

Media Update

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PRESS RELEASE

The Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development and the ILO launch the first ever Migrant Resource Centre in Lahore.

ISLAMABAD – The ILO in Pakistan, through its EU funded South Asia Labour Migration Governance Project, has entered into a partnership with the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development to establish the first Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) in Pakistan. The MRC will be based in the Protectorate of Emigrants offices in Lahore, a space that is visited by hundreds of Pakistani migrant workers on a daily basis. The MRC will provide a range of services including information on safe migration and foreign employment options, as well as other support services that will facilitate their migration process.

The MRC will deliver information services to potential/migrants, pre-departure orientation, supplemented by targeted outreach and awareness-raising activities in areas of high emigration.

Pakistan is a major supplier of low- and semi-skilled migrant workers to the Middle East. Between 1971 -2014, more than 7.8 million Pakistanis have officially proceeded abroad for employment, out of this total manpower export, about 96% have proceeded to the six GCC countries, where UAE and Saudi Arabia are the main countries of destination.

Migrants often lack information about safe migration and rights at work, and have limited access to support services. Many potential/migrants are also unaware about recruitment process, lack information about cultural, social and economic norms at the destination country and thus face problems and may end up with exploitation and abuse at workplace. Many of them are also

unaware of the practical and legal processes, for migrating through legal channels and maintaining legal status while in destination. Migrant workers often have a very limited understanding of their rights at work and where to go in case their rights are violated. In countries of origin, migrants tend to get information from acquaintances, agents or recruitment agencies; while in countries of destination, they face language barriers, do not know where to seek assistance, are intimidated by service providers, or cannot reach services. This lack of awareness undermines orderly migration and puts migrants at risk of exploitation.

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PRESS RELEASE

“Government Initiates Dialogue on the Ratification of Convention 155- Occupational Safety and Health and the Working Environment”

International Day on Safety & Health at Work

Karachi: To mark World Day on Safety & Health at Work under the theme: “*Join in Building a Culture on prevention on Occupational Safety and Health (OSH)*”, the Employers Federation of Pakistan (EFP), in collaboration with the Pakistan Workers Federation (PWF), the Provincial and Federal Labour departments and the International Labour Organization (ILO) held the 2015 OSH awards in Karachi on 28 April 2015. The event brought together over 170 participants representing Government, Employers, Chamber/s, Workers, Academia as well as media

A national occupational safety and health culture is one in which the right to a safe and healthy working environment is respected at all levels, where governments, employers, and workers actively participate in securing a safe and healthy working environment through a system of defined rights, responsibilities and duties, and where the highest priority is accorded to the principle of prevention.

The annual event raised awareness on OSH, recalled stakeholders commitments around the theme of the commemorative event and awarded employers who showed progress since the last awards in the area of OSH at the workplace. Over 20 organizations/employers were given the OSH awards including the Pakistan Refinery which won the first prize while the Pak-Arab Refinery were the runners-up in overall best performance in terms of effective OSH measures at the workplace. Industries and businesses also secured prizes in various business sectors i.e. Oil, Gas and Energy, Food & FMCGs, Services, and Processing and Allied sectors.

The Chief Guest at the event, Mr. Sikandar Ismail, Federal Secretary, Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resources Development (OPHRD) announced that the federal government would initiate a tripartite dialogue to consider the ratification of new ILO conventions including Convention 155 concerning Occupational Safety and Health and the Working Environment (Entry into force: 11 Aug 1983). He also stated that the Government at Federal and Provincial level, would continue its efforts aimed at strengthening reporting on-and the compliance to, already ratified conventions by Pakistan. Mr. Ismail urged the Government of Sindh to accelerate the implementation of the Joint Action Plan on OSH (2013-2016) which was developed in 2013 by the tripartite constituents in response to the Baldia Town Factory Fire-deemed the largest industrial disaster in Pakistan which left over 250 workers dead and rendered more than 1200 workers as jobless.

Brother Zahoor Awan - representing PWF, emphasized the need for more collective bargaining around OSH issues at enterprise level and stated that charter of demands by the workers should ask for better working conditions for the workers in order to ensure decent work for all. Speaking on behalf of EFP, Mr. Khawaja M. Nauman restated the need to reinforce the tripartite inspection mechanism for effective adoption of OSH practices by the work establishments whether formal or informal. Ali Ashraf Naqvi, Joint Director Labour (Sindh) shared the updates on implementation of 'Joint Action Plan on OSH' and expressed optimism that the Sindh OSH Act will soon see the light of the day.

In his address during the event, Mr. Francesco d' Ovidio- Country Director of the ILO in Pakistan congratulated Employers Federation of Pakistan on organizing the awards ceremony which allowed participants to share the progress and highlight the challenges faced by the constituents in implementation OSH related initiatives at enterprise level 9formal and

informal). He echoed the Federal Governments call for the speedy implementation of the JAP-OSH as a model that can be replicated in other provinces of Pakistan and reconfirmed ILO's commitment to further support provincial and government in fulfilling their commitments to building a preventative culture on OSH through capacity building initiatives and analytical work. Mr. d'Ovidio also welcomed the government's decision to initiate a tripartite dialogue process for unratified ILO conventions including the C-155 referring to the comprehensive national labour inspection and OSH profile which has recently complied. This will pave way for the affirmative actions on improvements and mitigating the OSH risks at the workplaces as well as address decent work deficits across Pakistan.

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