



Note No: 041/25

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Singapore to the United Nations and Other International Organisations in Geneva presents its compliments to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and has the honour to refer to the Office's Note (dated 9 April 2025) regarding the draft report 'Enhancing the human right to family life for migrants and their families in the Asia-Pacific region'.

The Permanent Mission has the further honour to submit the following response to correct the draft report's mischaracterisation of restrictions on marriage and pregnancy for migrant workers in Singapore as "systemic gender-based discrimination" (Section 4.4) and set out the unique context of Singapore:

Singapore's policy on work permit holders is shaped by our unique circumstances as a country that is very small and densely populated. As a country just slightly larger than Lake Geneva (only 736 square kilometers in size), Singapore hosts more than 1.1 million work permit holders – who comprise close to one-fifth of our total population of 5.9 million people. Our small geographical size and high population density shapes many of our policies, including those related to immigration. While we appreciate the contributions that work permit holders make in Singapore and treat them fairly within our laws, it is not feasible to allow all work permit holders to settle or to freely start families in Singapore.

Singapore has ensured that we are transparent and upfront in communicating to all prospective migrant workers the conditions of their work permit, including those on marriage and pregnancy, even before they enter Singapore. This policy is applied to all work permit holders (i.e., non-discriminatory) and also protects them from the vulnerabilities associated with being pregnant while they are far from home without the necessary family and social support systems.

This practical and calibrated policy is part of Singapore's wider immigration framework targeted at balancing Singapore's workforce needs against other imperatives like integration and social harmony. Migrant workers who choose to work and make a living in Singapore have accepted and agreed to abide by these conditions, with more than 90% of migrant domestic workers surveyed¹ indicating that they were satisfied living and working in Singapore.

The Permanent Mission respectfully requests that the clarification above be reflected in full in the aforementioned report.

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Singapore to the United Nations and Other International Organisations in Geneva avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights the assurances of its highest consideration.

GENEVA
23 April 2025



Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
Geneva

¹ According to the Singapore Ministry of Manpower's Migrant Domestic Workers (MDWs) and MDW Employers Study 2021, <https://www.mom.gov.sg/newsroom/press-releases/2022/0608-mdw-and-mdw-employer-study-2021>.