



## **United Nations Summit for refugees and migrants**

**New York, 19 September 2016**

Statement of the **International Organisation of Employers (IOE)**, delivered by Ms. Ronnie Goldberg, Chair of the IOE working group on international labour migration

Roundtable 5: Global Compact for safe, regular and orderly migration: towards realizing the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development and realizing the human rights of migrants

- I have the honour today of representing Linda Kromjong, Secretary General of the International Organisation of Employers. On her behalf, and on behalf of the IOE's global membership, I would like to thank our hosts, the current and outgoing Presidents of the General Assembly, His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson and His Excellency Mr. Mogens Lykketoft for convening a meeting that brings all stakeholders to the table.
- IOE is the world's largest and most representative private sector business association. Its members are some 150 business and employer organisations from over 140 countries. The IOE represents Employers in the ILO, and is recognized as the voice of business in social and labour policy debates across the UN system, as well as in the G20.
- Employers regard migration as a necessary and positive phenomenon. Inclusive growth and sustainable development require open markets, competitiveness, and innovation – and all of these imply robust and coherent policies to facilitate the movement of people. Migration is a vehicle for fulfilling personal aspirations, for balancing labour supply and demand, for sparking innovation, and for transferring and spreading skills.



- It is thus in the interest of all stakeholders – including governments from countries of origin, transit and destination, and business communities around the world – that we develop and implement coherent and comprehensive responses to the challenges of migration.
- The private sector has a particular role to play in this regard. Last year, the Global Forum on Migration and Development endorsed the creation of a GFMD Business Mechanism, coordinated by the IOE and the WEF Global Agenda Council on Migration.
- Its aim is to facilitate sustained interaction between migration policy makers and business leaders – in other words, to fill the empty seat of business at the GFMD table.
- We believe our participation will help governments to better understand how migration policies and practices affect business operations at national level, as well as enable private sector representatives to actively contribute to migration policy debates by contributing their extensive experience and expertise on migration issues.
- The GFMD Business Mechanism thus stands ready to collaborate with all stakeholders on the development of the global compact for regular migration, to be adopted in 2018. In particular, we look forward to engaging with all governments to explore ways in which the GFMD Business Mechanism can be helpful as we collaborate in working towards the same goal.
- Why does business have such an interest and such a stake in the success of this venture? The answer lies in the convergence of what are often characterized as separate business and human rights cases for ensuing fair, humane, and orderly migration systems.



- First, the business case: The need for labour migration and the integration of migrants in labour markets around the world is already urgent, and it will only grow in coming years. The drivers are mostly demographic: developed economies are characterized by ageing populations and falling birth rates. The shrinking domestic labour pool means shortages of workers at all skills levels, and in many places a serious skills gap, i.e. a misalignment of skills and knowledge with the needs of the labour market. This gap raises a need for high- and low-skilled foreign workers in myriad industries.
- By filling labour market needs, immigrants increase productivity and raise consumption, thereby generating additional jobs and benefiting society at large. Migrants contribute to diversity, bring new skills, and increase innovation and productivity.
- But labour markets are not necessarily equipped to employ migrants to their full potential. Better adapting labour migration systems to employers' needs is important for all parties. Restrictive migration policies can have a negative impact on international skills mobility. Recruiting migrant workers may be costly, lengthy and plagued by administrative uncertainties. And such dysfunction may also contribute in some cases to policy failures, for which both companies and policymakers share some degree of responsibility.
- Moreover, as the current refugee crisis demonstrates, both home and host labour markets can be significantly affected when large numbers of individuals are displaced from their home countries because of conflict or environmental disaster. To the extent that part of the problem lies in insufficient certification of training and skills recognition, the private sector can be a useful partner for governments.



- Thus, engagement with employers can lead to better migration policy and better implementation. The employers' responsibility here is not only to illuminate obstacles and help identify future needs, but also to do their share in workforce skills development and life-long learning programmes. Engaging with employers, notably SMEs, can also help identify skills gaps, in terms of language proficiency, formal skills recognition or technical skills.
- Companies can also provide modern communication technologies that improve connectivity between migrants and their left-behind families, foster the transfer of knowledge, skills and experience, and facilitate transnational business. As such, new technologies developed by the private sector have a huge impact on how migrants' contributions to prosperous societies can be leveraged.
- In short, coordinated, well regulated, and well-managed migration policies are an essential part of a well-functioning labour market, and deeper engagement with the private sector is an important component in devising and implementing such policies.
- Such migration policies are also necessary to ensure the protection and promotion of human rights. Employers have an important stake in ensuring fair labour conditions and decent work for the migrant workforce – a responsibility shared among governments, employers and trade unions.
- Employers, as citizens, of course have an ethical stake in ensuring that the communities in which they live and do business respect human rights. But the rights of migrants are far from being only an ethical responsibility; they are a legal obligation and have an economic impact. Abuse of migrant labour, human trafficking, unethical recruitment and supply



chains that lack transparency can cause severe reputational and financial damage to companies.

- Employers are active in a large number public and private sector initiatives that address these abuses. For example, the IOE and the International Organization on Migration (IOM) are working together to develop IRIS - the International Recruitment Integrity System. The ILO has also launched the Fair Recruitment Initiative which aims to prevent human trafficking, promote safe migration and reduce the costs of labour mobility.
- It is essential that we ensure better synergy and effectiveness among these and numerous and diverse other initiatives. Not just business engagement, but also bilateral and cross-regional dialogue and cooperation are needed to ensure proper oversight of recruitment of migrant workers and to maximize efforts to combat trafficking and forced labour.
- Finally, business has a stake and a role in countering the current climate of negative rhetoric that is having a devastating impact on rational policy-making. Regrettably, migration is far too often associated with protectionism, terrorism and xenophobia. Businesses can and should play a more prominent role in advocating for fair immigration policies by highlighting the benefits of migration to their own operations and to the societies in which they are established.
- We urge businesses to use their branding and public image, their services and products as well as their internal communication and training tools to pass positive messages about migration to the general public and to their staff.



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- In conclusion, we all have a vital interest in working together on the global compact. Companies benefit from open and modern migration policies that facilitate skills' transfer and human mobility. But individuals, economies and societies as a whole throughout history have benefited from the ability of human beings to migrate to seek better lives and opportunities. We hope and trust that our efforts can contribute to a public discourse that better reflects this reality.