

Joint Statement on International Migrants Day

Seven Ministries, Departments and Agencies and IOM call for increase awareness and pledge for strengthened response to international trafficking of Ghanaians for domestic work

On International Migrants Day 2016, as we celebrate the contribution of migrants worldwide, and particularly to the Ghanaian society in the form of remittances, investments and skills transfers, we, the signatories of this joint statement hereby acknowledge the plight of vulnerable Ghanaian migrants worldwide, particularly those trafficked for domestic work.

Ghanaian migrants, particularly women and young girls are increasingly recruited through licensed and unlicensed recruitment agencies for domestic work in various countries. According to information collected by the Ghana Immigration Service (GIS), over 2,000 Ghanaian women departed for work in the Middle East between September 2014 and January 2015. Since then about 350 women have returned, reporting exploitation and abuse (source: GIS).

Fraudulent advertisements for job opportunities in various countries including the Middle East are now common in the streets of Ghana as well as on social media channels, such as Facebook and Whatsapp.

We continue to take various measures to address these challenges and to protect Ghanaian migrants including but not limited to:

- Upgrading of the Ghana Immigration Service Migration Information Centre (MIC) in Sunyani and the Migration Information Bureau (MIB) in Accra.
- Signing of a bilateral agreement on labour issues between the Government of Ghana and the Government of Jordan.
- Creation of an association of employment agencies under the supervision of the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations.
- Sensitization of Ghanaian ambassadors and capacity building initiatives for relevant stakeholders to address issues of exploitation of Ghanaian migrants by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration.
- Provision of assistance for voluntary return and reintegration of those stranded in countries of destination by the International Organization for Migration (IOM).
- Development and launch of a National Migration Policy for Ghana by Ministry of Interior.
- Establishment of a unit (in the final stages) at the Kotoka International Airport help identify potential victims of trafficking prior to departure by the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection in collaboration with the Police Service and Ghana Immigration Service.

Recognizing the challenges arising as a result of the increasing migration of Ghanaians for domestic work, we the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, the Ministry of the Interior, Ghana Immigration Service, Ghana Police Service, the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations, the Labour Department, the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection , and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) do hereby reaffirm our commitment to the promotion and protection of the rights of all vulnerable Ghanaian migrants.

To that effect, at the Workshop on **Protecting Migrants at Home and Abroad** organized on 15 December 2016 organized by IOM, we pledge to ensure greater protection of our citizens against exploitation and abuse and to strengthen the provision of direct assistance and reintegration to victims by making the following commitments:

- Develop Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to strengthen the process of assisting victims of such exploitation, from the moment of identification through return and reintegration where applicable.
 - Develop information sharing protocols so that all relevant stakeholders are well informed and are able to contribute to the protection of migrants and ensure their rights and those of their families.
 - Negotiate additional bilateral agreements as needed with key receiving countries, to facilitate humane and orderly labour migration and decent work for all.
 - Strengthen access to information for potential migrants in Ghana and contribute to their ability to take informed decisions by improving the capacity of institutional structures (MIC/MIB) to serve as one-stop migrant workers' resource centres.
 - Improve access and availability of training and pre-departure orientation opportunities, to increase knowledge amongst potential migrants on issues of job training, adjusting to a new culture, cultural sensitivities in the country of destination, their rights etc.
- Enhance the law enforcement response including the closure, investigation and prosecution of illegal recruitment agencies and individuals who facilitate the recruitment and trafficking for domestic work of Ghanaian migrants.

Through this Joint Statement we collectively recognize the collaborative efforts of all civil society organizations, communities and development partners to join us and partner and invite them to partner with us to continue to uphold the rights of migrants especially women trafficked for domestic work. By working together in a whole of government and whole of society manner, we hope to rapidly reverse this concerning trend and ensure that migration remains mostly a safe and empowering experience for Ghanaians.

15 December 2016

Accra, Ghana