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Towards a brighter future for the development of the domestic and home care sector across the world

Introduction

Domestic work stands as a cornerstone of employment worldwide, constituting 2.3 percent of total global employment. According to the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189), individuals who work in or for a household or households on an occupational basis fall under the umbrella of domestic workers. As such, care activities are comprised of two broad kinds. First, direct care in domestic work includes face to-face, personal care such as child care, nursing a sick partner, helping an older person with activities of daily living or carrying out health check-ups. Second, indirect care activities which do not entail face-to-face personal care, such as cleaning, cooking, doing the laundry and other household maintenance tasks (sometimes referred to as “non-relational care” or “household work” or instrumental activities of daily living), that support independence and quality of life. These two types of care activities cannot be separated from each other, and they frequently overlap in practice, both in households and in institutions. Currently, according to ILO, over 75.6 million individuals aged 15 and above are engaged in domestic work in private households worldwide. Remarkably, one in every 22 employees works within the domain of domestic and care work, with women making up 76.2 per cent of this workforce.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shed light on the critical role of domestic and home care workers, while at the same time revealing the inherent vulnerabilities of the sector on a global scale. Although there has been a cultural shift regarding the perception of domestic and care work since the pandemic, the sector continues to be undervalued. Furthermore, labour shortages pose significant challenges to the sector, especially as the demand for home support is expected to grow in light of demographic shifts, population ageing, and increasing long-term care needs.

Recommendations for the way forward

In light of the above-mentioned, the undersigned organisations representative of the domestic and home care sector from countries composing the G7, call upon governments to recognise the sector and improve the working conditions by:

1) ratifying the ILO Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189), the first international legal instrument devoted to domestic work. While all existing international labour standards also apply to domestic workers, the Convention seeks to achieve equality of treatment between them and other workers, calling to ensure labour and social protection for domestic workers under conditions that are no less favourable than those provided to other workers, particularly with respect to working time, wages, social security and access to justice.

2) promoting social dialogue and collective bargaining agreements.

Regular and structured dialogues between workers and employers' representatives in the domestic and home care sector often lead to significant improvements of working conditions in the sector. These agreements often result in competitive wages, better working conditions and benefits for domestic workers, while also establishing employment practices that contribute to formalization, thereby ensuring legal recognition and protection for workers. Moreover, social dialogue is instrumental in strengthening vocational training and occupational health and safety prevention in the domestic and home care sector. By engaging in dialogue, social partners can identify and address skill gaps, ensuring that there are enough skilled workers to effectively manage the everyday needs of families and provide tailored assistance to those requiring care and support. This not only benefits workers by enhancing their employability and job satisfaction but also improves the quality of services provided to individuals in need and enables employers to tackle labour shortages and retain workers.

3) developing market conditions that financially support households and enable companies to provide domestic and household services in a competitive and fair welfare manner.

Promoting socio-fiscal incentives for domestic and home care services, such as subsidies and tax breaks, is one of the main instruments that can be implemented by public authorities to foster the formalisation of the sector. The lack of or inadequate public investment poses significant challenges to affordability of the sector and its future development. To address these challenges, it's crucial to recognize the earn-back effects of socio-fiscal incentives. By implementing these incentives, the prevalence of undeclared work can be effectively reduced, the quality of services provided can be increased, and workers' working conditions can be significantly improved.

4) tackling undeclared work. Despite progress in extending labour and social security laws to domestic workers, a significant proportion globally– 61.4 million (81.2%) – remain undeclared. This figure, most likely to expand given the high demand for domestic and home care services, underscores the critical need for governments to urgently devise and implement robust mechanisms to monitor and enforce labour regulations to address undeclared work effectively. Measures tackling undeclared work in the sector should find long-term and sustainable solutions for the benefit of workers (by granting them access to formal jobs not deviating from standard employment rights and protection) and users (by enabling them to adequately meet their needs on the formal market at an affordable price).

5) promoting fair recruitment practices in accordance with human rights principles which is essential to safeguard the dignity of workers' rights and avoid exploitation or any form of modern slavery. Given the current labour shortages the sector is facing and the high percentage of migrant workers, labour recruitment should be facilitated by reducing the gaps and restrictions in access to temporary work permits in host countries. Other measures, such as reciprocal

pension agreements, should be fostered with worker's countries of origin, ensuring their entitlements upon return and supporting families in the home countries.

6) ensuring work-life balance and promoting a gender-balanced sector. Most of the unpaid informal care is done by women, often at the expense of their paid job, health, and work-life balance. This disparity, known as the 'unpaid care penalty' reflects the amount of potential earnings foregone by women due to unequal distribution of unpaid care work. However, this imbalance can be redressed by establishing alternative support systems, such as having access to affordable and high-quality services as it contributes to balancing the existing gender gaps. The current gender division within the sector perpetuates broader gender inequalities, making this situation economically and socially unsustainable. It is paramount not only to shift the narrative to encourage an equal sharing of unpaid housework and care work between men and women, but also to turn the female-dominated sector into a gender-balanced one by recruiting more male workers.

In conclusion, we, the domestic and home care representatives organisations from the G7 countries, underscore the critical need to recognise and acknowledge the societal and economic value of the sector. By advocating for the above-mentioned initiatives, we commit to fostering a more equitable, sustainable and thriving domestic and home care sector. By collectively advocating for improved working conditions, fair recruitment practices and socio-fiscal incentives, we commit to advancing the development of the domestic and home care sector.

In reaffirming our commitment, we emphasize the **unanimous agreement** among the signatories to this declaration on the need and urgency of the outlined initiatives.

Signatories

The **Canadian Home Care Association (CHCA)**, established in 1990, is a national not-for-profit organization representing home care stakeholders across Canada. We are committed to ensuring accessible, high-quality home care that empowers individuals to live with dignity and independence. Our vision is an integrated home and community care system that provides seamless, patient- and family-centred care that is accessible, accountable, evidence-informed, and sustainable. More info: <https://cdnhomecare.ca/>

The **German Home Economics Council** (*Deutscher Hauswirtschaftsrat*) was founded on November 19, 2016, in Frankfurt (Main) and is an association of stakeholders in the home economics sector. The Council represents the interests of the home economics sector in politics. It is the point of contact for politics and society, a partner for vocational training institutions and for employers and employees in Germany. Its stakeholders come from associations and organizations, schools and educational institutions, youth welfare facilities, elderly care, agencies for household-related services, consulting firms, out-of-home catering companies, industry and universities. The German Home Economics Council represents over 500.000 members and workers. More info: www.hauswirtschaftsrat.de/

DOMINA – National Association of Families Domestic Employers (*Associazione Nazionale Famiglie Datori di Lavoro Domestico*), is an Italian employers' association assisting and protecting families in the management of the domestic employment relationship with domestic workers and family carers. DOMINA operates across the country with a solid network of

Operational Points offering specialized consultancy to households. The Association is one of the signatory Social Partners of the National Collective Agreement on Domestic Work (CCNL). Accordingly, DOMINA works on a daily basis to ensure the correct application of the CCNL and promotes it as an indispensable protection tool for those hiring domestic workers. Since 2016, DOMINA leads in-depth thematic studies on “The value of Domestic Work - The economic and social role of family employers”. In addition, since 2019, DOMINA has published the Annual Report on Domestic Work, produced by its Observatory. Finally, in the quality of signatory body of the National Collective bargaining on Domestic Work, DOMINA is a member of the bilateral bodies Cas.Sa.Colf, Ebincolf and Fondo Colf. More info: www.associazionedomina.it

The **European Federation for Services to Individuals (EFSI)** was created in 2006 to bring together national trade associations, employers’ associations as well as private providers and companies involved in the enhancement and development of domestic and home care services in Europe. Through its members, EFSI operates in 21 EU Member States. EFSI promotes, defends and develops the sector both at national and European levels. Besides, it creates opportunities for domestic and home care providers and stakeholders and gives them a voice on the EU scene. Its final goal is to ensure that the sector’s specificities are properly recognised, and that high quality, accessible and affordable services are provided under appropriate economic and legal conditions. More info: www.efsi-europe.eu/

The **Fédération des Services à la Personne et de Proximité – Fédésap** is the No. 1 federation for personal services and homecare in France, in terms of the number of companies it represents. Founded in 2007, it gathers 3,800 organisations that support more than 670,000 individuals or families every year, thanks to the professionalism of 140,000 employees. Drawing on its recognized expertise, the federation has been a privileged partner of public authorities for over 15 years. It supports the implementation of local family, disability and autonomy policies, in a spirit of co-construction with elected representatives and public decision-makers. Affiliated with the French Confederation of small and medium-sized companies (CPME), Fédésap is a collegial organization open to social dialogue and works with its social partners to structure the homecare sector to establish a stable economic model that promotes the long-term viability of its players and guarantees quality jobs that cannot be relocated. It is one of the signatories of the collective bargaining agreement for personal service enterprises (SAP). More info: www.fedesap.org/

Supporter

The **International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF)** is a membership-based global organization of domestic and household workers. A domestic or household worker is any person engaged in domestic work within an employment relationship. Since its inception as a network in 2006 (the Federation was officially formed in 2013), the IDWF has evolved into a key advocate for the rights of domestic workers globally. We believe domestic work is work, and all domestic and household workers deserve to enjoy the same rights as all other workers. As of February 2023, the IDWF is made up of 88 affiliates from 68 countries, serving a membership of over 670,000 domestic/household workers’ members. Most are organised in trade unions and others democratically in associations, networks and workers’ cooperatives.