EU, ILO, UN for ending violence against women migrant workers

Independent Online Desk

The European Union (EU), International Labour Organization (ILO) and UN Women organized a national Consultative Dialogue and discussed with key stakeholders women migrant workers' rights and opportunities in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar on Thursday, reports UNB.

The consultation introduced the new ILO and UN Women "Safe and Fair" Programme to key partners and identify activities which could be undertaken in Myanmar building on the on-going efforts by the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population and the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Settlement to promote safe and fair migration practices, including to promote the labour rights and end violence against migrant women.

Government authorities, embassies, labour organizations, overseas employment agencies, community-based organizations, INGOs and UN agencies elaborated a shared roadmap that will inspire the work in Myanmar over the next five years, said a joint statement.

The meeting ensured that the project aligns with country and ASEAN level priorities, and international legal frameworks on migration, anti-trafficking, ending violence against women, and promoting women's rights.

This national Consultative Dialogue is part of a series of ten national consultations being held in each ASEAN country.

Women migrant workers are contributing to the development and economies of both the country they work in and Myanmar, including sending significant amounts of money home and bringing back skills and contacts.
The Myanmar 2014 Population Census through backward projection methods, estimated that a total of 4.25 million persons (nearly 20 per cent of the Myanmar labour force) were living abroad.

Women make up nearly half the migrants in Thailand, China and Japan and just over half in Singapore.

Women work as domestic workers, factory workers, sex workers and in agriculture and construction.

According to the World Bank’s Migration and Remittances Factbook 2016, Myanmar migrants remitted USD3.5 billion to Myanmar in 2015, nearly five per cent of the country’s gross domestic product.

Myanmar women continue to migrate for livelihood reasons, and migration can be a positive experience, in which they gain skills, find meaningful employment, and gain more opportunities for themselves and their families.

Through migration, women can inform and change social, cultural, political and gender norms and can influence positive change across households and communities.

Women who are in an irregular situation and women working as domestic workers are particularly vulnerable to exploitation, abuse, violence, forced labour and trafficking due to their status and isolation, said the statement.

Fear of being deported, reluctance to report abuses to legal authorities, language and cultural barriers are among the obstacles, women who have experienced violence face, when accessing services such as health care, justice, police or social services, it said.

The positive experiences and contributions of women migrant workers can only be fully ensured if their safety, labour and human rights are fully protected and migration becomes a safe and fair process for them, said the statement.