



**PERMANENT MISSION OF SINGAPORE  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

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**STATEMENT**

**BY**

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**UN HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE ON  
INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT  
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*Please check against delivery*

Mr President,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The forces of globalisation have in recent years escalated and forged closer economic integration among countries. The same processes that started with the ease of movement of capital and goods across borders have now also enabled labour mobility on an unprecedented scale. As is now clearly evident, these migratory trends have both short and long term consequences on both the source and receiving countries. This High-Level Dialogue provides a timely opportunity to discuss international migration and its impact on economic and social development.

### **Migrants and their Contributions to Singapore**

2 As a small city state much dependent on global trade, Singapore has always welcomed foreign manpower to bolster our total workforce, now at about 2.4 million. Today, more than one in four workers in Singapore is a foreigner. Without the contribution of foreign manpower, our economic growth would have been stymied by labour and skills shortages. We are a cosmopolitan city with a diverse population of people from different continents who bring with them diverse ethnicity, cultures and customs.

### **Regulation of Migrant Flows**

3 But because of our limited size and small population, we allow foreigners to work in Singapore in a regulated manner through a work pass and visa framework with established rules and criteria.

4 While Singapore is supportive of greater openness and global integration, like other countries we are also mindful of the economic, social and security implications of irregular migration. We therefore have a tough stance against immigration offenders, and those involved in human smuggling and trafficking. To keep irregular migration at bay, we have a multi-pronged approach with measures ranging from the enactment of deterrent laws to stringent enforcement. Penalties against illegal trafficking or deployment of foreign workers are punitive. For instance, human traffickers face jail terms of up to 5 years under our Immigration Act.

## **Protection of Migrants**

5 Foreign nationals under our work pass system are protected under Singapore's laws and in some situations accorded even greater protection when compared to locals. For example, we have enhanced our Penal Code to increase by one-and-a-half times the penalties for acts of abuse against foreign domestic workers by their employers. This is to send a clear signal that foreign workers have benefits and rights under our law.

6 To ensure that the lower-skilled foreign workers understand and are able to assert their rights, we have stepped up promotional and outreach efforts to inform them of the available channels of assistance. Various administrative and assistance measures have also been implemented to protect migrant workers against abuse, unfair practices and exploitation. For foreign domestic workers in particular, we have introduced further protection measures, which include compulsory orientation courses for employers and workers, tighter regulation of the recruitment agencies, and strict enforcement against employment infringements and abuse.

7 As migration transcends national borders, collective efforts at the regional and global levels are required to reinforce national capacities in understanding and managing migration issues. Source countries can do their part in establishing measures to educate migrant workers on their rights and responsibilities, and curb exploitative recruitment practices. Dialogues between source and receiving countries can also strengthen cooperation and enhance the regulation of migration.

## **Conclusion**

8 This UN dialogue can facilitate the benefits of labour migration by articulating a common framework that fosters understanding and appropriate responsibilities on source and receiving countries and other stakeholders.

9 Thank you.

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