphasised that *“partnership is a key, to achieve tangible and sustainable results to promote safe migration and this MRC is a good example of an effective partnership”*.

Ms. Sedef Dearing, Senior Regional Advisor, Silk Routes, International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) mentioned in her speech *“that these MRCs are an outcome of partnership of not only EU and ILO but also several other countries as well, namely Bulgaria, Hungary, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and the United Kingdom”*. She recalled the series of events held under Budapest Process which resulted in decision to support the establishment of MRCs and mentioned that *“providing the correct information to the right people is crucial when smugglers attempt to fill in the deficit of information. It is important that right skills are matched with the right jobs so that migrants and the countries of origin and destination make best use of these skills”*.

H. E. István Szabó, Ambassador of Hungary to Pakistan expressed his great pleasure to officially launching the MRC and congratulated the ministry and stakeholders. Talking at the event, he said that *“people migrate in search of employment and study so that can contribute to the welfare of their families, unfortunately the well-organized human smugglers and traffickers group take advantage of this, and trap them by providing false information to the vulnerable migrants in order to mislead them and gain more profit without bothering about the future of their victims and their families”*. In concluding his speech, he said that *“the MRCs here in Islamabad will be a good source of information for*

potential migrants to get information on safe migration and consequences of irregular migration”.

Addressing the inaugural event, **H.E. Jean-François Cautain, Ambassador of the European Union to Pakistan** said that “*historically, Europe has been both a source and a destination for migration, and labour migration is also very much at the heart of the European Union today and while migration can benefit societies in many ways, it can also pose problems, in particular if it takes place illegally, and at the moment Europe is in the middle of an unprecedented crisis of illegal migration, which constitutes a serious test of our cooperation. Illegal migration is not only a problem for the recipient country but also pose a serious threats to migrants themselves, therefore we look forward an effective partnership with the government of Pakistan to combat with this menace*”. Ambassador Cautain continued by saying “*We are also in favour to promote legal opportunities as our populations are aging and in the future there will be a growing number of jobs that it will be difficult to fill from within Europe. Therefore, it is in our interest to be able to draw on qualified and interested candidates from the rest of the world*”. He concluded by emphasising that these MRCs will help the potential migrants to make informed decision about migration and that the wished that this initiative will be a success.

In his closing remarks, **the Secretary of the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development, Mr Khizer Hayat Khan** stated that “*the Government of Pakistan has developed a legal and institutional framework aimed to encourage emigration through regular channels under overall supervision of my Ministry*”. He also mentioned that “*our objective is not only to increase the number of people going abroad for employment but also ensure their welfare and protection*” and emphasised that “*Strengthening the labour migration governance and policy framework is a priority of the government*”. He thanked the EU, ILO and ICMPD for their support to set up this first ever MRC. He together with the speakers of the event unveiled the inaugural plaque of the MRC.

For further information please contact:

Ms Sadia Hameed
National Programme Officer, SALM Project
ILO Country Office for Pakistan
Migration
Email: hameeds@ilo.org
silkroutes.org

Ms. Hina Maqsood
Project Liaison Officer
Silk Routes Partnership for
Process Secretariat
hina.maqsood@icmpd-

UN Women

Press Release



Serena Hotels & UN Women Celebrating International Day of Sports for Development and Peace

Islamabad, Sunday 10 April 2016: Serena Hotels and UN Women (the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women) commemorated the UN's International Day of Sports for Development and Peace by hosting a match day to show how football is a powerful vehicle for social inclusion, gender equality and youth empowerment. Young women and girls from Pakistan's National Football Team, Rawalpindi's Young Rising Stars, and Ambassadors, Diplomats and UN dignitaries participated in the friendly matches.

The International Day of Sports for Development and Peace was celebrated under the banner of the Serena Hotels Sports Diplomacy Initiative and UN Women's 'Planet 50-50 by 2030: Step It Up for Gender Equality' campaign and the matches were played at Total football facility, the only FIFA certified football pitch in Islamabad.

The 6-a-side football tournament between four teams, gave a chance to young females and participating players to get together in a spirit of commemoration and hope. The event gave the uplifting message that football is no longer a game dominated by boys and men. Pakistan's female National Football Team and the young girls from Rawalpindi's Young Rising Stars took to the playing fields to show that sport is a powerful tool for developing confidence, team spirit, skills and leadership, and for spreading messages of peace and driving social change.

In opening the tournament, Mr. Jamshed Kazi, Country Representative of UN Women Pakistan said: "In Pakistan, one of the key challenges for women and girls in sports is the lack of safe public spaces making it difficult to find places to exercise or play without facing harassment or even worse. UN Women, through one of its initiatives to combat violence against women aims to create greater awareness and implementation of legislation and adoption of practices that ensure that women's rights to safe spaces is safeguarded and



that urban and local planning bodies take this into account. Sport creates confidence, a healthy lifestyle, team spirit and breaks down gender stereotypes of girls as being weak and physically inactive- investing in enabling opportunities for women and girls to participate in sports is investing in a healthier, equitable and more productive and harmonious nation”

Speaking after the tournament, Ms. Sana Mahmud, former captain of the Pakistan’s female National Football Team said; “Sport really has changed who I am. The person that I am today is only because of the fact that I play sport. Everything that I have learned, all the memories that I have, all the friend I have made, and everything else in my life, and even the future, it’s all because I play sport. Somehow, luckily I ended up in sports”.

In closing the games and tournament Mr. Aziz Boolani, CEO of Serena Hotels said: “Sports have the potential to bring about great personal and social changes through better health, fostering gender equity, strengthening and unifying communities, improving education outcomes, and building skills that promote employment and economic development. We are proud to collaborate with UN Women to raise awareness about inclusion in sports and celebrate development and peace through sports.”

Honorary guests included Ms. Brigitta Blaha (Ambassador of Austria), Ms. Ina Lepel (Ambassador of Germany), Mr. Heather Cruden (High Commissioner of Canada), Ms. Helle Nielsen (Chargé d’Affaires of Denmark) and Mr. Neil Buhne (UN Resident Coordinator) who welcomed the opportunity to play alongside the female stars and display his football skills.

The Serena Sports Diplomacy Initiative encourages and promotes healthy activities through interaction amongst various segments of the society to enhance social wellbeing and cultural development. Under this banner, Serena Hotels hosts the prestigious President of Pakistan Gold Medal Golf Tournament, the President Gold Cup International Squash Championship, the Serena Hotels – Chief of the Air Staff International Squash Championship and annual polo, cricket and invitational golf tournaments. The Serena Hotels Football Tournament was the first football initiative taken by Serena Hotels early this year and it was ensured that women empowerment was the highlight of the event where a platform was provided for women to display their sporting skills.
