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## Migrant Women Workers Demand Justice in the Temporary Labor Programs in the United States and Canada

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### MEDIA CONTACTS:

Julia Coburn

Centro de los Derechos del Migrante, Inc. (CDM)

From Mexico: 01-800-590-1773; From the US: 1-855-234-9699 // [julia@cdmigrante.org](mailto:julia@cdmigrante.org)

Andrea Galvez

United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Canada

+52 55-3300-6144; 55 3126 2421// [andrea.galvez@ufcw.mx](mailto:andrea.galvez@ufcw.mx)

### Migrant Women Workers Demand Justice in the Temporary Labor Programs in the United States and Canada

Mexico, D.F. – Today, United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Canada and Centro de los Derechos del Migrante (CDM) simultaneously filed public communications to denounce the United States and Canada for violating principles of the North American Agreement on Labor Cooperation (NAALC). CDM and UFCW Canada are leaders in defending temporary workers, and submitted the complaints with the support of a transnational network of allies. Both complaints are supported by dozens of organizations, including Global Workers Justice Alliance, Sin Fronteras, and Voces Mesoamericanas. In addition, the AFL-CIO, North Carolina Justice Center, and other organizations are co-petitioners in the complaint against the United States. The complaints contend that the governments of the United States and Canada have failed to comply with their obligations to defend the principle of non-discrimination in employment and to ensure the implementation of their own labor laws.

In both countries, women are systematically excluded from temporary labor programs. For example, in the United States, women represent just 4% of participants in the temporary agricultural work program, despite the fact that 28% of farmworkers in the country are women. Similarly, in Canada, just 3% of participants in the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program are women, while women's representation in the overall agricultural labor market is up to 30%.

“The struggle for migrant and temporary workers' rights is a global struggle and we should unite beyond borders to fight for a fair society” declared Paul Meinema, National President of the UFCW Canada. “The lack of female participation in these programs is a result of rampant

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sex discrimination throughout the recruitment and hiring processes,” says Rachel Micah-Jones, Founder and Executive Director of CDM. However, the United States and Canada have failed to address these discriminatory practices. In doing so, they flout their obligation under the NAALC to ensure the implementation of domestic labor law, which prohibits sex discrimination in recruitment and hiring, and guarantees equality between the sexes.

“They told me that employers didn’t want women, and that it was our fault, because one went and two came back,” said Reinalda Sánchez, a worker who is part of the case against Canada. Adareli Ponce, a member of the Committee for Defense of Migrants and part of the case against the United States, says that in her community, a variety of jobs in the United States are available to men, but very few are open to women. Women don’t even have the chance to apply for most jobs, because according to recruiters the work is “too demanding for women,” or “women can’t handle the work.” “They denied me the opportunity to work, which isn’t denied to men in my community,” adds Enriqueta Candia, another worker in the case against Canada.

The United States and Canadian governments not only have knowledge of this discrimination, but also participate in it through their administration of the temporary work programs. The migrant worker women, CDM, UFCW Canada, and their allies demand that the United States and Canada assume their responsibilities under the NAALC, and take measurable steps to address sex discrimination in the temporary labor programs.

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*Centro de los Derechos del Migrante, Inc. (CDM) envisions a world where migrant workers’ rights are respected and laws and policies reflect their voices. CDM empowers Mexico-based migrant workers to defend and protect their rights as they move between their home communities in Mexico and their workplaces in the United States through education, outreach, and leadership development; intake, evaluation, and referral services; litigation support and direct representation; and policy advocacy. Read more about CDM at [www.cdmigrante.org](http://www.cdmigrante.org).*

*UFCW Canada is the country’s leading and most progressive private-sector union with more than 250,000 members across Canada, working primarily in the food production and food retail sectors. Leader in the defense of temporary foreign workers rights’ for more than two decades, UFCW Canada also operates 10 support centers for migrant workers in Canadian rural areas in collaboration with the Agriculture Workers Alliance. Read more about UFCW Canada at [www.ufcw.ca](http://www.ufcw.ca).*

*Please see the complaints for a full list of allied organizations.*



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Centro de los Derechos del Migrante, Inc. is a transnational 501(c)(3) non-profit migrant rights organization with offices in Mexico City, Mexico, Juxtlahuaca, Oaxaca and Baltimore, Maryland.

We envision a world where migrant workers rights are respected and laws and policies reflect their voices. With our bilingual, multinational staff and geographical reach in the US and Mexico, we remove the US-Mexico border as a barrier to justice for Mexico-based migrant workers.

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