

PROMOTION OF 1990 INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION ON MIGRANTS RIGHTS

AN INITIAL SUMMARY

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ADVOCACY

30 countries have now acted to sign, ratify or accede to the 1990 International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. Taking into account the number of countries that have also ratified one or both of the complementary ILO Conventions, there are now 68 different countries that have ratified one or more of these three international instruments, and thus committed to respect and implement international standards on treatment of migrants.

Nearly all of the ratifications and signatures on the 1990 UN Convention have come in the last few years. This last decade has been a period in which human rights of migrants was not a “mainstream” issue, in which concerted efforts were made to push back the extension and expansion of human rights protection to groups at risk, and in which conventional wisdom had it that States were very reluctant to accept norms expanding rights protections for non-citizens.

So what made the difference? Certainly, active and ever expanding advocacy for the 1990 Convention on the rights of migrants begun in the early 1990s played a big role.

This “work in process” represents an initial identification of activities that contributed to accession, ratification or signature by States of the 1990 Convention. This initial version is based on information known by or brought to the attention of the Coordinator of the *Steering Committee* for the Global Campaign for entry into force of this convention, and/or the Campaign Secretariat. ***Additions and corrections are most welcome***, towards compiling an accurate summary of relevant activities and initiatives. Please send to taran@ilo.org and/or migrantwatch@vtx.ch

STRATEGY

This advocacy, which has evolved and grown over the last decade, reflects a strategic approach to articulating a ‘campaign’ on the Convention. In retrospect, the main lines of this strategy evolved as follows:

- 1) Initial work to articulate migrants’ rights and the 1990 Convention as fundamental issues of Human Rights, conducted in consultation by a number of church and migrant-based NGOs in the early 1990s. The 1990 Convention was identified as a key symbolic and practical instrument to implement these rights within the framework of the rule of law.,
- 2) Creation and distribution of initial publications and awareness raising materials on the Convention. (Example: the CCME/WCC booklet *Proclaiming Migrants Rights* initially produced in 1991 in various languages.)
- 3) Establish an organizational basis to promote, encourage and implement campaigning work in different world regions and across key sectors: The International Migrants Rights Watch Committee was established in Cairo in 1994 with promotion of the Convention as a main purpose, comprising individual members from all regions, reflecting migrant, church, human rights and trade union affiliations.
- 4) Strategic prioritization of advocacy: agreement emerged among advocacy groups to focus first on countries of origin in Africa, Asia and Latin America as more likely to ratify early to bring Convention into force; it was anticipated that achievement of entry into force would strengthen later efforts in industrialized host countries.

- 5) Develop a material basis for campaign efforts: fund raising for campaign staff, publications, etc. (Results at the international level only achieved last year with modest support from PSI and ICMC, and a recent contribution from Mexico.)
- 6) Broaden organizational base, manifest multi-sectoral support and mobilize constituencies on promotion of Convention/migrants human rights by convening a coalition of intergovernmental and civil society **organizations** from migrant, human rights, trade union, religious and women's sectors. This stage was manifested in convening of a number of international civil society organizations and inter-governmental agencies in the Steering Committee and articulation of a 'Global Campaign' launched in 1998.

This strategic approach, combined with multiple initiatives at regional and national levels, appears to have made a major contribution to the advances to date in adoption of the 1990 International Convention.

A Chronology

1990

-Following an arduous ten year United Nations drafting process, the UN General Assembly adopts the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (CRM) on December 18, and commends it to States for signature and ratification or accession.

1991

-World Council of Churches (WCC) Migration Secretariat and Churches Committee for Migrants in Europe (CCME) co-publish *Proclaiming Migrants Rights (PMR)*, a promotional guide and summary of the 1990 Convention. Over 10,000 copies printed in English, French, German and Spanish. *PMR* is later reproduced in full in Arabic, Dutch, Italian, Japanese, and Portuguese, and in part in other languages. This booklet remains the only widely distributed publication on the CRM until 1996.

-Center for Migration Studies publishes special edition of *International Migration Review* on CRM.

-South American Ecumenical Network on Migration commits to take up advocacy in various countries.

-CCME includes advocacy for Convention in Europe as program priority.

1992

-As of 1992, informally coordinated NGO advocacy around migrants' rights agenda item at UN Commission on Human Rights and at Sub-Commission focuses on promoting attention to CRM, both in statements and in approaching delegations to cosponsor relevant resolution; this activity continued every year subsequently.

-ICMC, ICVA and WCC statements at annual session of IOM Council in November highlight CRM, materials distributed; CRM raised by these organizations at IOM Council every year since.

1993

-WCC, church and migrant groups advocate for attention to Convention and distribute materials at World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna.

-An Asia-Pacific regional seminar on labour migration co-organized by the Scalabrini Migration Centre and ILO in Manila focuses on CRM.

1994

-Pontifical Council on Migrants delegate, WCC and several migrant-concerned NGOs advocate for inclusion of language on CRM in draft International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) documents at ICPD Prepcom III in May in New York.

-International Migrants Rights Watch Committee (IMRWC) is founded at the ICPD in Cairo, as an international expert group focused on promotion of this Convention and migrants human rights, with membership drawn from church, human rights, migrant and trade union fields.

-IMRWC holds seminars, press briefing, distributes materials, and advocates with ICPD delegates on the CRM. A recommendation to States to sign and ratify the CRM is retained in the ICPD Program of Action.
-The International Movement Against all forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR) and other organizations feature the CRM in reports and follow-up to ICPD

1995

-IMRWC organizes seminars, press briefing, distributes materials and advocates with delegates and NGOs on CRM at World Summit on Social Development in Copenhagen.
-Asian migrant organizations and IMRWC members organize seminar, briefings, distribution of materials and advocacy with delegates to highlight CRM at 4th World Conference on Women at Beijing. Migrant groups organize highly visible street march featuring banners on CRM; march covered worldwide on CNN TV and other media.
-Womens' International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) calls on national constituents to take up advocacy; produces advocacy brochure. WILPF affiliates in various Asian, Central American and European countries adopt advocacy of CRM as a priority activity.

1996

-Office of UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) publishes Fact Sheet #24 on Human Rights of Migrants, providing first published text of Convention, in six official UN languages.
-Advocacy helps increase to 24 the number of co-sponsoring States to the resolution on the 1990 Convention adopted at the UN Commission on Human Rights.
-Public Services International (PSI) organizes an international seminar for public service unionists on migration and features the CRM. It later publishes an extensive report emphasizing trade union advocacy on CRM.
-Migrants Forum in Asia (MFA) together with other Asian migrant-concerned groups organize activities and advocacy on CRM at NGO parallel events at APEC annual consultations; and have done so every year subsequently.

1997

-CRM is featured in WCC policy statement on uprooted people, adopted by its Central Committee. The Christian Conference of Asia, Conference of European Churches, Middle East Council of Churches, Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI) also issue statements calling for ratification in respective regions.
-UN Commission on Human Rights establishes Working Group of Intergovernmental Experts on Human Rights of Migrants. Informal NGO-IGO provision of materials and advocacy at meetings emphasizes CRM. The UN Working Group gives extensive attention to standards in protection of migrants, notes inadequate attention by other treaty bodies, and calls for wider ratification in final report.
-Asia regional seminar on migrant workers and international law organized by Canadian Human Rights Foundation focuses on CRM.
-Asia Migrant Centre features CRM in *Asia Migrant Yearbook* widely distributed in region, does so every year subsequently.

1998

-IMRWC convenes Steering Committee (SC) of international civil society organizations and ILO, IOM and OHCHR to establish a broad base for a global campaign for ratification/entry into force of CRM.
-IMRWC produces a "Campaigners Handbook" on CRM; over 10,000 copies printed since.
-Global Campaign launched at UN event for the International Day Against Racism, March 21, presided by the High Commissioner for Human Rights.
-Steering Committee organizes mid-day forum on CRM at Commission on Human Rights.
-SC statement made to Commission; statements made every year subsequently.
-International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) includes CRM in regional training events in Africa.

- SC initiates planning with Inter-American Institute for Human Rights and El Productor for a major promotional forum on CRM for Central America, to take place in Costa Rica in September, to feature addresses by the UNHCHR and other international officials. Local border tensions force cancellation.
- December18 portal website (www.december18.net) on migrants human rights is established; it features CRM and related advocacy and documents.
- Global Campaign website established (www.migrantsrights.org).

1999

- ICJ puts migrants rights and CRM on agenda of the NGO forum at the semi-annual meeting of the African Commission for Human and Peoples Rights in March in Kigali, Rwanda, and invites the Campaign Coordinator to speak at that event.
- IMRWC, renamed Migrants Rights International (MRI), establishes its secretariat, also serving as Secretariat for Global Campaign.
- UN Commission on Human Rights establishes mandate for Special Rapporteur on Human Rights of Migrants, includes promotion of standards in responsibilities.
- Steering Committee organizes mid-day forum on CRM at Commission on Human Rights; featured speakers include chairman of intergovernmental working group and IOM Deputy Director General.
- CRM discussed at the International Migration Policy Course for Southern Africa with senior officials from 13 SADC (Southern Africa Development Council) countries, in Pretoria in May.
- ICMC includes focus on CRM and Church advocacy at annual meeting of Commission members representing dioceses worldwide.
- Presentation and recommendation on CRM featured at International Migration Policy Course for Asia-Pacific, with high-level government officials from 15 countries, in Bangkok in November. (Indonesia announced intention to ratify.) Individual briefings on CRM held with delegations of several countries.

2000

- In her first report to the UN Commission on Human Rights, the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights of Migrants, Gabriela Rodriguez, extensively emphasizes the importance of the 1990 Convention. She frequently refers to it in her subsequent reports, statements and missions.
- Steering Committee organizes mid-day forum on CRM at Commission on Human Rights with panel of three UN Special Rapporteurs and opening remarks by HCHR.
- Following proposal and advocacy led by December18 network and supported by SC, the Commission adopts a resolution in April calling for recognition of International Migrants Day on December 18.
- CRM featured at International Migration Policy Conference for Central Asia, the Caucases, and neighbouring States with senior government officials from 16 countries, in Kyrgyz Republic in May. Individual briefings on CRM held with delegates of 8 countries.
- NGO Working Group on Migration and Xenophobia established in May at first Prepcom for World Conference Against Racism and Xenophobia (WCRX); group members make CRM a main advocacy concern towards Durban at subsequent regional and global preparatory events.
- Steering Committee organizes panel at global forum at *World Summit for Social Development plus 5* in Geneva in June, featuring migrant, church, labour, and women's organization speakers addressing CRM.
- Importance of CRM is raised at Seminar on Migration in the Americas in Costa Rica in September by IOM, NGO delegates, the UN Special Rapporteur and the Campaign Coordinator.
- MRI and Human Rights Watch (HRW) representatives at Europe Regional Conference on Racism in Strasbourg in October advocate for reference to CRM in outcome document.
- First MDSA (Migration Dialogue for Southern Africa) Forum held in November in Swaziland with officials from 14 SADC countries includes discussion and a recommendation on basing policy on the CRM. Briefings on the Convention are held with ten delegations; several indicate interest of government to consider action.
- NGO caucus and the UN Special Rapporteur advocate in support of strong reference to CRM in outcome of Americas Regional Preparatory conference for WCRX, in Santiago in early December.

- UN General Assembly proclaims December 18 as International Migrants Day.
- International Confederation of Free Trade Unions announces its own global trade union campaign to promote ratification of CRM.

2001

- UN Special Rapporteur on migrants promotes inclusion of recommendations on CRM at Africa regional preparatory meeting for WCRX in Dakar in January.
- Asian migrant organizations, along with IOM and ILO representatives and UN Special Rapporteur, ensure that CRM remains included in outcome of Asia-Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting for WCRX in Teheran in February.
- A conference on Protection of Human Rights in migration flows co-organized by the Universidad Nacional de Educación of Spain and the OHCHR --with the UN Special Rapporteur as featured speaker-- calls on all Mediterranean basin States to ratify the 1990 Convention.
- With support from ICMC and PSI, a global campaign officer is employed full time over the first five months of the year, substantially advancing campaign activity, advocacy and coordination.
- Steering Committee organizes mid-day forum on CRM at Commission on Human Rights with panel including Deputy HCHR, senior official of Mexico and Burmese woman migrant leader in Thailand.
- ILO Seminar on International Standards and migrant workers in Indian Ocean countries held in Mauritius in July includes discussion of CRM.
- NGOs organize rallies for migrants rights both at NGO Forum and the World Conference in Durban, ratification of convention highlighted in banners and chants; considerable media coverage resulting.
- International Parliamentary Union (IPU) features keynote address on CRM in forum for parliamentarians at Durban Conference; IPU statement calls for action by parliamentarians and wider ratification.
- Campaigners Handbook* translated into Spanish (by Mexican Human Rights Commission) and into French (by IOM); posted on December 18 website.
- CRM featured at International Migration Policy Conference for West Africa held in Dakar in December with senior government officials from 16 countries; a recommendation urges all States in region to ratify and implement (8 of 16 countries present already signed or ratified). Individual meetings on CRM held with delegations of 8 countries.
- UN Secretary General's statement for International Migrants Day (Dec. 18) focuses on call for ratification of CRM.

NATIONAL ACTION (Countries acting to date)

It is clear that national efforts in a number of countries were key to signature and ratification or accession by those States. In other countries, particularly those where civil society organizing is not yet advanced and/or has not yet taken up migration and migrants rights issues, international efforts have made a difference. Following is a very brief summary of information available on efforts leading to action in the countries that have so far signed or/and ratified or acceded to the 1990 Convention.

ACCESSIONS AND RATIFICATIONS

AZERBAIJAN

Acceded in January 1999. Note: the Global Campaign was launched in March 1998, giving considerable additional visibility to the 1990 Convention in international fora. The rate of signature and ratification of the Convention subsequently increased considerably, even among States where there was little or no discernable civil society action on this Convention.

BELIZE

National NGOs associated with the Central American Association of NGOs on Forced Migration (ARMIF) –some led by resettled former Guatemalan and Salvadoran refugees-- advocated in Belize; it acceded in November 2001.

BOLIVIA

With support from WCC in the mid-1990s, the Bolivian refugee/forced migration NGO (and UNHCR implementing agency) CESEM actively promoted public awareness of and government action on the Convention.

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

Ratified ILO Conventions C-97 on Migration for Employment and C-143 (Supplemental Provisions) in 1993; its accession in December 1996 to the UN Convention came when the still-new State adopted a number of international human rights instruments.

CAP VERT

Ratified in September 1997.

COLOMBIA

Efforts of Catholic Church entities, notably the relevant offices of the Latin American Bishops Conference (CELAM) based in Bogota, the Scalabrini order, and several national Bishops, were key in urging Colombian action; it ratified in May 1995. Efforts were also conducted by other sectors, including the Colombia Domestic Workers Union led by International Migrants Rights Watch Committee (IMRWC) Executive Council member Yenny Hurtado.

MEXICO

Mexico's leadership in promoting attention to migrants' rights in the UN General Assembly and the UN Commission on Human Rights made its ratification an incontestable –if considerably delayed-- political imperative. Numerous Mexican NGOs focused on migration issues –and some senior government officials-- consistently advocated for ratification since the early 1990s. Leading Mexican academics, notably Jorge Bustamante (chair of the UN Inter-governmental Group of Experts on migrants rights 1996-98), among others, also weighed in on ratification. Launching of the Global Campaign in March 1998 and concurrent urging by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to senior government officials may have provided additional impetus to ratification in March 1999.

ECUADOR

Civil society advocacy efforts began in the early-1990s. Scalabrini Order Sisters worked with the national Catholic Bishops Conference and advocated actively with Congress; they published in 1994 and distributed nationally the text of the 1990 Convention and of the WCC publication “Proclaiming Migrants Rights” in small booklet form, and organized joint statements by the National Bishops Conference calling for ratification (1999?) The WCC Refugee and Migration Service provided support to the NGO coalition on migrants' rights CARDEV for activities to promote ratification; CARDEV organized a “National Campaign for the Rights of Migrants” in 1997, with events, publications, poster and advocacy featuring the Convention. NGO associations have expanded advocacy efforts since. The WCC Secretary for Migration met with government, NGO, and church officials during visits in 1992, 1994 and 1997 to promote ratification efforts, as did the UN Special Rapporteur in a visit in 2001. The regional YMCA (ACJ) and the Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI) included demands for ratification in advocacy with government since 1994. The Ecuadoran Congress voted to adopt the Convention in November 2001; deposit of instrument of accession was on 6 February 2002.

EGYPT

Demonstrated leadership by being the first country to accede to the Convention after UN adoption, in February 1993.

GHANA

UN Secretary General's call for ratification of Conventions by all UN members at Millenium General Assembly may have been major impetus to Ghana's accession in September 2000. (The SG is a Ghanean national) Global Campaign visibility and promotional materials in international forums may also have contributed. (National civil society role not communicated.)

GUINEA

UN Secretary General's call for ratification of conventions by all UN members at Millenium General Assembly may have been major impetus to Guinea's accession in September 2000. Global Campaign visibility and promotional materials in international forums may also have contributed. (National civil society role not communicated.)

MOROCCO

Demonstrated leadership by being the first country to sign the Convention in 1991, and ratified in June 1993.

PHILIPPINES

Demand for ratification was a major component of advocacy by most of the numerous migrant-concerned NGOs in the Philippines since the early 1990s. Members and friends of IMRWC established the Philippine Migrant Watch Committee as a coalition of national NGOs in early 1995, lobbied congress, worked with key Senator to draft legislation. Everything was 'in place' for immediate ratification in response to execution of Filipina domestic worker Flor Contemplation in November 1993.

SEYCHELLES

Acceded in December 1994.

SENEGAL

As an important country of origin and destination for migrants, Senegal has assumed a visible profile in addressing international migration issues in West Africa and globally. It has given explicit recognition to the Global Campaign in the UN Commission on Human Rights; it appears that visibility of the campaign effort and materials about the CRM in international fora contributed to Senegal's action.

SRI LANKA

IMRWC founding member Irene Fernandez prepared briefing for Cabinet and recommendation in 1995, one of a number of contributions to ratification in March 1996. Sri Lankan migrant and human rights organizations advocated for action.

TAJIKISTAN

Campaign coordinator made presentation and led plenary discussion about the 1990 Convention at the Regional Migration Policy Conference for Central Asia and neighboring States held in Kyrgyzstan in May 2000, gave further materials and talked with the high level Tajiki delegation. After signature by Tajikistan in September 2000, Coordinator wrote to urge ratification and sent additional materials to the government. IOM and ILO have distributed materials regarding 1990 UN and relevant ILO Conventions to officials of Tajiki and other governments of Central Asia.

UGANDA

Following the founding of IMRWC in Cairo in 1994, Executive Council member Joseph Oneka met on various occasions with former law-school colleagues in senior foreign ministry posts to brief them,

provide materials and texts, and urge action on ratification. Uganda's ratification came through in November 1995.

URUGUAY

The Uruguayan Ecumenical Service for Human Rights (SEDHU), with WCC support and materials, took up advocacy for the Convention starting in 1992. Efforts carried out by the Secretariat and member Catholic, Protestant and secular organizations were the primary impetus to the decision to adopt the Convention by the Uruguayan Congress in May 1999. However, it took considerable follow-up by the SEDHU director Guillermo Kerber (in coordination with the Global Campaign secretariat) with Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials to ensure deposit of instrument of accession, in February 2001.

SIGNATURES

BANGLADESH

Migrant-based NGOs in Bangladesh and outside have long advocated for government action, in concert with Bangladeshi academics and diplomats. A main national actor is WARBE (Welfare Association for Returned Bangladeshis), which organized numerous national events –several with government ministers as speakers-- promoting the Convention. Bangladesh signed in October 1998. The WCC/CCME-produced booklet on the 1990 Convention “Proclaiming Migrants Rights” was reported used as a main briefing paper for Cabinet regarding signature.

Since signature, activities to promote ratification have intensified; ratification has been a main demand at national forums and marches on International Migrants Day (December 18) since 1998. The former IOM representative in Dhakka also expressed explicit support.

BURKINA FASO

Signed in November 2001. As with other West African countries, the Secretary General's call for ratification of conventions, the international visibility of the campaign, Burkina Faso's adhesion to relevant ILO Conventions and its active trade union movement in a country with 20% of its workforce abroad may all have contributed.

CHILE

The ecumenical refugee service agency FASIC and members of Catholic Bishops Conference have raised the issue with the government since 1992/93. Chile signed in September 1993. FASIC was involved in subsequent efforts to develop a national campaign for ratification.

COMOROS

UN Secretary General's call for ratification of all main conventions by all UN members at Millenium General Assembly may have been an impetus to Comoros' signature in September 2000. Global Campaign visibility and promotional materials in international forums may also have contributed.

GUATEMALA

Church and secular organizations concerned with migration have been advocating for Guatemalan government action since early 1990s. The national Catholic Conference office on Human Mobility has been especially active since 1991 in this effort, later taken up by national NGO coalition on forced migration. Guatemala signed in September 2000 on occasion of the UN Millenium General Assembly.

GUINEA BISSAU

UN Secretary General's call for ratification of all main conventions by all UN members at Millenium General Assembly may have been an impetus to Guinea-Bissau' signature in September 2000. Global Campaign visibility and promotional materials in international forums may also have contributed.

PARAGUAY

The Ecumenical Organization CIPAE, with WCC support and materials, took up advocacy for the Convention starting in 1991. The National Catholic Bishops Conference, its' office for migration, and Caritas have advocated since as early as 1991. (WCC Secretary for Migration met with the Vice-President of national Senate and President of the National Council for Repatriation, as well as church leaders, to urge ratification during a visit in 1991). Paraguay signed in September 2000 on the occasion of the UN Millenium General Assembly.

SAN TOME AND PRINCIPE

UN Secretary General's call for ratification of conventions by all UN members at Millenium General Assembly may have been an impetus to signature in September 2000.

SIERRA LEONE

UN Secretary General's call for ratification of conventions by all UN member States at the Millenium General Assembly may have been an impetus to signature in September 2000.

TOGO

Signed in November 2001. As with other West African countries, the UN Secretary General's call for ratification of conventions and the international visibility of the campaign promotion of the 1990 Convention may have contributed.

TURKEY

The government has long featured defense of decent treatment for migrant workers as a main international policy concern, particularly in Europe. Long anticipated action on the Convention came with its signature in January 1999, some months after launching of Global Campaign. Global Campaign representatives have since discussed progress towards ratification with senior government officials on several occasions.

REGIONAL ADVOCACY EFFORTS

Efforts to promote the 1990 Convention have been underway and expanding in a number of other countries. Considerable activity at regional levels has been developed in the Americas and Asia. Some of these efforts have emerged out of national conditions and imperatives, not necessarily formally linked to other international efforts.

Africa:

Campaign focal points have been established in Zimbabwe and South Africa.

The Southern Africa Ecumenical Network on Uprooted People for regional advocacy has initiated some regional advocacy efforts, following initiatives from the WCC-convened Global Ecumenical Network on Uprooted People and MRI.

Asia

National campaign focal points and campaign activities have been developed in Indonesia, Japan, Korea, and Nepal (in addition to those indicated above). Organizations in a number of other countries have taken up promoting the Convention.

Migration concerned regional organizations and networks have made advocacy for the Convention a highly visible component of their work across Asia. These include the Migrant Forum in Asia, the CARAM-Asia network, the Asia-Pacific Forum on Law and Development (APFLD), several active nationality-based networks of migrants, notably Filipinos, Bangladeshis and Indonesians, among others. The Asia Partnership on International Migration (APIM-supported by UNDP and other agencies)

produced a regional Sourcebook on Migration featuring the Convention in 1997. Notable also is support by the Canadian Human Rights Foundation, which has organized regional seminars and co-produced in 2000 a UN Road Map on human rights for migrant workers, in cooperation with Asian Migrant Center, Ateneo Human Rights Center and APFLD.

Central America

Campaign activities have been developed in Costa Rica, Honduras and Nicaragua.

Catholic church organizations, migrant NGOs and trade unions throughout have campaigned for ratification of the Convention since the mid-1990s, when ratification was included as priority by the regional Catholic Bishops Conference and Caritas networks, by ARMIF, and the trade union Public Services International. The Inter-American Institute for Human Rights has actively promoted ratification with governments in the region. Promotion of ratification has been consistently raised by NGOs participating in the regional inter-government “Puebla Process” of regional migration conferences. Promotional materials on the convention produced by the World Council of Churches (WCC) and Migrants Rights International (MRI) were circulated via ARMIF and church networks in all Central American countries.

Europe:

National campaign efforts have been established in Belgium, France, Italy and the Netherlands; in the latter two formal national campaigns have been launched. Church-related advocacy groups in Germany and Sweden have also sought to raise awareness.

At the regional level, the Churches Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) has been promoting awareness of and action on the Convention since before 1990; its former General Secretary contributed to the drafting process and was a co-founder of the IMRWC. More recently, three other regional civil society networks have taken up campaign activity. PICUM, the Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants has included advocacy for the Convention as a priority; Emmaus International launched a Europe-wide campaign in 2000, and in 2001, the European Network Against Racism (ENAR- a network of more than 500 national organizations in all 15 EU member countries) agreed to join the Global Campaign effort and promote ratification.

Middle East

Awareness raising about the Convention has been discretely conducted since the mid-1990s by the Middle East Council of Churches and Caritas offices in various countries. More recently, the Arab Organization for Human Rights has expanded visibility and advocacy for the Convention.

North America:

Campaign efforts have been taken up by local and national organizations in both Canada and the USA since 1994. National church coalitions in Canada have made promotion of the Convention a major agenda since the International Year of Churches’ Solidarity with Uprooted People in 1997.

South America

Advocacy for the Convention in a number of countries has been consistently carried out by church-related entities since the early 1990s. Members of the South American-Southern Cone Ecumenical Network on Migration, began such efforts in 1992-93 prompted and supported by WCC. (See Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, Paraguay and Uruguay above.) National Catholic migration offices, national Caritas agencies and some Catholic Bishops have actively promoted the Convention, with encouragement from the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC), the Pontifical Council for Migrants and Itinerants, and the Latin American Bishops Conference (CELAM). Promotion of the Convention has been underway in Argentina since 1992; efforts have also been reported in Peru.

GLOBAL RESULTS:

A few conclusions can be drawn regarding the outcomes of these many and diverse advocacy efforts:

- Visibility of the 1990 Convention increased dramatically in the last three years, as a result of efforts outlined above and others and the work of the Special Rapporteur.
- In the last three years, ratifications of the 1990 Convention more than doubled from 8 to 19 ratifications, and signatories quadrupled 3 to 12, in contrast to minimal progress in the previous eight years.
- The international debate on migration, particularly protection of migrants, has changed from “dormant” to active in the last five years.
- The work of the Global Campaign may have contributed to the demise of several attempts to elaborate “soft” alternatives to the 1990 Convention which would have neither the strict standards nor the enforcement mechanism of the Convention, e.g. proposals raised in IOM fora to draft a “code of conduct” for States, a resolution drafted in 1997 in the UN Commission on Human Rights proposing “guidelines” on migrant protection, and a similar suggestion formulated by members of the UN Inter-Governmental Expert Group on migrants rights. Such initiatives may arise again in the near future.

NEXT STEPS

The following conditions suggest that it is imperative to continue and strengthen both national and regional advocacy, as well as to maintain a concerted and highly visible ‘global campaign’ effort to promote wider ratification and effective implementation of the CRM—and related ILO Conventions¹.

- (1) Growing xenophobia against migrants and tighter migration controls --intensified in the backlash to the 11 September terrorist attacks-- make even more essential effective international legal standards for treatment of migrants.
- (2) Further attempts to devise weak alternatives to the 1990 Convention may still arise; such initiatives can only be countered by wider ratification of the 1990 Convention and complementary ILO Conventions on migrant workers.
- (3) To ensure that the Convention itself becomes a more relevant instrument, it will be essential to considerably increase the number of ratifications in the next years.
- (4) To ensure that the considerable number of 68 States which have already ratified one or more among the CRM and/or the significantly overlapping ILO Conventions 97 and 143 uphold and effectively implement standards for the protection of migrants to which they are accountable, these three Conventions need to be understood and projected as a complementary body of international human rights law.

Account also needs to be taken towards incorporating into ‘campaign’ efforts broadening sectors and organizations of civil society taking up activity to defend migrants rights, such as numerous national Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in various regions.

Draft: additional international activity to be added

P.A. Taran, Campaign Coordinator, 26-4-02 (rev)

¹ These are: the ILO Migration for Employment Convention #97 of 1949, ratified by 42 countries, the ILO Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention #143 of 1975, ratified by 18 countries. 19 States are Party to the 1990 International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. 11 others have signed it. Texts and related information available respectively on the ILO website, at www.ilo.org/ilolex , and on that of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, www.unhchr.ch