

The Progressive Movement of Overseas Compatriots

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Introduction

We are progressive Filipino organizations abroad and in the country fighting for the rights and welfare of our overseas compatriots. We have decided to unite and join in an international alliance to carry out further our task and to contribute our share in the struggle of the Filipino people for national freedom and democracy.

To properly carry out our tasks, we need to understand the root causes of Filipino migration abroad.

We have to look at Philippine history to understand how this phenomenon developed from the Spanish colonial period to the present. In the process, we shall see what our overseas compatriots did in contributing their share to the movement for social change in the country.

We shall learn that Filipino migration abroad is basically rooted in Philippine socio-economic conditions. We shall also learn that the Labor Export Program (LEP) of the government is nothing but an attempt to perpetuate an unjust social system by alleviating the unemployment problem and preventing social unrest from further developing in the country.

Then, we shall look at the situation of our overseas compatriots, clarify the nature of their issue, and define the link between our task to struggle for their rights and welfare and our task as patriotic Filipinos to help advance the movement for social change in our country.

This document is an affirmation of our viewpoint as progressive organizations of overseas compatriots. It is divided into three sections: (I) A Brief History of Filipino Migration Abroad; (II) The Root Causes of Filipino Migration; and (III) Our General and Particular Tasks.

I. A BRIEF HISTORY OF FILIPINO MIGRATION ABROAD

1. The Spanish Colonial Period

The Philippines was composed of scattered tribes with different levels of social development before the coming of Spain. At the time, the tribal needs for food – a fertile land and good hunting ground - and the conquest of other tribes dictated the pattern of migration. Colonial conquest of our ancestors by Spain was done through force and divide and rule tactics.

Spain maintained the tribal system by co-opting the tribal chieftains. It claimed the entire archipelago as a royal possession, imposed tributes on the tribes, distributed lands to loyal servants of the crown and the religious orders, and implemented the encomienda system where forced labor is required. It accelerated the political unification of the country through the creation of a central government in Manila. Eventually, the feudal social system was established in the whole archipelago.

In time, the colonial system of trade superimposed on the feudal social system. Spain dictated what crops to plant and minerals to mine, as well as monopolized the sale of gold, silver and other natural resources. During the period of the Manila-Acapulco galleon trade (1565-1815), colonial exchange between Spain and the Philippines via Mexico flourished.

Filipinos were forced to work in the galleons as seamen. Others were forcibly brought to California, then a part of Mexico, to serve as peons. The Spanish conquistadors made use of Filipino corvee labor to establish missionary settlements in California in such places now known as San Luis Obispo and Los Angeles. To escape the cruelty in the galleons, some Filipinos jumped ship in Acapulco, traveled the length of Mexico toward the city of Vera Cruz, crossed the Gulf of Mexico, and established a settlement in New Orleans, Louisiana. This settlement was called Manila Village. The settlers here were conscripted to join the American Revolution in 1812 against British colonialism.

With the opening of the Suez Canal, colonial trade accelerated even more. But it also created an opportunity for the children of the ilustrados, who profited from serving the Spanish colonial government and the friars, to study in Spain. From these students would emerge some of the Filipinos who launched the propaganda movement against Spanish colonialism.

The severe exploitation, oppression and slavery of the Spanish colonial regime led the Filipino people to rise up for national independence in 1896, under the leadership of Andres Bonifacio. There were also notable overseas Filipinos who joined and help finance the Katipunan and participated directly in the struggle. Candido Iban and Francisco del Castillo worked as pearl divers in Australia and after having won a lottery decided to donate their prize to buy the first printing press of the Katipunan to produce publication materials and recruit more members to the revolution.

On the eve of the victory of the Philippine revolution, a new colonizer arrived - the United States. With force, the US seized the liberty that was paid for in blood by our ancestors. Almost one million Filipinos died in the war between the Philippines and the United States.

2. The American Colonial Period

When the United States occupied the Philippines, it made a few changes in the existing social order. It introduced the system of land titling while confiscating the land, mines and few factories owned by Spaniards and the religious orders. The U.S. monopoly capitalists grabbed the best for themselves. Filipino ilustrados who betrayed the revolution and switched loyalties to the new colonizers were rewarded with the leftovers.

U.S. monopoly capitalists penetrated the country. Branches of American banks and trading companies were established. Some packaging factories were set up. The Americans converted large religious estates into export crop plantations.

Filipino landlords also took to planting sugarcane, coconut, tobacco, abaca, pineapple and other products for export and processing in the U.S. Filipino merchants and traders – the comprador bourgeoisie – facilitated the entry and sale of consumer and other goods from the U.S while ensuring the supply of raw materials to U.S. industries. The colonial pattern of trade expanded.

The conversion of rice and corn lands into large export crop plantations displaced many peasants from their land. Unemployment became widespread in the countryside. Rebellions broke out such as the Tayug uprising in Pangasinan in 1931 and the Sakdalistas in 1935.

To ease the problem of unemployment, the U.S. colonial government embarked on a systematic export of Filipinos to canneries in Alaska, to orchards and farms in California, to ports in Seattle, New York and to Hawaiian plantations.

The Olaa Plantation employed the first batch of Filipino workers. Under the supervision of the Hawaiian Sugar Planters Association, other plantations hired more Filipinos. By 1929, almost 18% of the total population of Hawaii were Filipinos. By 1934, the number of Filipinos in Hawaii had reached around 120,000.

The Great Depression in 1930 adversely affected the Hawaiian plantations. The prices of agricultural crops plunged. Filipino workers were laid off. Forty one percent of them were forcibly sent back to the Philippines. One of those repatriated was Pedro Calosa who became one of the leaders of the Colurum uprisings in 1931. Calosa was a veteran of the extensive strike in Hawaii in 1924 that was participated in by 31,000 Filipinos. Of those who were not repatriated, some went to the U.S. mainland to work as vegetable and fruit pickers in California. Still others went to Alaska to work in fish canneries. Subsequent immigration control under the Tydings McDuffie law in 1934 saw a quota of only 50 Filipinos a year.

There were also “pensionados” sent by the colonial US government to study and train in the United States and later return to become part of the civil service and bureaucracy in the Philippines. These more fortunate migrants actually came from the upper middle classes and landlords’ children.

From the life and writings of Carlos Bulosan, one can glean the prevailing conditions and protest actions of Filipino migrants during that time. Bulosan actively participated in organizing workers under the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), when it was still a progressive and militant federation. He and other Filipino migrants also actively supported the Hukbong Bayan Laban sa Hapon (Hukbalahap) during the Japanese occupation of the Philippines.

The severe crisis of world capitalism during the 1930s led to World War II. There was intensified competition among the big monopoly capitalist countries for control of the world market, as well as sources of cheap labor and raw materials for their industries. In their contention to redivide the world into their own spheres of influence and control, they dragged humankind into a world war in which 50 million people perished.

3. The Early Period of Nominal Independence: From Roxas to Macapagal

The Americans returned to the Philippines near the end of World War II. They reinstated the big landlords and comprador bourgeoisie to power, as well as their servile bureaucrats. They gave the Philippines nominal independence in 1946.

In exchange for the War Damage Act, the newly installed Philippine government passed the Parity Amendment to the 1935 constitution that allowed U.S. citizens and companies to own land, exploit the country’s natural resources and run public utilities. It also provided for the retention of U.S. military bases, the institutionalization of the sugar quota system, and the supply of wheat and agricultural products from the U.S. These neocolonial arrangements ensured U.S. control over the economy and politics of the Philippines.

The Huk rebellion was in reaction to this situation. As a measure to solve the unrest, frontier lands were opened as resettlement areas for landless unemployed peasants. Many landless peasants went to Mindanao, Northern Luzon and other areas.

The successive regimes from 1946 to 1965 presided over a continuously declining economy and quality of life of the people. There was no genuine land reform program implemented. Instead, the big landlords and U.S. corporations kept acquiring more land for themselves. The displacement of peasants from their land continued. Unemployment worsened. Migration to the cities started in earnest in the early fifties when internal travel within the country became easier than before.

There was no program of national industrialization. Instead, assembly plants for U.S. goods as well as import-substitution industries were established. Although some Filipino industries flourished for a time, these were dependent on the U.S. for their industrial equipment, technology and energy supply. These could not compete with goods produced in U.S. assembly plants. Eventually, these would close down with the lifting of import controls and the flow of goods from abroad.

The neocolonial pattern of trade kept the balance of trade and payment deficits growing. The foreign loans secured to cover the deficits ballooned, leading to the devaluation of the peso in 1963. With the devaluation of the peso came the price increase of prime commodities. Life became increasingly harder for the people. The country's financial difficulties provided the pretext for the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank (IMF-WB) to intervene and dictate on how to run the economy of the country.

Without national industrialization, the economy could not generate the jobs necessary to employ even its trained and skilled labor force. Thus, thousands of graduates from colleges and universities in the medical, engineering, teaching and other professions would not be able to find jobs much less adequate wages commensurate to their training. These graduates would be forced to seek employment abroad.

Most went to the United States. Others joined international organizations like the United Nations (UN) and its agencies the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), which began to proliferate after the war. Still others went to Europe which was in the process of reconstruction, becoming textile designers in Italy and Holland and nurses and doctors in Holland, England, Germany and Spain.

Many Filipinos also joined the U.S. Navy or were deployed to US military bases overseas. At the time, too, the recruitment of Filipinos as domestic helpers for diplomats and wealthy families abroad began. Seamen were also recruited for the merchant vessels of the U.S., Scandinavia, Holland, Belgium and Greece.

Meanwhile, Filipinos in the U.S. had been active in the union movement there. In 1949, 6,000 Filipino workers joined the strike of the International Longshoremen and Warehouse Union (ILWU) against the exploitative landlords in Waipahu, Hawaii. In 1965, Filipino workers under the leadership of Philip Vera Cruz and Larry Itliong launched a militant boycott of grapes to protest the harsh treatment of grape-pickers in California. Their boycott inspired the Chicano workers to join the protest. This led to the formation of the United Farm Workers Union (UFWU) where Philip Vera Cruz became vice-president.

4. The Marcos Dictatorship Period

Like his predecessors, Marcos was the chief political representative of the ruling classes of big compradors and landlords. His land reform program was a sham. His export processing zones established import-dependent-export-oriented industries that came to the country only for cheap quality Filipino labor. No basic industries were established, except some downstream plants such as the copper smelter.

He resorted to extensive borrowing from foreign and domestic sources to finance his so-called development program, as well as his infrastructure building. But he also pocketed a substantial portion of the loans. His cronies also got their share. Corruption was rampant. Marcos became the number one landlord and comprador bourgeois in the country.

In order to crush the rising tide of protests in the 70s, Marcos declared martial law in 1972.

Under Marcos, the export of Filipino labor gained a new dimension. The Marcos government, as a faithful follower of imperialist dictates, upheld the neoliberal policy of keeping workers cheap and docile through the neoliberal prescription of flexibilization or contractualization. Such framework seeped through the export of Filipino workers overseas who were aggressively marketed to overseas labor markets as temporary or contract workers. As a measure to prevent social unrest and keep himself in power, the Labor Export Program or LEP was institutionalized. The LEP intends not only to ease the acute unemployment problem in the country but also to raise foreign exchange earnings needed for debt payments and to cover the balance of trade deficits.

At the time, Saudi Arabia and other OPEC countries in the Middle East were awash with petrodollars. They needed cheap labor to build their petrochemical industry and infrastructures such as roads, bridges, hospitals and schools. Through the Arabian-American Company (Aramco), an US-held company, the Engineering Equipment Incorporated (EEI) of the comprador Ayala family, and Landoil Resources of the bureaucrat capitalist Jose de Venecia, thousands of Filipinos were recruited to work in the Middle East.

Then came the recruitment of domestic helpers to Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia and Europe, as well as workers in the logging and mining camps of Sabah and the construction industry of Brunei and Japan. Filipino seamen became the number one source of manpower in European merchant vessels and flags of convenience.

To supposedly alleviate the conditions of migrant workers, the dictatorship created a Welfare Fund in 1977 to provide services and skills training to migrant workers. This was financed from contributions by employers at the cost of USD25.00 per worker. However, workers shouldered the contribution either through payment to the recruitment agencies or directly to the POLO or POEA. Most of the funds collected did not go to providing services to migrant workers but to the pockets of labor officials in the Ministry of Labor and Employment. The creation of said fund absolved the government from its responsibility to fund welfare protection for overseas Filipinos, and the same time, added on to the exaction schemes of the government.

In 1982, the Marcos regime established the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) to supervise the systematic export of Filipinos. This office became the biggest labor contractor for overseas employment. Three government agencies were integrated into the POEA the National Seaman's Board (NSB), the Overseas Employment Development Board (OEDB), and the Bureau of Employment Services (BES) that was in charge of finding markets for Filipino labor abroad.

Not long thereafter, the dictator imposed Executive Order 857 (EO857), the mandatory sending of remittances through banks owned by the dictator and his relatives. Failure to do so meant the denial of authentication of contract renewals among other punitive provisions. This provoked so much protest that the regime had to withdraw the EO.

According to the POEA, from 1975 to 1985, the total number of Filipinos who went abroad as contract workers was 2,287,913. According to the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, their total remittances for the same period amounted to more or less USD5.150B.

However, these figures must be read carefully. The more than 2 million Filipinos who went to work overseas represent a cumulative figure. It does not mean that by the time Marcos was overthrown, that was the total number of Filipino contract workers abroad. Considering the two-year contract period and the time frame for each construction project, especially in the Middle East and Brunei, there is a lot of coming and going in the ranks of OCWs.

Moreover, these are conservative figures. The POEA total does not include those Filipinos who went abroad as tourists or students who worked (or are still working) there without legal documents. On the other hand, the Bangko Sentral figure does not include the remittances that did not pass through banks or remittance agencies and sent in cash through friends or relatives.

Our overseas compatriots contributed their share in toppling the Marcos dictatorship. They organized protests and helped exposed the cruelty and corruption of the fascist regime abroad. They held rallies, pickets and forums against the regime and secured the support of the host peoples for the struggle. They raised support for the movement for social change in our country. Many held high hopes that with the overthrow of the Marcos dictatorship, freedom and genuine democracy would happen in the country. Cory Aquino dashed their hopes upon her ascendancy to power.

5. The Period of the Cory Aquino Regime

Aquino proved no different from Marcos. As owner of Hacienda Luisita, her family comes from the big landlord class. Her land reform program (CARP) emasculates the right of peasants to own the land that they till. It includes provisions that allow landlords to make paper conversion of their haciendas into so-called cooperative capitalist farms. This was what her family did to Hacienda Luisita.

The Aquino regime maintained the exploited social order. It catered to the wish of big foreign monopoly capitalists. Her family directly benefits from the sugar quota arrangement with the U.S. She returned the comprador businesses grabbed by Marcos to their former owners. Her relatives grabbed some for themselves. Her regime borrowed heavily from local sources to finance its so-called economic recovery program.

Under the Aquino regime, the LEP was expanded. For the first time, in Aquino's 5-year economic recovery program, the foreign exchange remittance of migrant workers was recorded as an income item in the balance of payments. The regime even proclaimed OCWs as the "new economic heroes" because of their contribution to the economy. Aquino made a lot of promises, like the creation of a million jobs upon their return home, but not a single one was kept.

The remittances of overseas compatriots became the number one source of foreign exchange for the economy. At the same time, the Aquino regime imposed additional levies and taxes on migrant workers. Aside from the double taxation scheme and the increases in the travel tax (P1,620) and airport tax (P500), it imposed a so-called Mandatory Insurance and Repatriation Bond (MIRB) on them. The MIRB requires migrant workers to pay a premium of P800 for the duration of their two-year contract to guarantee their repatriation home should anything untoward happen. Although migrant workers are exempted from paying customs tax, they have to shell out grease money to immigration and customs inspectors to escape airport hassle.

The MIRB was a response to what happened during the Gulf war in 1991. At the time, the migrant workers themselves took the initiative in exerting pressure on the International Organization on Migration to evacuate them out of the war zone.

The Aquino regime set up the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) to replace the welfare fund administration of Marcos. The OWWA has two basic functions: to collect and administer contributions for the fund and to protect the rights and welfare of migrant workers. It collects the following fees from migrants: USD25.00 for membership dues, P900 for Medicare, and USD25.00 voluntary fee for additional services such as repatriation, death benefits, etc. Yet, as history has shown, it is not easy for migrant workers to avail of payments and services from the fund. Much of what is collected goes to the pockets of labor and OWWA officials and the upkeep of their offices abroad.

While it denied the existence of the export labor program, the Aquino regime through the Bureau of Labor aggressively peddled Filipino labor as a cheap quality product. The regime negotiated with Taiwan to legalize Filipinos working there without documents and to make available to them other types of work in the factories and the service sector. This gave additional income to the Taiwan government and Taiwanese brokers. In Japan and Korea, it marketed cheap Filipino labor through the trainee system – hiring migrants as so-called trainees who receive allowance instead of wage. Though they are involved in the production process, they are denied union rights and benefits.

It is ironic that the first female president would be instrumental in increasing the overseas deployment of Filipino women as modern day slaves. In 1975, female contract workers were only 30% of OCWs deployed. But by 1987, women OCWs will shoot up to 47%. Majority of these women were deployed as “performing artists” in the controversial entertainment sector in Japan and in the service sector – as domestic workers, nannies, cooks, caregivers – in Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Italy, and Canada. Nurses were also sent to the United States and the Middle East. The number of domestic workers in Singapore alone doubled from 25,000 in 1986 to 50,000 in five years since Cory Aquino was installed as president.

According to the POEA, from 1986 to 1991, the total number of Filipinos who went abroad as contract workers was 2,854,255. This is a cumulative figure. According to the Bangko Sentral, their total remittances for the same period amounted to more or less USD5.983B.

This explains why the regime simply turned a blind eye to the dead, battered, maimed and crazed Filipinos who arrived at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport. The Cory regime did not want these minor tragedies of the overseas workers to affect the foreign currency earnings of the government.

6. The Period of the Ramos Regime

The Ramos regime was like the Marcos dictatorship in serving the interests of big foreign monopoly capitalists and their local agents - the big landlords and comprador bourgeoisie. It embarked on a policy of liberalization, deregulation and privatization in accordance with the neo-liberal program of the big monopoly capitalists imposed through the IMF-WB and the General Agreement on Tariff and Trade-World Trade Organization (GATT-WTO).

Through its Philippines 2000 or Medium Term Development Program (MTDP), the Ramos regime opened wide the Philippine economy to the further exploitation of big foreign monopoly capitalists. Under its Foreign Investments Act, foreign investors have the opportunity to own or control huge tracts of public land, including unused portions of military camps, and government-owned corporations, including services such as water, energy and hotels, as well as banks and mines. They have the right to repatriate up to 100% of their profits. Under the build, operate and transfer scheme (BOT), foreign construction companies have come into the country to build dams, power plants and the Metro and EDSA flyovers.

The Ramos regime lowered tariffs on most imported goods. This has virtually destroyed the remaining local industries, as well as the local production of rice, corn and vegetables. It adopted the “market oriented land reform” which granted incentives to landlords to continue planting export crops. It also adopted the policy of land conversion that allowed landlords to turn their lands into so-called industrial estates, housing projects and tourists spots. It promulgated the Mining Act that allowed foreign companies to control huge tracts of mining land. All these exacerbated the problem of unemployment in the country.

The Ramos regime claimed the dubious honor of initiating discussions in APEC of what it called “Internationally Shared Human Resources”. It formally recommended the relaxation of immigration laws to facilitate the exchange

of cheap labor and eliminate obstacles to the conversion of workers into an export commodity. It publicly offered the Filipino for sale to whoever was interested in cheap, industrious and skilled labor.

The regime developed the so-called Kabuhayan 2000 project for returning migrant workers. Kabuhayan 2000 offered skills training to returning workers, such as computer programming, sewing, beauty culture techniques, etc. But the courses were not free. It also offered loans to those who were interested in running small businesses upon their return home. These small businesses, such as tricycle and taxi service, sari-sari stores, beauty parlors, etc. did not prove viable in the long term. With engine breakdowns, repairs and lack of customers, most of these businesses became bankrupt. Having borrowed the capital for the business, the returned migrants had to go abroad again to pay off the debt.

The regime issued Memorandum Circular 41 (MC 41) which prohibited the direct hiring of Filipino workers abroad. MC 41 provided that migrant workers must go through private recruiting agencies. This brought forth worse forms of abuses and impositions on migrant workers. They fell under the mercy of government officials and military men who own most of these recruitment agencies. Aside from charging excessive fees, some of these officials and military men resorted to extracting sexual favors in exchange for working contracts abroad. Yet, it was to these profit hungry and sex-starved men that the Ramos regime had entrusted the safeguarding of the rights and welfare of migrant workers.

In 1995, the Ramos regime hastily enacted the Magna Carta for Overseas Filipino Workers to diffuse the huge outcry against the unjust treatment and execution of Flor Contemplacion. This law was enacted after the Gancayco Commission cleared the regime of any responsibility in the abuses committed against migrant workers, especially in the case of Contemplacion.

The Magna Carta is nothing but a compilation of the rules and regulations of the POEA and OWWA. It puts MC 41 into law that officially deregulates the labor export industry and shifts the responsibility for providing protection to migrant workers from government to foreign employers and recruitment agencies. The Magna Carta also practically condones all the fees and levies already imposed on migrant workers. It even allows the imposition of new ones such as the so-called voluntary OWWA membership fee of USD25.00. It allocates funds to extend services to migrant workers but these have to be included in the general appropriations act. None of the appropriated funds went directly to migrants. These were used mainly to put up OWWA houses and pay for the salaries of labor officials abroad. The case of Glenda Lorio is a good example of OWWA's inutile existence. Clearly, the Magna Carta is just a scheme to cover up the government's program of exporting Filipino labor abroad.

Under the Ramos regime, the collection of fees and levies imposed on migrants was intensified. It assiduously implemented the collection of such fees as the MIRB, Medicare, \$25 for on site protection (Memorandum of Instruction No. 8), membership due to OWWA, trade tests, medical examination, NBI clearance, notarization and authentication (birth certificates, marriage contracts, etc.), and visa translation. The cost of placement fee, as well as passport renewal when processed abroad, was also raised. Thus, migrants have become virtual milking cows of the Philippine government.

According to the POEA, from 1992 to 1997, the total number of Filipinos who went abroad as contract workers was 4,164,533. This is a cumulative figure. According to the Bangko Sentral, their total remittances for the same period amounted to USD20.940B.

The 300% jump in remittances during the six years of the Ramos regime as compared to the six years of the Aquino regime is inexplicable. The 100% increase in the number of contract workers who went abroad during the Ramos period as compared to the Aquino regime, could not possibly account for the 300% increase in remittances. In this regard, it is possible that the Ramos regime had resorted to double accounting in order to bloat the figures.

7. The Period of the Estrada Regime (1998-1999)

The Estrada regime came to power under the slogan “Erap para sa mahirap.” But even before he could seat in Malacanang, his populist rhetoric had been exposed for what it is by the single act of wanting to bury Marcos at the Libingan ng mga Bayani. Estrada is nothing but a minion of the dictator Marcos and his business cronies. He is not pro-poor but anti-poor and definitely pro-foreign capitalists.

This has been proven by his subsequent actions: the restoration of ownership by the Marcos cronies over their business interests, the disregard of land reform in favor of corporative farming, the ratification of the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA), suspension of the peace talks with the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP), obsession to change the 1987 constitution in order to satisfy his foreign masters, increasing incidents of human rights violations, militarization in the countryside, violations of press freedom, and such other moves reminiscent of the Marcos era.

If the Ramos regime intensified the export of Filipino labor, the Estrada Regime is vigorously implementing and creating mechanisms for a well-trained, cheaper and docile labor for export. It placed a pseudo- progressive personality at the helm of the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), a government agency that conducts training courses on technical skills development for both local and overseas work. It also provides training for domestic helpers and entertainers while they are still in the Philippines.

While TESDA ensures the quality of exported labor, the DOLE, through the Job Fair Program, acts as a venue for employers and recruitment agencies to buy the “quality products”. The Job Fair Program is actually a job referral program (for local and overseas work) jointly sponsored by DOLE, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), TESDA and the Livelihood Programs of the Land Bank and DBP. It is in implementation of the “Active Labor-Management Program” of the IMF-WB under the so-called safety net clause that big monopoly capitalists use to blame the cheap labor in undeveloped countries for the unemployment problems in their respective countries and pit the working class against each other.

The Job Fair Program sets a day when employers and recruitment agencies gather to accept applications and interview workers for job vacancies. Only later will applicants be informed if they were accepted for the job or not. In this way, the government deceitfully boasts that it is creating new jobs for the people. In reality, the employers and recruitment agencies send most of the workers abroad as part of the labor export program of the government and in implementation of the anti-labor policies of contractualization and flexibilization.

8. The Period of the Arroyo Regime (2001 – 2010)

Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo benefited from the popular revolt that ousted the corrupt regime of Estrada in 2001. Not too long after though, the Arroyo regime was embroiled in its own issues of corruption and plunder even involving her husband.

As a champion of neoliberal economics, Arroyo did not waste time intensifying the policies of liberalization, deregulation and privatization as dictated by imperialists and the IMF-World Bank. She attempted to push through a Charter Change that would remove any remaining restrictions on foreign investments and ownership on telecommunications, public utilities, lands, mass media, government contracts and even schools and learning institutions. The country’s debt reached P3-trillion during her reign. Wages remained nailed to the floor, unemployment rose, and taxes were imposed to the people while big tax evaders were not prosecuted.

The nine years of Arroyo’s reign also featured some of the most horrible extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearance of activists. Heeding the ‘war on terror’ of US imperialist, Arroyo implemented a series of counterinsurgency plans that targeted legal activities from all sectors – peasants, workers, churchpeople, indigenous peoples and youth. Outcry against killings reverberated around the world with the Arroyo regime

getting indicted by the Permanent People's Tribunal. Even the report of UN Rapporteur on Extrajudicial Killings Philip Alston has found merit on complaints of human rights violations by the Arroyo government.

As an adherent of neoliberalism, Arroyo implemented policies that heightened the labor export program and increased the earnings of the government from Filipinos overseas. The Philippines, under Arroyo, was the first country of origin of migrants to host the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) that served as an imperialist instrument for the neoliberal agenda of intensifying commodification and modern-day slavery of migrants.

Dependence of the regime on labor export, state exaction and remittance was seen on its reaction to Migrante's call for Zero Remittance that government authorities branded as 'economic sabotage'.

Various state exaction measures were pushed by the regime such as the increasing passport fee and authentication fee, mandatory SSS membership and double taxation. An e-card was later on introduced that was exposed as another money-making scheme.

The OWWA became a rich source of funds for the regime as it tightened its control over the OFW money through the OWWA Omnibus Policy. Said policy limited OFW membership to the OWWA on a per contract basis, removed the General Financial Assistance Program, and gave free rein to the government for its fund's allocation. In 2003, Migrante Sectoral party (MSP) exposed the secret transfer of the OWWA Medicare Fund to PhilHealth that became a vehicle for Arroyo's electoral campaign in 2004.

Around this time, conflict in the Middle East also escalated resulting to calls for immediate repatriation of Filipino workers. The campaign to save the life of Angelo dela Cruz, an OFW kidnapped in Iraq also led to the call for the pull out of Filipino troops from the Middle East.

Gen. Roy Cimatu headed the Middle East Preparedness Team that took more than USD800,000 from the OWWA Fund for the rescue and repatriation of Filipino workers. No one repatriated was shouldered by the money taken but accounting of the money from the OWWA was also not done.

With the thrust of developing "Supermaids", the POEA under the Arroyo regime implemented the POEA Guidelines 2007 that institutionalized the "training" requirement for household service workers. This requirement replaced the placement fee paid by OFWs to private recruitment agencies that eventually proved to be even more extortionist as it was charged without a limit.

Protection of OFWs was also not high on the Arroyo government's priorities as it allowed without protest wage cuts of workers in Hong Kong, Taiwan and Saudi Arabia. With its blind support to US-led wars and interventions, the Arroyo government also exposed Filipinos in Iraq to loss of jobs and even life.

9. The Period of the BS "Noytoy" Aquino Regime (2009 – 2016)

The period of the BS "Noytoy" Aquino regime was characterized by the sharp rise of Filipinos leaving annually. The economic situation of the people did not improve as the government continued to adhere to imperialist dictates that perpetuate the semi-colonial and semi-feudal setup of the Philippine society.

While promising domestic job generation, the Philippine Development Plan the regime crafted relied heavily on foreign investments, import-dependence, foreign and domestic borrowing and the so-called free market. The regime implement programs such as the Private-Public Partnership that was exploited by private companies (many of whom with foreign ties) to gain maximum profit while leaving the burden of loan repayment and aid conditionalities to the people.

Glowing reports on improvements in the economic never trickled down to the ordinary people. Instead, the gap between the rich and the poor only widened with more Filipinos falling into poverty as joblessness and underemployment widened, and land reform continued to be bogus with the extension of the CARP into CARPER that did not provide thoroughgoing reforms in the situation of peasants in the countryside.

The government's initial promise of creating the condition where there will be "no need for people to look for employment abroad" proved hollow as it aggressively pushed for more labor markets for Filipinos overseas and continued to celebrate and rely on remittances of Filipinos abroad to keep the economy afloat. Even its program on education – the K to 12 education system – aimed mainly to reinforce cheap semi-skilled youth labor for the global market.

Under the BS "Noynoy" Aquino administration, the number of OFWs leaving the country increased from 2,500 daily in 2009 to 4,884 in 2010. It further increased to 6,092 by early 2015.

Like previous administrations, improvements in services to Filipinos abroad did not materialize under the BS "Noynoy" Aquino regime. There was no effective action done for repatriation of stranded workers and for victims of labor and other forms of trafficking. The campaign to Save the Life of Mary Jane Veloso highlighted the inutility of the regime to assist victims.

Government collection of fees also intensified with Aquino's signing of Administrative Order 31 that legalized state exaction and taxation on OFWs by effectively calling on all government heads and agencies to "rationalize the rates of their fees and charges, increase their rates and impose new fees and charges". Under the BS "Noynoy" Aquino regime, each OFW processed by the POEA had to pay P26,267 for various fees.

10. The Period of the Duterte Regime (2016 – Present)

The Duterte administration started with rosy promises to the people and to overseas Filipinos. His tough talks on drugs, crime and corruption, endo or contractualization and theatrics on concern for the wellbeing of migrant Filipinos earned him support from those overseas.

However, two years after gaining the presidency, Duterte's promises were abandoned and his more progressive electoral agenda were shattered. Instead, Duterte just continued the economic policies of the past – reliance on foreign investments, aggressive borrowing especially for China for infrastructure building, and regressive taxation – that continue to erode the livelihood of people who are already without land, decent and secure jobs, and access to free or accessible social services.

The Duterte regimes has also unleashed the vicious attacks against the people, activists and revolutionaries through his war on drugs, war against terror, and counterinsurgency operations. More than 20,000 people have been reportedly killed with impunity on his war on drugs with most victims coming from poor communities while big-time druglords, including his son, go scot-free and investigations are stalled or manipulated.

Duterte has also repeatedly threatened legal organization, unions and activists with repressive actions with a number already arrested and slapped with made up cases. In Mindanao, a Martial Law still exists despite the neutralization of alleged ISIS elements and destruction of the Moro city of Marawi.

Meanwhile, military operations in the countryside have intensified including in lands of indigenous peoples. Despite clamors for its continuation, Duterte has also unilaterally terminated the peace talks with the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP).

For Filipinos overseas, the Duterte government has only offered palliatives and not thoroughgoing changes that would improve service and rights protection for Filipinos abroad, as well as resolve the conditions for the forced

migration of Filipinos. Instead, he has shown reliance on the labor export program (LEP) with his plan to re-export OFWs from one country to another, the establishment of an OFW bank to corner remittances, the planned Department of OFWs that will just streamline labor export process, and his inaction on state exaction policies. Even the promise of reforms or additional incentives for OWWA members never materialized like the promise of refund for members who did not avail of any services for 10 years. The promise of ID system for OFW to facilitate all transactions of OFWs including the removal of EOC for vacationing OFW were never implemented as of this writing. Instead of evacuation and repatriation of OFW from war torn area, the program was to look for another country where OFW can be transferred.

The protracted global crisis continued to impact Filipino migrants, especially in the Middle East, and showed the total lack of ability of the government to respond to the impacts of the crisis including helping overseas Filipinos recover wages and economic benefits, and provide decent employment for those who were forcibly repatriated. Instead, the Duterte regime could only offer re-deployment to other countries and knee-jerk and populist actions such as the short-lived deployment ban to Kuwait.

11. On the Progressive Movement of Overseas Compatriots

The progressive movement of overseas compatriots regained new vigor in the late sixties and early seventies when several activists left for North America to help organize our compatriots there to support the national democratic movement in the Philippines. They formed organizations that swiftly established chapters in many cities. When Marcos imposed martial law, they succeeded in generating huge protest actions. Some members of the ruling classes who fled to the U.S. because of opposition to Marcos even joined the protests.

But some leaders of the progressive movement in the U.S. became disoriented. They shifted the principal thrust of the organizations from that of fighting the Marcos dictatorship and supporting the Filipino people's struggle for national freedom and democracy to working for change in the U.S. With the help of some American activists, they exhorted Filipino-Americans to work mainly in rebuilding the workers movement in the U.S. Many compatriots stood firm that their main task abroad was to fight the Marcos dictatorship, while extending support to the struggle of the American working class.

In the mid-70s, several more activists left for Europe and the Asia-Pacific to mobilize support for the national democratic movement in our country. At the time, the priority was to build solidarity groups among the host peoples. Though these efforts proceeded well, there was not enough attention paid to organizing among overseas compatriots at a time when the number of Filipinos leaving for Europe, the Middle East, Hong Kong and other Asian countries was increasing.

By the end of the '70s, the progressive movement of overseas compatriots started to adapt to the rising flood of Filipinos leaving for work abroad. Institutions to safeguard their rights and welfare were organized. Initially, these attended to migrants who encountered problems and abuses overseas. The victims were provided with refuge, counseling and assistance. But it was not yet clear how the migrant issue would be carried. Was it enough to safeguard their rights and welfare abroad? Was it not necessary to link their problems with the problems of the Filipino people?

In the early '80s, the progressive movement of overseas compatriots gathered momentum with the formation of mass organizations. The struggle for the rights and welfare of overseas compatriots became the stepping stone to do organizing work among them. The activists quickly integrated with the overseas Filipino community. But the direct relationship between the struggle for rights and welfare of our overseas compatriots and the need to advance the movement for social change in our country needs to be grasped fully.

Although activists were recruited from the ranks of overseas compatriots, a wrong notion prevailed that they were more concerned with bettering their lives than with issues in the Philippines. There developed the attitude that it was difficult to mobilize overseas compatriots to support the national democratic movement. This attitude came from the misconception that the root cause of Filipino migration abroad lies in the subjective reasons of Filipinos for working overseas - and not in the objective conditions of the country.

When Marcos promulgated EO 857 or forced remittance, it exploded into a big issue among migrants in the Middle East, Europe and Hong Kong. Protest actions were held. There was coordination with migrant rights' institutions in the Philippines. The campaign was well handled. It was linked with the overall problems of the Filipino people and the servility of the Marcos regime to IMF-World Bank dictates. The number of migrants reached and mobilized by the progressive movement expanded.

The progressive movement of overseas compatriots was active in the struggle against the Marcos dictatorship. It held various forms of protest actions in front of Philippine embassies or consulates. Lobbying work before agencies of foreign governments to protest the suppression of human rights in the country was conducted. The progressive movement generated much support from host peoples and provided assistance to the national democratic movement in our country.

However, the struggle against the dictatorship took a mainly antifascist character. There was not much that the activists could do to change the situation. There was a general disorientation happening at the time in the national democratic movement in our country. This had affected their work in projecting the comprehensive character of the struggle against the Marcos regime and in carrying out solid organizing among our overseas compatriots.

The downfall of the Marcos dictatorship further confused the progressive movement overseas. Some thought that Aquino's rise to power would bring about basic change in the country. Others believed that the struggle for national freedom and democracy was still unfinished. Although the membership of mass organizations declined, those who remained did their best to continue with their work.

But the disorientation in the national democratic movement in our country had taken hold in the progressive movement of overseas compatriots. No solid organizing was done. Coalition building and NGO networking took the place of solid organizing. Campaigns on an issue-to-issue basis became the principal form of activity. Solidarity work was limited to securing support for the Philippine struggle than in establishing relations of mutual cooperation and support with host peoples in the common fight against the unjust world system that perpetuates the degradation of human beings.

In the disarray came the red scare tactic launched by the Aquino regime. It issued a so-called blacklist of Filipino organizations abroad alleged to be communist fronts and distributed it to foreign governments. This caused more disruptions in the ranks of the progressive movement.

Negative tendencies arose. There was the inclination to remain in migrant institutions and confine work to the struggle for their rights and welfare. The civic character of mass organizations was overstressed in the desire to conceal their political character. In other places, there was the tendency to seek shelter in human rights groups and to limit solidarity work with host peoples in churches and the academe.

There were many unnecessary debates: whether to engage in the concerns of overseas compatriots or not; whether our overseas compatriots can be organized to support the national democratic movement in our country or not; or, whether to build mass organizations or just support network in the community of overseas compatriots. Nevertheless, despite the disorientation, work among the overseas compatriots continued.

As early as 1985, there were already initiatives to gather organizations and institutions overseas and develop a global network of Filipino migrant organizations. In 1989, the progressive organizations in Asia-Pacific countries initiated a conference that passed a resolution to carry out coordinated campaigns on issues affecting our country. This did not materialize because, frequently, only one or two countries would respond to the agreed upon coordinated campaigns. The actions had little impact on the Manila government even if they landed on the major dailies of the receiving countries.

In January 1992, another conference took place that established the Committee for the Unity of Overseas Filipinos (CUOF). It was composed of progressive organizations and institutions that promote and protect the rights and welfare of overseas compatriots and the Filipino people. The CUOF was mandated to prepare for the formation of an alliance of progressive organizations in the AsiaPacific region. After two months, CUOF was renamed Migrante-APME. However, its implementation was suspended because there was still a need to strengthen and expand the progressive Filipino organizations in the region.

By this time, the national democratic movement in our country was undergoing renewal. Those who instigated the disorientation from within the movement left on their own accord, while a few were suspended. The renewal instilled a better understanding of the situation and the work that must be done among our overseas compatriots. It gave renewed vigor to the patriotic movement overseas.

In 1994, another consultation took place with representatives of progressive Filipino organizations and institutions in the Asia-Pacific, North America and Western Europe in attendance. A decision was taken to transform Migrante APME into Migrante-International. An Executive Committee was formed to prepare for the convening of the Founding Congress of Migrante-International.

When the Flor Contemplacion issue erupted in 1995, Migrante-International spearheaded the campaign in the Philippines. In close coordination with progressive Filipino organizations in different countries and with different sectors in the country, the campaign was militant and became widespread. It had a strong impact within and outside the country that shook the Ramos regime, as well as the Singapore government that took a beating from the international media. The campaign brought the situation of overseas Filipino migrant workers to the national and international level. It consolidated the need for an international alliance of progressive Filipino organizations that promote the rights and welfare of overseas compatriots and of the Filipino people.

The Founding Congress of Migrante International took place in 1996. Migrante International aims to arouse, organize and mobilize overseas compatriots to fight for their rights and welfare and to support and participate in the movement for social change in the Philippines. It is firmly convinced that the solution to the continuing migration of Filipinos abroad lies in resolving the basic problems of the Filipino people in achieving national freedom and democracy.

Since its establishment, Migrante International's membership has increased. From 21 founding member organisations, membership jumped to 65 in 1999. In 2005 it further expanded its reach to various countries in Europe and the Middle East.

With its rapid expansion, Migrante International was able to pursue multiple campaigns from the regimes of Ramos up to the present Duterte government. These campaigns ranged from projecting issues of OFWs in different countries to confronting anti-migrant policies, state exaction and neglect of the Philippine government to the wellbeing of OFWs.

Migrante International and its members were also able to contribute significantly to national campaigns in the Philippines such as the ouster of the corrupt Estrada to generating public support and international pressure to the Arroyo government against extra-judicial killings and other forms of human rights abuses.

Members of Migrante International in various countries have been recognized as consistent defenders of rights and welfare of overseas Filipinos even by the host governments. Many are acknowledged as representatives of the Filipino communities abroad.

In 2002, the progressive movement of Filipinos overseas led the formation of the Migrante Sectoral Party (MSP) to engage in electoral struggle with a clear agenda on the rights and wellbeing of migrant Filipinos and families, as well as clear stand on forced migration and the labor export program. Maximizing the Overseas Absentee Voting, MSP chapters were established around the world and in provinces and regions in the Philippines. Cornering 35% of all overseas votes for partylists in 2004, MSP marked itself as the partylist voice of overseas Filipinos.

However, the successive Philippine government has shown its insincerity in truly enabling overseas Filipinos to participate in the electoral exercise. Insufficient budget, limited personnel, very few accessible voting sites, and weak education on registration and voting processes all contributed to the disenfranchisement of millions of overseas Filipinos.

Since its establishment, Migrante International took on serious efforts to reach out and organize would-be migrants, returned migrants, families of migrants, families of victims, and migrant advocates in the Philippines. Organizations of families, migrant youth, returned stranded workers from Saudi Arabia and their families, and even cultural organizations were established initially. MIGRANTE and MSP chapters were also established in many provinces all over the country. While many of these efforts were not sustained, it underscores the necessity of establishing our sectoral movement based in the Philippines. Most recently, chapter organizing of MIGRANTE regained momentum and culminated in the successful establishment and expansion of MIGRANTE-Pilipinas, the nationwide sectoral mass organization in the Philippines.

Migrante International also contributed significantly to the building of the broad anti-imperialist movement of migrants, immigrants, refugees and displaced peoples.

In 2001, it co-organised the International Migrants Conference that affirmed the need for migrants of all nationalities to organize and forge cooperation with each other. The next years saw such effort coupled by participation of migrants in anti-imperialist campaigns such as the People's Action Week against the World Trade Organization 6th Ministerial Meeting in Hong Kong in 2005 and the anti-US war in Iraq campaign. Migrante International continued its involvement in the International League of People's Struggle (ILPS) and led discussions in the study commission on migrants. Finally, with many other progressive organizations and advocates, the International Migrants Alliance (IMA) was established in 2008 as the only grassroots-based and led global formation of migrants, immigrants and refugee organizations and advocates. Aside from the IMA, Migrante International also played a key role in the Churches Witnessing With Migrants that served as a broader platform for resistance to the GFMD.

II. THE ROOT CAUSES OF FILIPINO MIGRATION ABROAD

1. On the Socio-Economic Conditions of the Philippines

From a short review of Philippine history, we learn that what prompted Filipinos to migrate to other places is the question of survival. More importantly, we learn that this question is connected to the socio-economic level of development of the country.

For instance, in the pre-colonial period, migration occurred because of the tribal search for good hunting ground and fertile land. During the Spanish colonial period, it was to escape the landgrabbing, as well as the tributes and corvee labor imposed by the rulers. During the American colonial period, it was in search of land to till in the frontier areas and of jobs in the plantations of big landlords during the harvest and planting seasons.

Today as before, the impulse to migrate comes from the need to survive – to find work in order to live and support one's family.

If only the Philippine economy can employ everyone, there would not be any need for Filipinos to migrate overseas to work. But it cannot. Yet, the Philippines is rich in mineral resources, with a fertile land and good climate, and has an industrious people that can transform it into an industrialized, just and prosperous country.

Why is not possible for the economy to absorb its labor force? Why do Filipinos have to go overseas to find work? The answers to these questions can be found in an analysis of Philippine society today.

The Philippines is a semicolonial semifeudal country. It is under the joint rule of the big landlords and comprador bourgeoisie that serve foreign monopoly capitalists, principally the U.S. For this reason, it has remained backward, agrarian and without basic industries.

These ruling classes directly benefit from such a social order. It does not matter to them that the majority of the people are mired in poverty, disease and ignorance. What is important is that they continue to extract profits from the labor of the people and the natural resources of the nation.

The foreign monopoly capitalists extract superprofits from the Philippines. For every dollar that they invest, they earn more than ten dollars in return. They come to the country for the cheap labor and raw materials, as well as market for their finished products. They even use local savings to finance their investments. They lease mining areas to extract mineral resources. While paying cheap for our labor and resources, they sell their expensive industrial and consumer goods to our people.

The big landlords own huge tracts of agricultural and pasture lands in the country. Through lease and contract growing agreements with foreign monopoly capitalists, they earn rental payments for their land. They also earn directly by planting export crops to supply foreign companies and industries, while exploiting the peasants and agricultural workers.

The comprador bourgeoisie earn mainly by selling the products of foreign monopoly capitalists. They either manage the subsidiary plants that assemble the products of foreign monopoly capitalists or engage in the production of semiprocessed goods that depend on capital, technology, supply and market from foreign monopoly capitalists. They also earn by providing services to foreign monopoly capitalists in selling their products.

The big compradors and landlords, together with the foreign monopoly capitalists, connive to prevent the Philippines from industrializing. They do not want the country to develop basic industries. If the Philippines were to industrialize, they would lose their income. Their foreign monopoly capitalist masters would also have new competitors for the cheap labor, market and resources of the country.

The foreign monopoly capitalists have other means to control the economies of backward countries. Through international institutions such as the IMF-WB and the GATT-WTO, they impose stringent controls over the finances and trade of these countries. At the moment, they are implementing the neo-liberal program of liberalization in trade and investments, deregulation in tariffs and laws, and privatization of government-owned or controlled companies, to ensure their unlimited access to the market and ownership of domestic companies. On top of these, they have promoted anti-labor policies such as contractualization and flexibilization that lead to the destruction of trade unions, lowering of wages and denial of social benefits.

The big compradors and landlords also act as political agents of the foreign monopoly capitalists. They put up political parties that compete in so-called elections for control of the government. Through bribery and corruption, they keep the bureaucrats in line. They encourage some bureaucrats to engage in business themselves. However, other bureaucrats take the opportunity to dig into the national coffers to make themselves

rich. To maintain their rule, the big compradors and landlords keep a tight rein on the police, military, judicial and civil servants. They wield these instruments to keep the people from demanding their democratic rights and seeking basic social change.

Under this social order, our country has remained a supplier of cheap agricultural and mineral resources and labor, as well as an assembler of consumer and semiprocessed goods, and a buyer of expensive finished products from the foreign monopoly capitalists. Since what we buy is more expensive than what we sell, the country's balance of trade and payments deficits continues to worsen yearly. The neocolonial pattern of trade locks the country into a cycle of debt and underdevelopment.

The government must keep on borrowing from abroad and local sources to offset the trade and payments deficits and even for its budgetary needs. The more debts the country incurs, the less is it able to pay. This leads to a continuing cycle of peso devaluation, increases in the price of basic commodities, budget deficits, tax increases, and widespread corruption in the allocation of contracts and pork barrel from the national coffers. The situation has reached a point where the government is now borrowing only to pay for the interests on its debts.

The perpetuation of the system has led to the ever-widening gap between the few rich and the numerous poor. It has also led to the deterioration of living standards. There are the failure of social services, decline in the people's health and literacy level, proliferation of so-called squatter colonies, growth in the number of street children, and the spread of crime and mindless violence. At the same time, the unemployment situation continues to worsen every year.

Without land reform and national industrialization, the economy cannot develop further. It cannot have the capability to manufacture its raw materials into finished or semi-finished industrial and durable consumer goods for local consumption and export. It can not generate nor accumulate the capital necessary for comprehensive industrial development. At most, it can only have the few packaging and semi-processing industries.

In such a situation, employment opportunities remain scarce. With a vast army of unemployed, labor remains cheap. Moreover, there is a limited market for consumer goods because the majority of the people are either without any income or do not receive enough to live adequately. This situation does not provide any incentive to enterprising Filipino capitalists to go into industrial production, especially in the face of fierce competition from foreign monopoly capitalists for the limited market.

The vast majority of the unemployed is in the countryside. Under semifeudal conditions, the big landlords and foreign agribusiness and mining corporations own or control most of the land. They displace millions of peasants from the land, rendering the latter without any means of survival. Only a limited number of peasants are employed in the haciendas, plantations and mining camps of the big landlords and foreign corporations.

Previously, the displaced landless peasants left their areas to settle new lands. Some resorted to kaingin in order to survive. Others engaged in odd jobs, such as hired hands for fishing companies, while waiting for the planting and harvest season in the haciendas and plantations of the big landlords and foreign corporations, like the sacadas of Negros and Central Luzon. When the government opened resettlement areas in response to social unrest, they migrated to these places. With the exhaustion of the land frontier towards the late '60s, the cities became their natural destination in search of jobs.

Without national industrialization, the country cannot generate the jobs necessary to absorb its labor force, much less its trained or skilled ones. Since the fifties, thousands of graduates from colleges and universities in the medical, dental, engineering, teaching and other professions have sought employment abroad, especially in the U.S. This was called the brain drain.

With the unemployment problem growing each year, the ruling classes of big compradors and landlords have been under extreme pressure to find a solution to the problem. They developed the Labor Export Program (LEP) as a scheme to send unemployed Filipino workers abroad. At the same time, they turn the LEP into an industry for its own purposes.

External factors play a secondary role in the migration of Filipinos overseas. The law of uneven development of capitalism has divided the world into a few industrialized capitalist countries and the many dependent ones, majority of which are countries like the Philippines that are backward, agrarian and without basic industries. The standard of living and income of the people in these countries vary.

The relatively high wage (in peso terms) of workers in the industrialized capitalist countries has been a source of subjective attraction for Filipino workers. This attraction becomes more enticing precisely because there are not enough jobs in the Philippines. This is true even for skilled workers and trained professionals. Moreover, the foreign monopoly capitalists have rode on this subjective factor to import workers to their country.

In the 1920s, U.S. monopoly capitalists imported Filipino peasants for the agricultural plantations of Hawaii and California to save on labor costs. With contractualization and flexibilization, this practice has become more rampant. In Japan, the Middle East, South Korea, Taiwan and Brunei, Filipino workers are hired as so-called trainees in labor intensive industries - garments, electronics, logging and mining - and in the service sector - heavy construction, seafaring, as helpers in hospitals, hotels, and nursing homes. Worst of all, some are recruited as so-called entertainers for the host peoples.

In other countries, such as Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia, Filipino workers are hired generally as domestic helpers. These countries have undergone a relatively accelerated pace of development in the last decade that drew their women into industries and services, such as banks, trading, insurance and the like. There has arisen a need for domestic helpers to take care of the children and parents of couples who are both employed in factories and offices. In Europe and North America, families are encouraged to hire domestic helpers as a way to cut back on social services, such as day care centers and nursing homes.

The monopoly capitalists have always tried to use migrant workers against their own workers in their persistent effort to destroy the ranks of the working class and trade union movement in their country. They use migrant workers as scapegoats in attacking the rights and welfare of local workers. Then, when a severe crisis occurs in their countries, they accuse migrants of grabbing the jobs of local workers, denounce them as a heavy social burden, and whip up racism against them to divert the attention of their people away from their misery. After exploiting the migrants, the monopoly capitalists send them for slaughter to save their skin.

We, who promote the rights and welfare of Filipino migrants, must know how to handle this problem correctly. We must never allow the monopoly capitalists to destroy the ranks of the international working class movement.

2. The Labor Export Program (LEP) of the Philippine Government

The chronic economic and political crisis of the semi-colonial and semi-feudal Philippines rapidly deepened during the 20-year reign of the US-Marcos regime. The most indicative of the said crisis was the imposition of the nationwide Martial Law by Marcos as early as 1972 which showed the inability of the ruling class to rule in the old ways.

The peso was devalued by the early 70s to P6.00 per US dollar from the previous P3.90. Such brought widespread hardships as the prices of everything, especially basic goods, rose up while the wage remained low. The devaluation of the peso further increased the debt of the Philippines which steadily rose during the Marcos period. From 1977 to 1982 alone, Philippine debt ballooned from US\$8.2 billion to US\$24.4 billion. Aggressive borrowing including from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank fed the infrastructure

requirements of imperialist-owned businesses and the rampant corruption led by the Marcos cronies who cornered foreign-funded or foreign loan-funded projects and the biggest chunks of kickbacks.

To stave off the crisis and the social volcano that threatened to overwhelm the US-Marcos regime, the Labor Export Program or LEP was institutionalized and systematized. Since then, the LEP has played a major role in the policies of succeeding puppet regimes after Marcos.

The Philippine government has never officially acknowledged the existence of its labor export program (LEP). It claims that our overseas compatriots leave the country voluntarily because of higher wages abroad in peso terms.

This has been its standard reply, especially to overseas compatriots who complain of abuses by foreign employers or recruitment agencies in dismissing their complaint and urging them to go home voluntarily or face deportation by the receiving government. It does not want to endanger the LEP because of these complaints.

The Philippine government wants to conceal the LEP behind our own decision to seek employment abroad for our family's survival. It wants to escape responsibility for our plight by throwing the blame on us. Since there appears to be a grain of truth to its claim, it manages to hide the real causes of Filipino migration overseas.

We must understand that migration is a human right, especially in a situation where conditions for living are difficult, with no jobs available for all, and there is oppression. In this situation, it is but natural for people to seek employment overseas in order to survive and to escape oppression. Thus, we need not be ashamed or defensive about our decision to work abroad. It is a decision dictated by necessity.

We also know from experience that working and living abroad is not easy. There is the loneliness caused by separation from one's country and loved ones. There is the strange environment - of different language, customs, and weather conditions. There is the heavy and difficult work that we perform, as well as the abuses and indignities that we suffer. Though our income may be higher in peso terms, it is not enough to enable our families to escape poverty back home.

Furthermore, we know that if jobs were available in the country, we would not have chosen to work overseas. We would remain in the Philippines at the side of our loved ones to work or practice our profession and help in the progressive development of our country.

In the first place, it is the primary duty of any just and responsible government to look after the welfare of its people by providing them with jobs so that they would have the means to survive. The government of the big compradors and landlords does not consider this its duty. It has catered only to its needs and those of its foreign monopoly capitalist friends.

By perpetuating the semicolonial and semifeudal system, the ruling classes have created the situation where the economy has remained undeveloped. The economy cannot generate the jobs needed to give employment to everyone. The ruling classes benefit directly from this situation. Because of their greed and corruption, the economy is burdened with, among others, enormous foreign and local debts and a huge unemployment problem. It is their fault that many people are without jobs in the country.

The LEP is not only a measure to prevent social unrest. It plays right into the neoliberal framework of imperialism of ensuring profits of businesses from labor flexibilization; in this case, the cheap and disposable migrant workers. As well, it is also a means to overcome through the foreign exchange remittances of overseas Filipinos the chronic financial crisis of government brought about by the neocolonial pattern of trade and the huge borrowings for so-called development programs and infrastructure building.

The LEP turns Filipinos into an export commodity. The government peddles Filipino labor overseas like the toys and garments that are produced in the export zones of the country. What it gets in exchange for sending Filipinos abroad is their foreign exchange earnings. On top of these, it imposes all sorts of taxes, levies and fees on overseas compatriots.

Moreover, it does not mind that we suffer exploitation, abuse and indignity abroad so long as it gets its foreign exchange earnings. In fact, as a matter of policy, it routinely denies protection to us when we are in trouble abroad so as not to endanger the LEP. Every time we air and seek redress of grievances, we get insulted with the lie that we bear the consequence of our “voluntary” decision to work abroad!

The LEP is a concrete example of what cruelty the ruling classes are capable of doing in an attempt to maintain their rule. They sell their own people as an export product, unmindful of the abuse, exploitation and oppression that compatriots experience overseas. In doing so, they deprive us of our dignity as human beings. The LEP showcases the relationship between the social conditions in our country and Filipino migration abroad. Forced migration of Filipinos is rooted in the semi-colonial and semi-feudal setup of the country. The LEP does not only capitalize on the desperation of Filipinos but also perpetuates and reinforces the condition that breeds the forced displacement of the people.

3. On the Situation of Our Overseas Compatriots

As of 2016, the Philippine population stands at over 100 million. In 2013, it was estimated that over 10 million Filipinos are living and working overseas. From the government’s 2017 Survey on Overseas Filipinos, the number of Overseas Filipino Workers are 2.3 million. According to SWS, in 2015, one out of every 10 households in the Philippines has a member working overseas. This is around 2.2 million OFW households. Our overseas compatriots are scattered in at least 239 countries.

In general, our overseas compatriots may be classified into two categories - those permanently living in other countries (immigrants) and those who are there temporarily (migrants). The latter can further be classified into land-based and those working in the international maritime industry.

The immigrants constitute more than half of the number of overseas compatriots. Most are in the U.S. There are around 6 million Filipinos in the US with around 4.7 million Filipino Americans excluding undocumented. Based on records, the biggest remittance to the Philippines that constituted 43% of the total remittance in 2014 comes from the U.S..

Whatever their nationality, most immigrants still consider themselves Filipinos. They have formed patriotic organizations. These organizations are involved in Philippine issues and participate in the struggle for social change in the country. These also struggle for the promotion and protection of the rights and welfare of overseas compatriots as a minority in the receiving country.

The participation of overseas compatriots in the movement for social change in the country is a matter of choice. In the main, they choose to participate out of patriotic sentiment - a desire to contribute their share in transforming the Philippines into a just, democratic and prosperous society. Some have been victimized by neo-fascism, racism and discrimination. It is difficult for them to really be integrated into the society of the receiving country.

The migrants among our overseas compatriots can be considered part of the Filipino people who are oppressed and exploited by the ruling classes in the Philippines. This is because they are still Filipino nationals. Their stay abroad is only temporary. They are bound to return to their family in the country once their contract expires or they are deported for lack of legal papers. Besides, most of them do come from the democratic classes of Philippine society: peasants, workers, professionals, and ordinary employees of government and private

companies. Moreover, because they are foreigners in the receiving country, they are vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

Among the migrants, the overseas contract workers (OCWs), now called overseas Filipino workers (OFWs), including the seafarers, are less prone to abuse because they have legal papers. Nevertheless, because they constitute the biggest number among migrants, most recorded cases of abuses and deaths come from their ranks, like Flor, Lorio and Sarah Balabagan, as well as seafarers who died from boat disasters or under mysterious circumstances.

The undocumented or those without legal papers (called “bilog” in Japan, OS or overstayer in Hong Kong, TNT or “tago nang tago” in America) also constitute a big number among migrants. Because of their situation, they are more prone to abuse than the documented. According to the Planning Branch of the POEA, as published in the Chicago Tribune in 1996, the estimated number of undocumented Filipinos is as follows:

	Total No.	Undocumented	Percent
Middle East	1,153,320	54,320	(4.6%)
Asia/Oceania	1,275,000	626,000	(49%)
Europe	486,000	287,000	(57.2%)
Americas	1,101,000	901,000	(81.8%)

Since the early nineties, there has been the trend for more women than men to go abroad as migrant workers. They go to Europe, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, North America, and Japan as domestic helpers, au pairs, nannies or entertainers. There has also been a noticeable increase in the number of women victimized by commercial marriages or the so-called mail-order-bride schemes.

Our women compatriots overseas are the most vulnerable to abuse. Alone, separated from their loved ones, unfamiliar with the foreign environment and apparently helpless, they become prey to abusive employers and recruiters. Most victims of abuse, including murder and rape, are women. One of the worst aspects of LEP is the debasement of our women compatriots.

There are also Filipinos abroad sent by the government, multinational companies or parents, in order to study, do research or undergo training. There are also missionaries undertaking work abroad for their church. Moreover, there are those forced to leave the country and seek political asylum abroad because of persecution by the Philippine government. They are constantly under threat by the minions of the ruling classes.

Another phenomenon is the rising number of Filipino international students trafficked and exploited as migrant workers. The student pathway became popular for Filipinos wanting to work abroad. They gamble their savings and acquire huge debts to enroll in various courses, as advised by recruitment and education agents that give misleading information and false promises about smooth transition from study to work and residency in the host country. Rogue employers take advantage of international students desperate for jobs to recover study expenses and cope with the high cost of living in leading study destinations such as Australia, NZ, and UK among others. Host governments and education providers earn billions in the business of selling export education.

There are a few Filipinos occupying high positions in transnational corporations. Others are government employees in the consulates, embassies or other agencies that implement the government’s policies and programs. Some of them are ashamed of their overseas compatriots and betray the undocumented among them

to the authorities of the receiving country. It might be difficult to rouse their patriotic sentiment because of the interest they serve. But there are also those among them with compassionate hearts who can be drawn to help migrants.

There are an estimated 400,000 Filipinos working in the international maritime industry with most classified as ratings and others are officers. Various problems also hound seafarers from the period of pre-embarkation, during embarkation and after disembarkation or their end of contract. Their problems range from government policies (both of the Philippines and of countries where they dock), working and living condition inside ships, abandonment, the right to organize, and problems surrounding Flags of Convenience (FOCs). In 2017, a Magna Carta for Seafarers was passed in the Lower House though how the final law can indeed protect the rights of Filipino seafarers is yet to be determined.

Most overseas compatriots are workers. Only a few manage to go up the social ladder in the receiving country through the practice of their profession. Our overseas compatriots are usually employed in the same type of jobs (in the service industry, seafarers, nurses, domestic helpers, nannies, construction or factory workers, etc.). The problems they face are virtually the same. They are exploited by foreign employers, maltreated by recruitment agencies, denied protection by the Philippine government, victimized by racism, discriminated against in wages and treatment, and denied many basic rights as foreigners (union membership, pensions, etc.). Then there is the lost of dignity and self-esteem and the loneliness of separation from loved ones.

Our overseas compatriots can be considered a sector of Philippine society because of the common problems they encounter and the same issues they carry. This is why we struggle to promote and protect their rights and welfare as overseas compatriots. They can be organized and mobilized according to their particular situation. Moreover, since they belong to the toiling masses, they can easily understand the issue of exploitation and oppression by foreign monopolies and the need to bring about basic change in Philippine society.

By migrating abroad to work, our overseas compatriots take a chance on their future. Many say that once they have saved enough to start a business or own some property, they will go home for good. Eventually their stay abroad is prolonged with repeated renewal of contract. They get to accept the reality that once they return home, there is no work that would give their family the same amount of income. For our overseas compatriots in North America, Europe and Oceania, they choose to become immigrants and bring their family with them. For those in most Asian countries, they get to return home permanently only after another member of the family can take over their role as overseas migrant worker.

Our overseas compatriots undergo exploitation from beginning to end of the migration process. At the start, they are obliged to pay big sums for the papers they need to go abroad: from passport, to plane ticket, authentication of documents, police clearance, medical examination, etc. On top of these expenses, they are charged with excessive processing fees by recruitment agencies. Some get unlucky and deal with fly-by-night recruitment agencies. They either get swindled of their money or are sent abroad without available jobs and are deported immediately. To raise the required amount, they mortgage or sell their meager property or borrow from loan sharks that charge very high interest. Thus, even before leaving the Philippines, they are already buried in debt.

In the first months of their stay abroad, their income goes to pay the debts. In the following months, it goes to pay for the education of children or brothers and sisters. Then come emergencies like sickness in the family. When conditions get better, they are able to save and buy some home appliances. Some get lucky to make monthly payments for a house and lot. A few get to save enough to start a small business. But the yearned for deliverance from poverty usually never happens. The business goes sour, home appliances are sold, and the house and lot are mortgaged, sold or embargoed. Without any livelihood and prospects for employment, they are forced to return abroad. This is the vicious cycle that befalls our overseas compatriots.

The families of our overseas compatriots in the country get to live a bit better than the families of ordinary Filipino workers. This is because the peso value of their wage abroad is higher than the minimum wage in the Philippines, although their wage is usually below the minimum in the receiving country. But the rise in their family's standard of living is artificial because it is based on a temporary situation – as long as they are working abroad.

Sometimes, the artificial improvement in living standards results in unhealthy appetites and needs in the family. High expectations arise that are not sustainable in the normal course of life if one were working in the country. Some couples separate because the spouse left behind becomes obsessed with a lavish lifestyle and squanders the income from abroad on gambling, liquor or womanizing. Some children get hooked on vice or illegal drugs because of the absence of parents and the availability of extra cash.

But it is mainly the long separation between loved ones that creates the emotional and psychological problems for overseas compatriots and their families. Because of loneliness, some spouses are led astray. Many children grow into adulthood without the care and supervision of parents. Many families are shattered. Overall, these developments have serious consequences on the life of our society, on its social fabric or relations that bind a family as the basic unit of society.

Abroad, our overseas compatriots are confronted with varying cultures and lifestyles. They integrate in highly industrialized capitalist countries, as well as dependent ones. They experience liberal cultures, as well as conservative ones. They live in societies that are predominantly Muslim, as well as those that are predominantly Christian. In whatever country they are in, our overseas compatriots have to adjust and conform at the risk of losing their own culture and traditions. Some do get converted into other religion. Moreover, as strangers in foreign lands, they do not know much about the language, traditions, laws and policies of the receiving country.

Being foreigners, our overseas compatriots fall easy prey to hustlers and abusive foreign employers and governments. They become scapegoats for crimes committed by local residents. They get arrested or deported, sometimes for simple offenses but more often for no wrongdoing. Some have been sentenced to death or executed without benefit of fair trial. Many employers confiscate their passports so they cannot leave or transfer to another job. They also suffer racism, discrimination and physical abuse.

According to OWWA, from 1991 to 1995, 4,691 Filipinos died overseas and sent home in caskets for burial in the Philippines. Statistically, this means that almost three Filipinos die abroad everyday from various causes, usually under mysterious circumstances.

In the employer's factory, office or home, our overseas compatriots generally experience discrimination in pay and working conditions. They often receive less than the minimum wage and are deprived of the normal benefits secured from collective bargaining agreements such as paid vacation, maternity and sick leave, job security, automatic promotion, retirement or pension benefits, medical insurance, etc. They are also assigned to graveyard shifts.

The domestic helpers, as well as au pairs and live-in caregivers, usually work beyond the working hours prescribed in their contracts. Often, they are made to work from 12 to 14 hours each day. In the process, they get deprived of adequate food and sleep. Sometimes they are not even paid the prescribed wage. They are also subjected to punishment, such as withdrawal of days-off and wage deductions, for minor offenses. They often become victims of sexual harassment. Some are raped, so too are a few men, particularly in the Middle East.

Our overseas compatriots get to perform the work that are dirty, heavy, and dangerous - jobs that are usually avoided by or not assigned to the host people. Although many of them were trained as professionals or skilled workers in the country, they accept these jobs and do their work well - at the risk of losing their dignity and self-esteem. They console themselves with the thought that what they are doing is honest work. Moreover, these backbreaking jobs are injurious to health. In most instances, they are required to shoulder their own medical bills.

They also pay taxes to the receiving government, yet they do not enjoy the rights accorded to nationals of the receiving country.

On the other hand, their own government does not give them the protection or care that they need overseas for fear that it might alienate the receiving country and harm the labor export industry. Its usual solution to migrants encountering legal problems in the receiving country is deportation in coordination with the local authorities. Despite all these, the Philippine government has been quite religious in collecting the numerous fees and levies imposed on our overseas compatriots.

4. The Aspirations of Our Overseas Compatriots

The issue of our overseas compatriots is the promotion and protection of their rights and welfare. It is a democratic issue. It is based on their being part of the Filipino nation abandoned by their own government abroad in exchange for their foreign currency earnings. It is our duty as progressive Filipino organizations to struggle for their rights and welfare.

The International Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers and Their Families sets the standard for the proper treatment of migrant workers and their families. The standard can be used as the minimum basis in advancing the struggle for the rights and welfare of our overseas compatriots, even if the convention has not yet gathered the required signatories to gain the force of law. Moreover, most receiving governments have laws that provide protection to immigrants and migrants.

We must encourage our overseas compatriots to form mass organizations to fight for their rights and welfare. These mass organizations can take various forms, depending on circumstances and the preference of members. Through these organizations, our compatriots can empower themselves in the struggle for their rights and welfare. These organizations can relate with other Filipino organizations overseas in the attainment of common objectives.

We must ensure that we achieve concrete gains in the struggle for the rights and welfare of our overseas compatriots. In this way, the community of overseas Filipinos can see that we truly stand for their interests. Campaigning on issues of rights and well being that are addressed to the host country and especially to the Philippine government is important in our mass work. We must mobilize not only Filipino migrants but those of other nationalities and local people when confronting policies of host country. At the same time, we must also gather solidarity support in rights and welfare campaigns directed to the Philippine government.

Concrete welfare services must also be undertaken.

We must do our best to provide assistance and protection to victims of abuses in the community. We can set up refuge houses, provide legal, medical and psychological counseling, and carry out skills training program for them. We must also help them to confront the perpetrators of abuse, whether these be their employer, recruitment agency, or concerned government agency of the receiving country or the Philippine government. We must also pay attention to the needs of Filipino community overseas for housing and social services.

We must always ensure that the struggle for their rights and welfare is linked to the struggle of the Filipino people for national freedom and democracy. In this way, our overseas compatriots would get to understand that their problem is part of the general problem of the Filipino people. They would see that more than their subjective wish to improve their lot objective factors play a much more crucial role in their decision to work overseas. They would get to realize that only by resolving the socio-economic problems of the Filipino people would the issue of Filipino overseas migration be settled. This would encourage them to support and participate in the movement for social change in the country.

The sense of patriotism of our overseas compatriots is evident. This can be seen in their spontaneous but organized response during periods of calamity in our country and in the way they organize their ranks for mutual help and to support our compatriots in trouble. They often choose to course their help through nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) than Philippine government agencies because of bureaucratic corruption.

They know about the poverty, backwardness and corruption in the country. This is a subjective impulse for their migration. They hope for change to happen in the Philippines. They want to see it become a just, prosperous and democratic country. They want to work and live there with their loved ones. They continue to be interested in the events there. For this reason, it would be easy to get them involved in the movement for social change in the country.

Moreover, many of them had seen or participated in mass actions during the fight against the Marcos dictatorship. Some were members of progressive unions, teachers and student organizations. They were deeply disappointed when no change occurred after Aquino took power. But their experience has made them aware of the power of people's concerted action to bring about change in the country. Given the opportunity, they would again participate in the movement.

Our overseas compatriots belong to the community of immigrants and migrants in the receiving country. This community has become the source of cheap labor for monopoly capitalism, even doing the odd and difficult jobs in the service sector. It aspires to be accorded equal opportunity and treatment with the host people. It also needs protection against racism, neo-fascism, discrimination and unjust immigration and nationality laws of the receiving country.

Our overseas compatriots must unite and cooperate, and build solidarity with progressive immigrant and migrant organizations, as well as with the host people, in the struggle to promote and protect their rights as minorities and migrants in the receiving country. They can also establish relations of mutual support and cooperation with these progressive organizations in the struggle of their respective peoples.

III. OUR GENERAL AND PARTICULAR TASKS

1. Our General Task

We are an integral part of the national democratic movement in the Philippines even if our main arena of work is outside the country among the ranks of our overseas compatriots. Our tasks abroad is part of the overall general and particular tasks of the national democratic movement in effecting social change for the benefit of the Filipino people.

Our goal is to expand and consolidate the progressive movement of overseas compatriots in order to contribute our share in advancing the national democratic movement in the country. We hope that with the alliance we can achieve this goal.

Our general task is to arouse, organize and mobilize our overseas compatriots to fight for their rights and welfare and to support and participate in the national democratic movement in the Philippines.

It has two basic components: the struggle for the rights and welfare of our overseas compatriots and the struggle of the Filipino people for national freedom and democracy. These complement each other because the issue of Filipino migration overseas is inextricably linked to the socio-economic conditions of the country that brought it about. Only by addressing the problems of the Filipino people can the issue of Filipino migration abroad be properly resolved.

Historical experience has shown the folly of arbitrarily separating the two. We became like charity or service institutions when we limited ourselves to the struggle for the rights and welfare of our overseas compatriots. On the other hand, we became like academics when we paid no attention to the needs of our overseas compatriots and talked only about the struggle of the Filipino people. In both cases, we fell short of achieving our general task.

To perform our general task well, we must integrate with our overseas compatriots. We must persist and be creative in reaching out to them. We must know their situation thoroughly. We must identify their interest with ours. We must correct the elitist view that it is difficult to organize among them because they are only interested in bettering their lot and not in issues concerning the Philippines. We must struggle to better their lot while getting them involved in Philippine issues.

2. Our Particular Tasks

- a. Integrate with our overseas compatriots, as well as their families and the returned migrants in the country, to get them to identify their interest with ours.
- b. Conduct investigation on the actual conditions of our overseas compatriots and their families to have a thorough understanding of their situation.
- c. Provide education, as well as documentation materials, to our overseas compatriots to help them understand their plight and that of the Filipino people, as well as the inextricable link between the two.
- d. Form mass organizations among their ranks for the promotion and protection of their rights and welfare and that of the Filipino people.
- e. Set up service institutions that would attend to their needs and problems, especially for victims of abuse and their families, and seek the assistance of international organizations that promote and protect the rights and welfare of migrant workers and their families.
- f. Launch specific issues and campaigns that would highlight the plight of our overseas compatriots on the international and local level and ensure that concrete gains are achieved in these issues and campaigns.
- g. Strengthen Migrante International as the campaign center for issues of our overseas compatriots and firm up the coordination between Migrante International and its member organizations overseas.
- h. Coordinate with national democratic organizations from the democratic classes and sectors in the country concerning the issues of our overseas compatriots and, conversely, in projecting their issues abroad.
- i. Form alliances with other Filipino organizations overseas in the pursuit of common objectives and in support of the Filipino people's struggle for national freedom and democracy.
- j. Coordinate with progressive immigrant and migrant organizations, as well as with progressive individuals and organizations of the host people, for the common objective of promoting and protecting the rights of immigrants and migrants in the receiving country against racism, neo-fascism, discrimination and for equality of opportunity and treatment.
- k. Conduct investigation on the conditions of workers in the receiving country and establish relations of mutual support and cooperation with progressive organizations of the host people, as well as with progressive organizations of other nationalities based in the receiving country.
- l. Link up national democratic organizations in the country with their progressive counterpart organizations in the receiving country.