**THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA**

Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development

**PRESS STATEMENT ON THE SIGNED MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING ON MANPOWER SUPPLY AND DOMESTIC WORKERS’ PROTOCOL BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT OF UGANDA AND THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES**

**BY**

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**MINISTRY OF GENDER, LABOUR AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

**UGANDA MEDIA CENTER, THURSDAY 12TH JULY 2019**

Members of the Press corps,

Dear Ugandans,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

You may recall that Government of Uganda, through the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, started the programme of labour externalization in 2005 with the purpose of reducing the unemployment burden. This has been implemented under The Employment (Recruitment of Ugandan Migrant Workers Abroad) Regulations, 2005.

On 26th June 2019, my Ministry together with the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), represented by Minister, H. E. Nasser bin Thani Al Hamli, signed the Memorandum of Understanding in the field of Manpower and Domestic Worker Protocol in Kampala.

I wish to remind you that Uganda has already signed other two bilateral agreements on recruitment and Employment of Ugandan migrant workers with the Governments of Jordan 8th November, 2016 and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on 27th December, 2017 (Agreement on Domestic Workers Recruitment) and 31st December 2017 (Agreement on General Workers Recruitment).

The signed MoU between the Government of Uganda and UAE offers protection to our Ugandan migrants in a number of ways, especially through:-

1. Strengthening cooperation by providing a legal framework for the employment of Manpower from Uganda in the UAE;
2. Establishing a mechanism to discuss and exchange views on labour related problems and to resolve any outstanding issues relating to workers and their rights;
3. Creating mutual understanding between the Governments of the two countries to protect all workers, with special consideration to the specific vulnerabilities of female migrant workers;
4. Facilitating healthy cooperation and exchange of information on best practices between the tow states on labour migration for mutual benefits; and
5. Establishing a mechanism to discuss and exchange views on labour related problems and any outstanding issues relating to workers wellbeing and their rights.

Immediately upon signing of the MoU, my colleague Minister H.E Nasser bin Thani Al Hamli challenged me as follows: “***I need 80,000 Uganda workers in the next 12 months”.*** This is a huge undertaking and I urge the private sector to take up this offer.

The UAE has been the largest destination for the bulk of Ugandan migrant workers. Without an undertaking with the UAE Government, protection of migrant workers and their welfare has not been very easy. The unregulated business had given room to illegal recruitment, trafficking and exploitation.

However, with an agreement in place, more organized and safe employment shall be created. The terms and conditions of employment of Ugandan worker in the United Arab Emirates shall be defined by an individual employment contract between the worker and the employer. Further, an offer that is mirrored on the contract will be signed by both parties prior to the worker's departure from Uganda. The written text of the employment offer shall be delivered to the prospective worker in English and Arabic and explained by the Ugandan recruitment agency to the recipient where unclear.

All recruitment, hiring and placement activities of workers in both countries shall be permitted only under recruitment companies licensed by both Governments.

Upon arrival of the worker in the United Arab Emirates he/she will sign an employment contract that will clearly state the rights and obligations of the worker and employer, in conformity with the labour laws of the United Arab Emirates, and the contract will be duly filed with the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization in the UAE to constitute the sole binding contract document for the purpose of enforcement in the United Arab Emirates.

The terms and conditions of employment, as stated in the contract, shall not vary from those contained in the employment offer except for alterations that are favorable to the worker.

One sticking point has been the role of the middlemen who end up taking a huge share of the recruitment and placement costs. For us in Uganda, we have always looked forward to a situation where such charges are eliminated for all categories of workers. We are glad that Article 5 of the MoU is clear on that, by ensuring that the employer incurs all recruitment fees and that none shall be levied on the worker. This therefore ends the burden of placement fees that have previously been borne by the worker and hence ends exploitation that has been going on.

I have proposed that we set up the Joint Committee within three months of coming into operation of this MoU to, among others, make periodic reviews, assessment and monitoring of the implementation of the provisions of this MoU. The team will be composed of officials from my Ministry, as well as Ministries responsible for Foreign Affairs, Justice, Internal Affairs, and Security. The Committee will also make necessary recommendations to resolve any disputes arising from the implementation of the provision of this MoU or amendments to this MoU as may be necessary.

By signing the MoU, the two countries present a critical effort in the fight against human trafficking that has become a menace. This shall be achieved by the two countries enforcing fair and transparent recruitment practices in their respective jurisdiction and ensuring that all actors comply in the process of recruiting Ugandan workers for employment in the UAE in accordance with the rule of law.

As a Ministry, we shall continue the efforts to have more bilateral labour agreements signed with other countries for purposes of ensuring the safety and productivity of our labour in overseas employment.

Finally, this is to urge the public most especially the job seekers to remain vigilant, seek guidance from the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, and report any suspected illegal recruiter and anybody involved in any form of exploitation. We remain committed to ensuring safe, orderly, regular, dignified and productive migration for our people.

We salute our brothers and sisters from the UAE for the warm and cordial cooperation enjoyed by our two friendly countries.

 FOR GOD AND MY COUNTRY