



International Organisation of Employers
Organisation Internationale des Employeurs
Organización Internacional de Empleadores
The Global Voice of Business



GFMD BUSINESS MECHANISM AWARENESS MEETING

**Enhancing Public-Private Dialogue on the Business Case of Migration:
Finding the interface between governments and business
in order to maximize opportunities and minimize challenges**

**Co-hosted by the International Organisation of Employers (IOE) and
the World Economic Forum Global Agenda Council on Migration (WEF GACM)**

19 April 2016, Geneva, Switzerland

SUMMARY REPORT

Introduction

This first meeting of the GFMD Business Mechanism brought together decision-makers of global businesses, high-level migration policy-makers from various governments, as well as representatives of business federations, with a view to identifying areas of interaction between business and governments, as well as common denominators to strengthen public-private dialogue on migration. The goal was to raise awareness on the recently endorsed Business Mechanism, which aim is to fill in the empty seat of business at the GFMD table. The participants addressed issues related to skills mobility, connectivity and digital transformation, matching skills to labour market needs (demographic challenges), integration and social welfare, public perception and discourse, as well as concerns about the (lack of) definitions of terminologies in relation to migration. The conclusions covered a wide range of topics, including the need for clear, transparent and coherent migration policies that permit movement of skills and economic growth; the need for a continued private-public dialogue; the need for incentives to attract the global workforce; the importance of sharing success stories.

Takeaway of the awareness meeting

The need for public-private partnerships: There is a need to enhance the dialogue between governments and the private sector to ensure that, while adopting policies on migration, governments take into account labour market needs. There is a strong interest from the private sector to play an active role in the framework of the GFMD, which can provide a platform to translate concerns into concrete action plans to improve the system. In this context, terminologies related to migration (economic migrant, high, medium, low skills, refugee, professional worker, mobility) need to be clearly defined. In the end, migration should be to the mutual interest of receiving states, sending states, migrants and businesses (quadruple win). Governments and the private sector have a shared responsibility to identify migration policy solutions that allow governments to exert their regulatory mandate, are adequately flexible and responsive to business needs, and ensure the best outcomes for migrants at all skill levels. By and large there is a need for a global labour market.

The business, a policy influencer: The civil society has become a credible actor of the GFMD, whereas the voice of the private sector remains missing in the multi-stakeholders' discussion. The Business Mechanism, through its Advisory Group, should therefore build a strong business case for migration by gathering information, listening to companies and encouraging their participation in the process. While governments, particularly in Europe, are struggling against the toxicity of the topic, companies could rally support for migration and bring a reality check to the global discussion; companies should also fulfil their responsibilities in terms of fair and decent conditions of work. The goal is to bring together companies of all sizes, from all regions, across an array of industries to bring their expertise. The idea is not to deal with all migrations issues at the same time, because of the high level of abstraction, but rather to focus down on specific contributions that companies could make, and to help governments understand how the business talks and works.

Workforce mobility and skills recognition: The labour market faces critical challenges, including skills gaps and mismatches across the labour spectrum, due in part to shifting demographic trends, leading to a global competition for talents. Labour mobility can be the response to the skills mismatch. However, it may be challenging to recruit foreign labour, while countries face high unemployment rates. Migration is leading to social tensions and it becomes difficult for governments to adopt migration friendly policies. It is crucial to find ways to facilitate the transfer of workers, in particular low skilled, who tend to experience more challenges. The future for low-skilled migrants lies in their capacity to adjust to new situation and to use their soft skills. In this context, skills recognition and validation will be even more challenging in the future. Some companies' concerns are driven by moving the employees with as little obstacles as possible. Yet the regulation field is established by rules in relation with labour migration, which are not relevant to these specific deployments. If companies face problems moving skilled workers, it is a deterrent to business. When there are able to set up businesses around the world it will open opportunities to hire middle and lower skilled workers. States could enhance regulations by including chapters on workers' mobility in regional trade agreements. (ex: ECOWAS)

Connectivity and digital globalization: Digital is the new era of globalization, and will boost the past trends of people flows. The role of technology in the world of migration is impactful. Matching platforms start to globalize quickly, creating the easiness of matching. Three factors of change: The larger set of new digital-born companies become multinationals and hire global talents; The new digital marketplaces involve larger amount of cross-border talents; Digital allows labour economies of scale and scope among multiple locations through better information and cooperation flows. Remittances create connectivity and may be as relevant and productive as development policies. Today, a globally connected workforce is the advantage companies have. Business leaders must be able to operate in a global world technologically advanced, demographically complex and geographically diverse.

Refugee crisis: Although the current forced migration crisis is not regulated by labour migration policies, the topic was largely addressed, in particular the access to the labour market; trainings and programs that match skills with employment opportunities; and the treatment of refugees as potential migrants, rather than as asylum seekers. Public-private initiatives will be called for; yet the refugee crisis is a humanitarian crisis and should be dealt as such by sovereign states and International Organisations. The private sector will not be able to absorb the millions of people forced to leave their homes. Refugees are not the solution to the labour market needs and to the skills mismatches. Originally the GFMD focuses on migrants and how migration relates to development.

Public discourse, perception: Xenophobia, exclusion, discriminatory laws are not conducive for a productive business environment. The business has an interest and responsibility to counter the negative public discourse and to highlight success stories. Business should talk positively about the power of diversity, of entrepreneurship, of new ideas flowing into a country, highlighting the contributions of migrant to host societies. The Business Mechanism could play an active role in this regard, by contributing to discussions on social media and by sending letters/OpEd to the media. HR Manager (not PR) could send positive stories about immigration to change the dialogue, the narrative and the perception.

Next steps

Business Advisory Group position paper: In preparation for the Summit in Dhaka, the Business Mechanism will focus on the challenges of global skills mobility and competition for skills, while acknowledging the existence of a wide range of other topics related to migration, which could be further developed in next GFMD summits. The goal is to make recommendations to facilitate and support the efforts of states to adopt appropriate policies and ensure their implementation. The analysis will include references to the importance of specific matters related to migration, such as remittances, sharing of skills, excess of costs, human rights, ethical recruitment, decent work conditions, which impact both countries of destination and of origin.

Challenges/markers of success: The Business Mechanism should be beneficial for all (migrants, business, intermediaries). It should find solutions to reduce the information asymmetries under which migrants work. It should bring States and civil society in a non-confrontational manner.

Next meeting: GFMD Business Mechanism Thematic Meeting, 18 July in New York, co-hosted by the IOE and WEF GACM. The Business Advisory Group will be presenting first thoughts for a position paper to be presented in Dhaka in December.