

During the 59th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC), the United Kingdom delivered a firm and forward-looking statement reaffirming its commitment to combating human trafficking, with particular focus on the protection of migrant domestic workers especially women and girls.

Speaking during the Interactive Dialogue with the UN Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, the UK delegation welcomed the Special Rapporteur's report, which drew attention to the heightened risks of exploitation faced by migrant domestic workers in destination countries.

"Migrant domestic workers are particularly vulnerable to labour exploitation and abuse," the UK stated. "We must recognise the gendered risks of exploitation and ensure these are fully addressed in our prevention, protection, and assistance efforts."

Domestic Policy Under Review

Domestically, the UK outlined the protections currently in place for Overseas Domestic Workers (ODWs). However, the government acknowledged concerns regarding the potential link between certain visa arrangements and instances of modern slavery.

"We remain concerned about the links between visa arrangements for private domestic staff and exploitation," the UK noted. "We are actively reviewing how the Overseas Domestic Worker route operates and will provide further information in due course."

This review underscores the UK's commitment to ensuring that immigration pathways do not inadvertently increase vulnerability to abuse and that protective mechanisms remain fit for purpose in a changing global context.

Work in Freedom: Impact on the Global Stage

Internationally, the UK highlighted the continued success of its Work in Freedom programme, which focuses on preventing trafficking and exploitation along key migration routes in South Asia and the Gulf. The programme has directly supported over 770,000 individuals, equipping them with the resources, training, and support needed to avoid exploitation.

Additionally, the initiative has had a substantial impact on national policy. In partnership with governments, Work in Freedom has contributed to the development or reform of more than 27 laws and policies that aim to strengthen protections for vulnerable migrant workers and improve labour rights enforcement.

A Call for Collective Action

The UK concluded its statement with a call for increased international cooperation to address the root causes of trafficking and to provide robust support systems for migrant workers, particularly those employed in domestic roles.

“The fight against trafficking requires coordinated, cross-border solutions,” the UK emphasized. “We must continue to strengthen legal frameworks, improve oversight, and ensure all migrant workers are treated with dignity and protected from exploitation.”

The UK’s address at the HRC59 reflects a comprehensive approach combining domestic policy review with global partnership initiatives reinforcing its role as an advocate for the rights and safety of migrant workers worldwide.

The 59th UN Human Rights Council session continues in Geneva, bringing together international delegates, experts, and human rights advocates to address pressing global challenges, including human trafficking, gender-based violence, and the rights of migrants.