

**Opening Remarks by Hady Riad**  
**Counsellor, German Embassy**  
**at the occasion of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly Seminar on**  
**“The Role of Parliamentarians on the Protection and Promotion of Migrant Workers Rights in ASEAN“**  
**04<sup>th</sup> of April 2011**

Your Excellency Samdech Akka Moha Ponhea Chakkrei Heng Samrin,

Your Excellency Post Dr. Cheam Yeap,

Your Excellency Mr. Yang Sem,

Your Excellency Ms. Ho Naun,

Your Excellency Ms. Chou Bun Eng,

Honorable Delegates and Parliamentarians of the ASEAN Inter Parliamentary Assembly  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank the organizers of this Seminar for giving me the opportunity to offer some opening remarks to this important occasion. Since 1994, Germany has been a supporter of the National Assembly of the Kingdom of Cambodia. Our specific assistance to the National Assembly in its role as host of the 32<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly in September 2011 dates back to the visit of H.E. Mr. Dirk Niebel, Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, to Cambodia in March 2010. Ever since discussing AIPA’s activities with H.E. Samdech Heng Samrin, President of the National Assembly, he took a personal interest in supporting the National Assembly in its role as host of the 32<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly of AIPA. Germany therefore supports with great pleasure this upcoming seminar.

In the past decade there has been increasing interest in international migration. Asia is one of the key regions around which academic and policy interest has centred, as the importance of Asian countries in contributing to the rise in global migration has come to be recognized. 5 years ago, 53.3 million or 28 per cent of the worldwide estimate of 191 million international migrants, were in Asia - a share that most likely has even risen since this data was compiled. A large number of these are labour migrants who in turn have been accompanied by family migrants while student migration and forced migration also continue to play a part within the continent. Asia currently has origin, transit and destination countries with regard to migration. This region also hosts the world’s largest labour exporting country, the Philippines.

Migration has also attracted attention because of its broader economic relevance. The finding that the transfer of finances achieved through remittances exceeded that through foreign aid did much to focus world attention on **remittances as a driver of development**. The economic potential of migrants thus moved on to the development agenda with renewed force. On the other hand policy makers need to consider the consequences especially of migration of higher skilled labour workforce which has contributed to some extent to a **brain drain**.

Several **features** have come to characterize Asian labour migration. Firstly, all destination countries in the region have a policy to keep it temporary. Secondly, much of international migration in Asia is intraregional. Thirdly, although there are legal frameworks to regulate the movement of workers, the numbers of undocumented migrants is relatively high. Fourthly, the migration industry is well-developed and well-connected in the region; with recruitment being largely left to private agencies which are largely unregulated. Lastly, the share of women participating in labour migration has increased sharply since the late 1970s. In some countries the feminization of migration has been notable – in the Philippines, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Cambodia, women outnumber men among those legally deployed every year.

Especially worrisome is the issue of **illegal migration**. A recent report by the Cambodia Development Research Institute for instance estimates that 95% of all labourers from Cambodia who go abroad do so through illegal channels. While this estimate deserves further scrutiny it cannot be denied that migrants, especially illegal migrants, are prone to abuse and violence even though laws and agreements with neighbouring countries have been put in place to protect their rights abroad. It is mostly the poor members of society who are most susceptible to exploitation and abuse and who suffer disproportionately from violations of Human Rights. More recently and with mounting controversy about the role of some private recruiting agencies, HE the Prime Minister of Cambodia has ordered an investigation into their practices.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

with experts from diverse backgrounds contributing to the upcoming discussions, this seminar promises to be a fruitful and productive one. Addressing the rights of migrant workers in an inter-parliamentary setting is an excellent opportunity to tackle the cross-cutting and cross-border issues of migration. Invitations to this seminar had been send out to all political parties of the Cambodian National Assembly as well as to Members of Parliament from all ASEAN

countries, their governments, experts, related UN agencies, national and international organizations and civil society representatives.

This format has been chosen by our hosts in recognition of the fact that national legal frameworks are too narrow in scope to grasp the challenges of international migrant movements. Building on the **ASEAN Declaration** on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers - adopted at the ASEAN Summit in 2007 -, this seminar provides ample opportunity to consider ASEAN wide effective regulations on migration. The first step was already initiated in 2007, when the 28<sup>th</sup> AIPA General Assembly recommended the identification of common legislative and policy **initiatives** on migration in ASEAN countries. The second step is to further develop an ASEAN-wide common **legal framework** for migrant workers. The crucial step will be to build on the future conformity by implementing the measures agreed upon. **Cross-border implementation and cooperation** is key to successfully regulate migration movements in ASEAN member countries, especially in the run-up to establishing an ASEAN Community until 2015.

I sincerely hope that this seminar will enable Parliamentarians from ASEAN countries to debate and exchange ideas on best practices in helping governments in designing related effective regulations, policies and laws.

Thank you for your kind attention