

LABOUR MOBILITY AND BUSINESS HARMONIZATION

All the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders have committed all the Pacific Islands Countries (PICs) including NZ & Australia to the SDG8 **to promote decent work & economic growth**. All PICs are members of the ILO and majority are party to the 8 core conventions as international labour standards as the benchmark for the creation of decent jobs; and to facilitate investment & trade to achieve economic sustainability for the Pacific Region. The principal objective of the **Framework for Pacific Regionalism** stipulate sustainable development that combines economic social and cultural development in ways that improve livelihoods; and an economic growth that is inclusive and equitable.

1. INDECENT POLITICAL COMMITMENT:

Unfortunately, these international commitments have not been accorded the political priority at the PICs national level including Australia & NZ. In addition, regional policies and/or agreements are currently being drafted purely for economic benefits with no proper assessment of its social impact on the people. These policies included the (1) Bilateral Labour Mobility Agreement; (2) PACER Plus; (3) International Labour Standards; (4) Regional ILO Decent work Framework; (5) Regional Movement of Natural Persons; (6) Foreign Direct Investment policies; (7) Health & Safety policies; (8) Youth development policies; and (9) Fiscal policies.

2. INDECENT SOCIAL PROBLEMS:

There have been increasing financial and social problems resulting from non-compliance to international and regional commitments on economic development focused on private sector development but failing to ensure the protection of the welfare of the people. These problems will also intensify with the drafting of regional policies aiming to promote and harmonise businesses without taking into consideration its social impact on the people of the Pacific. These problems include: (1) Violation of workers' rights at national and migrant workers; (2) No recognition of the ILO Regional Decent Work Framework; (3) No respect of the ILO Core Conventions; (4) Labour mobility not to be included in PACER Plus; (5) Lack of inclusion of CSOs in national & regional consultations; (6) Human trafficking; (7) High unemployment; (8) Increase financial insecurity of women & youth; (9) Increase in youth crime activities; and (10) Increase in gender-based violence.

3. WE THE PACIFIC CSOS CALL ON THE PACIFIC ISLAND FORUM LEADERS TO:

- **Endorse** the **ILO Pacific Decent work Framework** to ensure investment and creation of decent jobs;
- **Undertake** impact assessment on the problems of the seasonal workers and make appropriate recommendations to reduce the abuse of the seasonal workers in Australia & NZ;
- **Revise** the bilateral **Labour Mobility Agreement** to include a social clause to protect of the workers' rights and welfare;

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- **NOT** to include the bilateral **Labour Mobility Agreement** in **PACER Plus** as workers are not commodities to be traded;
- **Delay** signing of **PACER Plus** pending capacity building of PICs governments to implement **PACER Plus** and set up national food quality control systems to ensure free trade of quality & safe food products;
- **Ratify**, implement & respect the 8 ILO core conventions;
- **Abolish** all Recruiting Agencies and **establish** employment authorities in all PICs to be responsible for screening & confirming employment contracts, selection of the seasonal workers, and conduct pre-departure trainings incorporation with the national trade union organizations.

4. And we further call on Leaders to

- **Consider** extension of the labour mobility schemes to include skilled workers such as nurses, teachers, sports people, etc. to address the high youth unemployment in the region.
- **Include** CSOs in all the national & regional consultations of PACER Plus, free trade agreements & Labour Mobility Agreement; and a representative of the CSO to be part of the national negotiation team;
- **Lift** the restrictive policies preventing practising of professionals such as doctors, nurses, pharmacists, plumbers, etc. from PICs in Australia & New Zealand and to be **facilitated** under **Regional Movement of Natural Persons Agreement** and **Labour Mobility Agreement**;
- **Screen** foreign investors properly and investment incentives granted to foreign investors should also be accorded to local investors either for export or import substitution;
- **Establish** vocational training of young people to match the investment initiatives so that they would be able to get a job or set up a business;
- **Reduce** the loan interest rates and collateral to encourage women and young people business initiatives;
- **Promote & encourage** microfinance systems such as savings & loans and credit unions to encourage financial inclusive;