

**COMITE DE APOYO A LOS TRABAJADORES AGRICOLAS
FARMWORKERS SUPPORT COMMITTEE**

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Protection of the Rights of Migrants
*Opportunities and Challenges after the High Dialogue and
Preparations for its Follow-up*

Presentation by Mariza Ibarra, CATA's Board of Directors

Good afternoon to everyone present today. I would like to tell you that I feel honored to be in this building, in this room and in front of so many people from so many different places. But that's not how it is, better said, I feel a lot of responsibility to be able to express to you what millions of people like me are feeling.

When I learned what the meaning was of this impressive and famous building of the United Nations, I believed that here were the most intelligent and good people who exist in the world, since here is where they defend human rights. I have no doubt that there are some like that here.

Talking about human rights and about migration are two things that go together completely. Nowhere is it said that people who are migrants do not have human rights; neither is it said that if you are in a different country from the one you were born in, that you have no human rights. In fact, all human beings have human rights, wherever they may be, whether they have papers or not.

My story represents a segment of the immigrant population: those who emigrate without having a formal education, those who have always lacked fundamental things like enough food, clothing, and a decent place to live. The survival instinct of man is to seek the well-being of the ones he loves and his own well-being, and what he must do in this case is leave to go somewhere else, in this case to the United States, risking his life to find work and giving everything a human being is capable of giving to his family, but finding out soon that he is a modern slave. They do not hurt him with a whip, but now they hurt him with things that remain unseen and nobody can be directly blamed for. He is hurt psychologically.

They hurt him when he goes to work driving, anguished by not having in order the paperwork for the vehicle. He lives terrified that they will enter his room and remove him and send him back to his country, with time spent in prison first, making him feel like a third class person. He does not even know how to speak the language; he cannot defend himself from unjust employers. Therefore I ask myself, when did this chain of human rights violations begin? When one of the worst currency devaluations in my country took place, and we could not feed or clothe my daughters, their

rights were being violated. When my husband had to come to this country and he left my daughters without protection, their rights were being violated. When I heard a speaker before the Hearing with Civil Society on Migration and Development this year say that it was better that girls not have enough to eat than to be without their parents, I could not believe what I was hearing.

So who is responsible for the fact that people emigrate? Their governments? The wealthy countries with their economic policies? The migrants themselves? The answer to these questions no longer interests me. Now what is important to know is what are we going to do? To those of us who are interested in a solution, to whom should we seek out for their aid and to demand a solution to these human rights violations? For this reason it is important to unite and make ourselves heard, to make them understand that they are mistaken, that we all deserve to live with dignity where we choose, that they do not have the right to select who will have papers and who will not, that the just thing is for people to be free to live where they want to, that we all deserve the famous documents and that they should give them to us, and that what the country would gain is to have brave people who help to develop the economy and who make the country where they are stronger and healthier.

To conclude I would like us to reflect on this saying:

If I do not walk the path well, it makes no difference that I spoke for the sake of speaking.

That is to say, if the right people do not hear me, what difference does it make that I talked and talked?

Biography:

Mariza Ibarra was born and has lived most of her life in Mexico City. She came to the United States in 2004 to reunite with her husband and daughters. In her words, "I am a daughter, a sister, a mother, a wife, and a friend to thousands of immigrants like myself." Mariza has been participating in the organization CATA, el Comité de Apoyo a los Trabajadores Agrícolas (The Farmworker Support Committee), and over one year ago was elected to their Board of Directors.