



Office of the President of the Philippines

STATEMENT

Participation of President Rodrigo Roa Duterte Virtual Forum on Labor Mobility and Human Rights: Examining Migrant Labor Governance in the Middle East in the Context of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) 20 April 2021

President Rodrigo Roa Duterte called for the abolition of the “Kafala” system, stressing the need to uphold and protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all migrant workers regardless of status.

In his video message addressing global migration stakeholders at the virtual forum entitled *Labor Mobility and Human Rights: Examining Migrant Labor Governance in the Middle East in the Context of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM)* on 20 April 2021, President Duterte described “Kafala” as an unjust and exploitative system that places migrant workers in very vulnerable situations and emphasized the Philippines’ resolve and commitment to address the “Kafala” system and the many attendant issues.

“We continue to bravely speak against the ills of the Kafala system. We will be relentless in our efforts to dismantle this unjust structure. And we will never tire from seeking greater cooperation with all those who want these inequities and suffering to end, once and for all,” said the President.

He emphasized that the Philippine Government’s principled policy guidance on protecting, promoting and upholding the rights and ensuring the welfare, safety and dignity of all Filipinos overseas.

“As I have said before, the Filipino is not a slave to anyone, anywhere,” the President added.

The President also pointed out that the COVID-19 pandemic is pushing migrant workers, especially those under the “Kafala” system, to even more precarious positions and stressed that migrant workers, regardless of status, must be included in interventions and recovery programs.

“As the world went into lockdowns, many were driven into destitution with no job, no social safety nets, and no money to send back home. This cannot go on,” said the President.

“Our pandemic responses must be inclusive with no room for any kind of discrimination. No one should be left behind as we march towards recovery,” the President added.

On the other hand, the President welcomed the reform initiatives of Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar and Bahrain. He expressed hope that Saudi Arabia’s *Labor Reform Initiative* will improve the working conditions of migrant workers in the Kingdom, including about 800,000 Filipinos.

The Philippines has been working closely with Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar and Bahrain in developing and implementing programs promoting migrants’ rights and welfare.

The President also stressed the importance of stronger advocacy and cooperation to realize the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

He said the Philippine Government remains fully committed not only to protecting Filipino migrants, but also to improving international migration governance for the benefit of all migrant workers, especially those in the Middle East.

“To be truly sustainable and transformative, migration must work for all stakeholders. This is our collective challenge and our shared responsibility,” the President underscored.

The virtual forum was organized by the Philippines’ Department of Foreign Affairs and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia’s Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development, in cooperation with the International Organization for Migration and the University of the Philippines *Centre Internationale de Formation des Autorites et Leaders* (UP CIFAL). **END**