

# **C189 - Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189)**

**Convention concerning decent work for domestic workers  
(Entry into force: 05 Sep 2013) Adoption: Geneva, 100th ILC  
session (16 Jun 2011) - Status: Up-to-date instrument  
(Technical Convention).**

## **Preamble**

The General Conference of the International Labour Organization, Having been convened at Geneva by the Governing Body of the International Labour Office, and having met in its 100th Session on 1 June 2011, and

Mindful of the commitment of the International Labour Organization to promote decent work for all through the achievement of the goals of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization, and

Recognizing the significant contribution of domestic workers to the global economy, which includes increasing paid job opportunities for women and men workers with family responsibilities, greater scope for caring for ageing populations, children and persons with a disability, and substantial income transfers within and between countries, and

Considering that domestic work continues to be undervalued and invisible and is mainly carried out by women and girls, many of whom are migrants or members of disadvantaged communities and who are particularly vulnerable to discrimination in respect of conditions of employment and of work, and to other abuses of human rights, and

Considering also that in developing countries with historically scarce opportunities for formal employment, domestic workers constitute a significant proportion of the national workforce and remain among the most marginalized, and

Recalling that international labour Conventions and Recommendations apply to all workers, including domestic workers, unless otherwise provided, and

Noting the particular relevance for domestic workers of the Migration for Employment Convention (Revised), 1949 (No. 97), the Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, 1975 (No. 143), the Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156), the Private Employment Agencies Convention, 1997 (No. 181), and the Employment Relationship Recommendation, 2006 (No. 198), as well as of the ILO Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration: Non-binding principles and guidelines for a rights-based approach to labour migration (2006), and

Recognizing the special conditions under which domestic work is carried out that make it desirable to supplement the general standards with standards specific to domestic workers so as to enable them to enjoy their rights fully, and

Recalling other relevant international instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and in particular its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children and its Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, and

Having decided upon the adoption of certain proposals concerning decent work for domestic workers, which is the fourth item on the agenda of the session, and

Having determined that these proposals shall take the form of an international Convention;

adopts this sixteenth day of June of the year two thousand and eleven the following Convention, which may be cited as the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011..

#### **Article 1**

For the purpose of this Convention:

- (a) the term *domestic work* means work performed in or for a household or households;
- (b) the term *domestic worker* means any person engaged in domestic work within an employment relationship;
- (c) a person who performs domestic work only occasionally or sporadically and not on an occupational basis is not a domestic worker.

#### **Article 2**

1. 1. The Convention applies to all domestic workers.
2. 2. A Member which ratifies this Convention may, after consulting with the most representative organizations of employers and workers and, where they exist, with organizations representative of domestic workers and those representative of employers of domestic workers, exclude wholly or partly from its scope:
  - (a) categories of workers who are otherwise provided with at least equivalent protection;
  - (b) limited categories of workers in respect of which special problems of a substantial nature arise.
3. 3. Each Member which avails itself of the possibility afforded in the preceding paragraph shall, in its first report on the application of the Convention under article 22 of the Constitution of the International Labour Organisation, indicate any particular category of workers thus excluded and the reasons for such exclusion and, in subsequent reports, specify any measures that may have been taken with a view to extending the application of the Convention to the workers concerned.

#### **Article 3**

1. 1. Each Member shall take measures to ensure the effective promotion and protection of the human rights of all domestic workers, as set out in this Convention.
2. 2. Each Member shall, in relation to domestic workers, take the measures set out in this Convention to respect, promote and realize the fundamental principles and rights at work, namely:
  - o (a) freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining;
  - o (b) the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour;
  - o (c) the effective abolition of child labour; and
  - o (d) the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.
3. 3. In taking measures to ensure that domestic workers and employers of domestic workers enjoy freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining, Members shall protect the right of domestic workers and employers of domestic workers to establish and, subject to the rules of the organization concerned, to join organizations, federations and confederations of their own choosing.

#### **Article 4**

1. 1. Each Member shall set a minimum age for domestic workers consistent with the provisions of the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), and not lower than that established by national laws and regulations for workers generally.
2. 2. Each Member shall take measures to ensure that work performed by domestic workers who are under the age of 18 and above the minimum age of employment does not deprive them of compulsory education, or interfere with opportunities to participate in further education or vocational training.

#### **Article 5**

Each Member shall take measures to ensure that domestic workers enjoy effective protection against all forms of abuse, harassment and violence.

#### **Article 6**

Each Member shall take measures to ensure that domestic workers, like workers generally, enjoy fair terms of employment as well as decent working conditions and, if they reside in the household, decent living conditions that respect their privacy.

#### **Article 7**

Each Member shall take measures to ensure that domestic workers are informed of their terms and conditions of employment in an appropriate, verifiable and easily understandable manner and preferably, where possible, through written contracts in accordance with national laws, regulations or collective agreements, in particular:

- (a) the name and address of the employer and of the worker;
- (b) the address of the usual workplace or workplaces;
- (c) the starting date and, where the contract is for a specified period of time, its duration;
- (d) the type of work to be performed;
- (e) the remuneration, method of calculation and periodicity of payments;
- (f) the normal hours of work;
- (g) paid annual leave, and daily and weekly rest periods;

- (h) the provision of food and accommodation, if applicable;
- (i) the period of probation or trial period, if applicable;
- (j) the terms of repatriation, if applicable; and
- (k) terms and conditions relating to the termination of employment, including any period of notice by either the domestic worker or the employer.

#### **Article 8**

1. 1. National laws and regulations shall require that migrant domestic workers who are recruited in one country for domestic work in another receive a written job offer, or contract of employment that is enforceable in the country in which the work is to be performed, addressing the terms and conditions of employment referred to in Article 7, prior to crossing national borders for the purpose of taking up the domestic work to which the offer or contract applies.
2. 2. The preceding paragraph shall not apply to workers who enjoy freedom of movement for the purpose of employment under bilateral, regional or multilateral agreements, or within the framework of regional economic integration areas.
3. 3. Members shall take measures to cooperate with each other to ensure the effective application of the provisions of this Convention to migrant domestic workers.
4. 4. Each Member shall specify, by means of laws, regulations or other measures, the conditions under which migrant domestic workers are entitled to repatriation on the expiry or termination of the employment contract for which they were recruited.

#### **Article 9**

Each Member shall take measures to ensure that domestic workers:

- (a) are free to reach agreement with their employer or potential employer on whether to reside in the household;
- (b) who reside in the household are not obliged to remain in the household or with household members during periods of daily and weekly rest or annual leave; and
- (c) are entitled to keep in their possession their travel and identity documents.

#### **Article 10**

1. 1. Each Member shall take measures towards ensuring equal treatment between domestic workers and workers generally in relation to normal hours of work, overtime compensation, periods of daily and weekly rest and paid annual leave in accordance with national laws, regulations or collective agreements, taking into account the special characteristics of domestic work.
2. 2. Weekly rest shall be at least 24 consecutive hours.
3. 3. Periods during which domestic workers are not free to dispose of their time as they please and remain at the disposal of the household in order to respond to possible calls shall be regarded as hours of work to the extent determined by national laws, regulations or collective agreements, or any other means consistent with national practice.

#### **Article 11**

Each Member shall take measures to ensure that domestic workers enjoy minimum wage coverage, where such coverage exists, and that remuneration is established without discrimination based on sex.

#### **Article 12**

1. 1. Domestic workers shall be paid directly in cash at regular intervals at least once a month. Unless provided for by national laws, regulations or collective agreements, payment may be made by bank transfer, bank cheque, postal cheque, money order or other lawful means of monetary payment, with the consent of the worker concerned.
2. 2. National laws, regulations, collective agreements or arbitration awards may provide for the payment of a limited proportion of the remuneration of domestic workers in the form of payments in kind that are not less favourable than those generally applicable to other categories of workers, provided that measures are taken to ensure that such payments in kind are agreed to by the worker, are for the personal use and benefit of the worker, and that the monetary value attributed to them is fair and reasonable.

#### **Article 13**

1. 1. Every domestic worker has the right to a safe and healthy working environment. Each Member shall take, in accordance with national laws, regulations and practice, effective measures, with due regard for the specific characteristics of domestic work, to ensure the occupational safety and health of domestic workers.
2. 2. The measures referred to in the preceding paragraph may be applied progressively, in consultation with the most representative organizations of employers and workers and, where they exist, with organizations representative of domestic workers and those representative of employers of domestic workers.

#### **Article 14**

1. 1. Each Member shall take appropriate measures, in accordance with national laws and regulations and with due regard for the specific characteristics of domestic work, to ensure that domestic workers enjoy conditions that are not less favourable than those applicable to workers generally in respect of social security protection, including with respect to maternity.
2. 2. The measures referred to in the preceding paragraph may be applied progressively, in consultation with the most representative organizations of employers and workers and, where they exist, with organizations representative of domestic workers and those representative of employers of domestic workers.

#### **Article 15**

1. 1. To effectively protect domestic workers, including migrant domestic workers, recruited or placed by private employment agencies, against abusive practices, each Member shall:
  - o (a) determine the conditions governing the operation of private employment agencies recruiting or placing domestic workers, in accordance with national laws, regulations and practice;
  - o (b) ensure that adequate machinery and procedures exist for the investigation of complaints, alleged abuses and fraudulent practices concerning the activities of private employment agencies in relation to domestic workers;
  - o (c) adopt all necessary and appropriate measures, within its jurisdiction and, where appropriate, in collaboration with other Members, to provide adequate protection for and prevent abuses of domestic workers recruited or placed in its territory by private employment agencies. These shall include laws or regulations that specify the respective obligations of the private employment agency and the household towards

- the domestic worker and provide for penalties, including prohibition of those private employment agencies that engage in fraudulent practices and abuses;
- (d) consider, where domestic workers are recruited in one country for work in another, concluding bilateral, regional or multilateral agreements to prevent abuses and fraudulent practices in recruitment, placement and employment; and
  - (e) take measures to ensure that fees charged by private employment agencies are not deducted from the remuneration of domestic workers.
2. 2. In giving effect to each of the provisions of this Article, each Member shall consult with the most representative organizations of employers and workers and, where they exist, with organizations representative of domestic workers and those representative of employers of domestic workers.

#### **Article 16**

Each Member shall take measures to ensure, in accordance with national laws, regulations and practice, that all domestic workers, either by themselves or through a representative, have effective access to courts, tribunals or other dispute resolution mechanisms under conditions that are not less favourable than those available to workers generally.

#### **Article 17**

1. 1. Each Member shall establish effective and accessible complaint mechanisms and means of ensuring compliance with national laws and regulations for the protection of domestic workers.
2. 2. Each Member shall develop and implement measures for labour inspection, enforcement and penalties with due regard for the special characteristics of domestic work, in accordance with national laws and regulations.
3. 3. In so far as compatible with national laws and regulations, such measures shall specify the conditions under which access to household premises may be granted, having due respect for privacy.

#### **Article 18**

Each Member shall implement the provisions of this Convention, in consultation with the most representative employers and workers organizations, through laws and regulations, as well as through collective agreements or additional measures consistent with national practice, by extending or adapting existing measures to cover domestic workers or by developing specific measures for them, as appropriate.

#### **Article 19**

This Convention does not affect more favourable provisions applicable to domestic workers under other international labour Conventions.

#### **Article 20**

The formal ratifications of this Convention shall be communicated to the Director-General of the International Labour Office for registration.

#### **Article 21**

1. 1. This Convention shall be binding only upon those Members of the International Labour Organization whose ratifications have been registered with the Director-General of the International Labour Office.
2. 2. It shall come into force twelve months after the date on which the ratifications of two Members have been registered with the Director- General.
3. 3. Thereafter, this Convention shall come into force for any Member twelve months after the date on which its ratification is registered.

#### **Article 22**

1. 1. A Member which has ratified this Convention may denounce it after the expiration of ten years from the date on which the Convention first comes into force, by an act communicated to the Director-General of the International Labour Office for registration. Such denunciation shall not take effect until one year after the date on which it is registered.
2. 2. Each Member which has ratified this Convention and which does not, within the year following the expiration of the period of ten years mentioned in the preceding paragraph, exercise the right of denunciation provided for in this Article, will be bound for another period of ten years and, thereafter, may denounce this Convention within the first year of each new period of ten years under the terms provided for in this Article.

#### **Article 23**

1. 1. The Director-General of the International Labour Office shall notify all Members of the International Labour Organization of the registration of all ratifications and denunciations that have been communicated by the Members of the Organization.
2. 2. When notifying the Members of the Organization of the registration of the second ratification that has been communicated, the Director-General shall draw the attention of the Members of the Organization to the date upon which the Convention will come into force.

#### **Article 24**

The Director-General of the International Labour Office shall communicate to the Secretary-General of the United Nations for registration in accordance with Article 102 of the Charter of the United Nations full particulars of all ratifications and denunciations that have been registered.

#### **Article 25**

At such times as it may consider necessary, the Governing Body of the International Labour Office shall present to the General Conference a report on the working of this Convention and shall examine the desirability of placing on the agenda of the Conference the question of its revision in whole or in part.

#### **Article 26**

1. 1. Should the Conference adopt a new Convention revising this Convention, then, unless the new Convention otherwise provides:
  - (a) the ratification by a Member of the new revising Convention shall ipso jure involve the immediate denunciation of this Convention, notwithstanding the provisions of Article 22, if and when the new revising Convention shall have come into force;
  - (b) as from the date when the new revising Convention comes into force, this Convention shall cease to be open to ratification by the Members.

2. 2. This Convention shall in any case remain in force in its actual form and content for those Members which have ratified it but have not ratified the revising Convention.

**Article 27**

The English and French versions of the text of this Convention are equally authoritative.