

**Speech by Mr. Maciej Madalinski  
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**Round table to discuss the draft regulations for Private Placement  
Agencies in Lebanon**

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***Check against delivery***

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Dear friends,

I am very glad to be among you today to open this round table debate on a *draft regulation for private placement agencies in Lebanon*.

An estimated 200 000 migrant workers are residing in Lebanon today. 200 000 people, most of them women, have come to Lebanon with hopes and aspirations: for a better income, for economic opportunities and ultimately, for a better life for themselves and families back home. Those aspirations are universal and everyone should have the right and opportunities to pursue them.

It is very regrettable to realise that certain practices – some of which resemble modern form of slavery, are so prevalent in Lebanon. These practices are mainly documented by the embassies of those countries from where many of the domestic workers originate, as well as by civil society groups. They range from mistreatment by recruiters, to non-payment or

delayed payment of wages, to a forced confinement to the workplace, to refusing leisure time, to forced labour and to verbal and physical, sometimes even sexual abuse.

Being aware of these degrading conditions, it is not difficult to imagine how unlikely – if not impossible - it would be for a migrant worker, being deprived from her legal papers, not mastering the language of the country, to start legal proceedings against her employer?

Why do such practices still exist nowadays? One of the many reasons one could think of is the fact that migrant workers in Lebanon are still not perceived as a regular "working force" with entitled rights.

The lack of legislated labour rights for domestic workers in line with international standards and of standardised recruitment methods of the agencies has surely contributed to domestic workers' mistreatment and abuse.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am convinced that we all agree that this lamentable situation must change.

The European Union is confident that the Lebanese Government is committed to improve the conditions for migrant domestic workers and to put an end to their widespread abuse.

Unfortunately, however, reforms to address these issues have so far been very limited. Much more efforts are needed to improve the legal framework for domestic work and to bring it in line with international standards.

Fortunately, there are networks of civil society and international organisations that are working hand in hand with the Lebanese government in regulating the presence and rights of domestic workers. The ILO is among those organisations that are addressing these challenges and receives substantial financial support from the European Union in order to continue doing so.

The European Union has also funded other programmes led by civil society organisations to support both the protection of women and migrant workers, to improve the legal and social situation of abused and exploited migrants and to prevent the violations of their rights.

To conclude, I would like to underline again the European Union's determination to fully support the Government of Lebanon in addressing the issue of migrant workers. I would like to thank very much the ILO and its staff for their commitment and determination toward achieving our common objective: providing women migrant workers with dignity and rights they deserve.

Thank you very much for your attention and I wish you a lot of success for your future activities.