



NGO Letter to Ministers of Labor



February 22, 2013



Your Excellency:

As advocates for children and their rights, we are writing to urge your government to protect some of the world’s most vulnerable working children by ratifying the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 189 concerning Decent Work for Domestic Workers (“Domestic Workers Convention”). This instrument is not only a breakthrough in labor rights, but a critical new tool for child protection, with the potential to improve the lives of an estimated 15 million children engaged in domestic work, largely girls, around the world.



The ILO estimates that children make up nearly 30 percent of the world’s estimated 50 to 100 million domestic workers. They often work 12 or more hours a day, seven days a week, cooking, cleaning, washing clothes, and caring for their employer’s children. They often receive little pay, if they are paid at all. Forced labor and trafficking is not uncommon, and their isolation in private homes leaves them at particular risk of exploitation and violence, including sexual abuse. Evidence shows that they are even less likely than other working children to attend school.



The Domestic Workers Convention protects children and adults alike by providing domestic workers with the basic labor rights long enjoyed by workers in other sectors, including daily rest and weekly days off, limits to hours of work, minimum wage coverage, and overtime compensation. The Convention also obliges governments to take specific steps to eliminate child labor in domestic work and to protect those children who can work legally, by setting a minimum age for domestic work in line with existing ILO conventions, and ensuring that work by children above that age does not deprive them of compulsory schooling or opportunities to participate in further education or vocational training. The recommendation accompanying the Convention gives



important additional guidance in protecting the rights of child domestic workers.

2013 offers two unique opportunities for your government to advance the rights of child domestic workers and build support for the Convention:

- This year's **World Day against Child Labor**, observed worldwide on **June 12**, will focus on child domestic labor, with a new report from the ILO detailing the scale of this global phenomenon;
- The **3rd Global Conference on Child Labor**, hosted by Brazil from **October 8-10** in Brasilia, will bring together thousands of delegates and an estimated 140 governments to accelerate global action to eliminate child labor.

We urge your government to use one or both of these important events to announce or pledge publicly its ratification of the Domestic Workers Convention. To date, governments from nearly every region—including Uruguay, the Philippines, Italy, and Mauritius— have already ratified the Convention. Your commitment will strengthen efforts to end child labor, break cycles of poverty, and provide working children with better conditions and a brighter future.

We welcome your response.

Signed,

Amnesty International
Anti-Slavery International
Defense for Children International
Child Rights International Network
Global March Against Child Labor
Human Rights Watch
International Domestic Worker Network
International Labor Rights Forum
Plan International
World Vision International

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