

GFMD Summit Opening Ceremony Marrakech, 5 December 2018

Roberto Suarez-Santos Secretary-General, International Organisation of Employers

- GFMD co-chairs, Excellencies,
- Permettez-moi tout d'abord de remercier Messieurs Nadir et Schmidt-Bremme, co-président de ce sommet, et le gouvernement du Maroc pour son accueil à Marrakech, en vue d'une semaine qui s'annonce intense et que nous souhaitons fructueuse.
- As Secretary-General of the IOE, I have the honour of speaking to you on behalf of our member federations, 155 in more than 144 countries, representative and independent business organization gathering more than 50 million companies: the global largest network of the private sector. But our added value is not just the number of companies that we represent, but the independence and capacity of our representative members to contribute efficiently to change domestic policy, including, of course, migration policies.
- As you all probably know, the IOE coordinates the Business Mechanism, which serves as an avenue for the private sector to share its experience, contribute with its expertise and advise governments on different aspects related labour migration policy. This Mechanism was launched at the 2015 GFMD Summit and is chaired by Mr. Austin Fragomen. We are delighted to be part of the GFMD Summit for the third year now and thank all governments and civil society friends for the constructive collaboration.
- The IOE was instrumental in setting up the Business Mechanism, and is a committed and active participant. Why? Why do business care?
- It is not just because migrant workers represent 3.4% of the world's total population. It is not just because this is an unavoidable and growing phenomena, even if complex and sensitive. It is not just because migrants contributed roughly USD 6.7 trillion, or 9.4%, to global GDP in 2015. In this difficult and uncertain time, we really believe that well managed migration is a positive force of change. It is not just a vehicle for fulfilling personal aspirations, but a critical tool also for balancing labour supply and demand, for sparking innovation, creativeness (many migrant workers are entrepreneurs) and for transferring and spreading skills. It has

been proved that regular, ordered migration is good for companies, for employment for competitiveness. The simplistic approach of closing borders to migrants is not just unrealistic, it is detrimental to business and can have devastating consequences for companies and employment.

- More than ever, sustainable companies require the ability to recruit those skills and talent from the largest possible pool and to be able to promote global mobility within its human resources. Evidence has clearly proved that their success is tied to the success of the economies in which they live and work. The main goal of the Business Mechanism is coherent with that of the GFMD – migration policies supporting sustainable enterprises and therefore, job creation and economic prosperity.
- We have been working intensively to complement your work. Let me give you just some highlights of how we have been involved, this year:
- At the multilateral level, the Business Mechanism was the primary vehicle for private sector participation in the negotiation of the Global Compact on Migration (GCM). We fielded a delegation of observers during each of the six intense rounds of negotiations that took place between February and July this year at the UN headquarters in New York, and we held separate briefings with Ambassadors from each of the major regional groups attending the negotiations.
- The GCM, of course, is heavily focused on protection of migrant rights, a goal that the business community shares. But we believe our presence and our advice to governments played some role in helping to shape GCM language recognizing the importance of labour market business needs, predictable labour mobility schemes, and appreciation of the role and expertise of the private sector, in particular in identifying skills needs.
- Labour market needs and migration policy interests of the private sector are diverse and vary hugely among companies, industries, countries and regions. This is why we wanted to be involved in different and major regional migration events in Europe, Africa, and Asia:
 - In Geneva last spring, the Business Mechanism actively participated/contributed in a workshop on “Skills shortages and immigration policies” organised by Swiss employers, that explored the relationships between local labour market needs, skill demands and immigration frameworks.

- In Kampala, Uganda last May the IOE organised a conference of the East, Central and Southern African Employers Organizations, to involve business organisations in migration policies in the context of regional mobility schemes.
- We explored similar themes in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in October when we organized our annual Business Mechanism meeting for Employers and companies in the Asia-Pacific region.
- Finally, we supported the GFMD to ensure private sector participation in all workshops organised this year. We highlighted the importance of developing migration policies as part of a broader skills strategy.
- The outcome of these activities enabled us to publish a policy paper on migration, which highlights the following pillars:
 1. First, the needs for skills mobility and the challenges faced by companies to access skills, in the context of complex political frameworks and with the perspective of drastic talent shortages in the future of work;
 2. Second, the business engagement in supporting governments in putting in place enforcement mechanisms, thereby protecting the most vulnerable migrant workers.
 3. Third, businesses cannot do that alone. Efficient Partnerships with governments and public institutions are key.
- What are our next steps?
- We have been among those who celebrated the launching of the GCM agreement in NY in July. And we look forward to being present at its formal adoption next week. As for the GCM conference, the IOE President will deliver remarks at the opening ceremony, on behalf of the private sector. But such adoption is only the beginning. Our 155 members will participate in its implementation, both through the Business Mechanism, and directly in their contacts with their own governments.
- We look forward to working with Ecuador, the incoming GFMD chair, as well as with the IOM, and the other international bodies that will be engaged in the implementation.

- We plan to continue our regional focus and to deepen our work on skills mobility as a response to the skills shortages that persist in all regions of the world. One of the main focus activities for next year will be “anticipating skills” and, of course, we plan to do some work with a focus on migrant workers.
- The IOE has the means and channels to consolidate private sector positions and to provide policy advices to governments and institutions.
- Let me conclude by thanking the Governments who have specially supported our work this year or have strongly committed to support us in the future: Switzerland, the UAE and Qatar. We count on other governments to join us to contribute to the participation of the private sector, including SMEs and employers from least developed countries, in bringing their expertise to migration debates.
- We invite you all to attend the business session of the GFMD Summit tomorrow at 5pm, as indicated in the GFMD programme. For those staying in Marrakech over the weekend, we will be pleased to welcome you at a Business Side Event on partnering with the private sector in the implementation of the GCM. Please join us on Saturday at 3:30pm in Conference Room Diamant.
- We look forward to further collaboration between IOE and the GFMD, as well as between our national members and your governments.
- I wish you a successful Summit.