

**Ellen Yost Talking points**

**IOE Forum during the International Labour Conference**

**Wednesday June 6, 2018**

**Shaping international labour migration policy to ensure business  
access to diverse talent**

**14:00-17:00 in Room XI, ILO**

**Geneva**

I'd like to thank Roberto Suarez-Santos for his kind words, and the IOE for inviting me here to speak about the business perspective on labour migration.

Migration has become an enormously contentious and hot button issue in many parts of the world. The debate over migration often confuses several issues: refugees, issues attached to economic migrants, and the difficulty of moving skilled workers. So it's important to be precise. As business and the IOE, we are concerned with labor migration.

Employers are frequent users of national migration systems and regard migration as a positive phenomenon. It is a vehicle for fulfilling personal aspirations, for balancing labour supply and

demand, for sparking innovation, and for transferring and spreading skills. To remain successful and competitive in the global economy, businesses require clear and consistent migration policies; national laws and procedures that allow them to assemble and maintain their workforces.

Public debate over migration too often focuses on irregular migration, affecting public sentiment in ways that are not conducive to adoption of the flexible policies that are required by the continuously- changing economic environment. We are concerned that the legal and regulatory systems around the world, for migration at all skill levels, should be as coherent and as transparent as possible.

Business has a role to play in helping governments improve migration policy. We know the skills needs, what works and what doesn't. For this reason, we are gratified to have been asked by the Global Forum on Migration and Development to establish a Business Mechanism, housed at the IOE, to give business a seat at the table in order to deliberate migration policy and to deliver

the perspective of business on migration issues. Stephanie Winet has been instrumental in our efforts.

There are 258 million migrants in the world, 160 million of whom are labor migrants. The majority are working legally, but as many as 50 million are irregular. By 2020, there will be a shortage of 40 million skilled workers worldwide. Comprehensive legal partnerships are essential to business and to protecting the rights of migrant workers, regardless of their status: we must empower migrants, not victimize them. Governments must work with the private sector to enforce the law, to combat abuses, and to create a level playing field for legitimate operators.

We are mindful that different regions and different countries have different concerns, so we are not suggesting that there's a single system or magic bullet. However, there are some principles that should be applied everywhere.

The Business Mechanism has focused on key issues in the migration debate and has given our ideas on these issues to the governments currently negotiating the Global Compact on Migration at the UN in New York.

1. Our first key issue is skills mobility: that is, movement on all skill levels. The greatest need is for higher and low skills. Demographic realities and the disconnect between education and training, and labor market needs, the so-called “skills gap” have created a situation where almost all countries both send ,and receive, migrant labor. Governments should consult businesses in crafting migration policy. Regional and bi-lateral trade agreements are essential to skills mobility.
  
2. Another of our issues is access to labor markets. The private sector can:
  - a. Communicate skills needs to governments;
  - b. Train to provide skills, domestically and internationally;
  - c. Harmonize the certification process of educational competency and methods of assessment; and
  - d. Match skills with employment opportunities.
  
3. Another concern of the Business Mechanism is responsible recruitment. The abuses associated with unethical recruitment practices are bringing attention to

gaps in governance and failures of enforcement affecting large numbers of vulnerable people. We would

- a. Insure that national laws are compatible with treaties;
- b. Urge ratification of ILO Convention 181; and
- c. Support the IRIS Initiative.

4. Another concern is entrepreneurship and circular migration. The economic benefits of migration are diverse. They devolve to migrants and their families. But they also enrich both home and host countries, and can serve as an important lever for economic development. We are exploring ways in which both businesses and governments can maximize the benefits of migration through policies and programs aimed at fostering entrepreneurship; encouraging the return of entrepreneurs and support from diaspora communities; harnessing remittances; attracting capital to provide employment to the displaced; and establishing partnerships to build talent.

The Global Compact on Migration is a historic document and we welcome the opportunity to be involved in its creation. Objectives 5, 6 & 18 reflect recommendations set forth by the Business

Mechanism and the current draft specifically refers to the on-going importance of the Business Mechanism. The Global Compact's language on skills mobility, skills recognition and labor market needs are new to UN documents.

Employers want to be involved with governments on an ongoing basis in order to help identify skills gaps in the labor market and to suggest migration selection criteria. Business can play a role in advocacy by providing positive narratives. Follow-up and review of capacity-building is key, as are establishing metrics.

To conclude:

The participation of the private sector is essential to the development of well-regulated migration systems.

Employers bring to the table essential experience with the practical workings of immigration laws, procedures, and policies, as well as knowledge of emerging market and staffing trends. They have a vital interest in the development and promulgation of clear and consistent migration policies and practices.

Since the establishment of the Business Mechanism at the IOE in 2016, the GFMD multi-stakeholders platform has been working well for the exchange of best practices. The Business Mechanism will continue working to inform the migration debate at the international level, and to enable and assist IOE members to engage constructively at the national and regional levels.

The next meeting of the GFMD Business Mechanism will take place in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on October 23. The meeting aims at compiling business input on labour migration and regional integration in Asia. The outcome will be presented at the GFMD Summit in Morocco on December 5-7 in Marrakesh, Morocco. A save-the-date has already been sent on May 30.

Thank you.

