

INTRODUCTION PAPER



Global Forum on Migration and Development Business Mechanism

Background on the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD)

The Global Forum on Migration and Development is a voluntary, inter-governmental, non-binding and informal consultative process open to all States Members and Observers of the United Nations. UN agencies and other international and regional bodies may be invited as observers. It was created upon the proposal of the UN Secretary-General at the September 2006 General Assembly High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development (HLD). The Forum was initiated by Belgium and is led by governments. Its purpose is to address, in a transparent manner, the multidimensional aspects, opportunities and challenges related to international migration and its inter-linkages with development, to bring together government expertise from all regions, to enhance dialogue and cooperation and partnership and to foster practical and action-oriented outcomes at the national, regional and global levels. National Focal Points have been designated by participating governments to coordinate Forum-related preparations at the national level.

The first session of the GFMD was held in Brussels in 2007 and chaired by the government of Belgium. Among the formative initiatives predating the GFMD are:

I. The UN Population and Development Conference in Cairo in 1994, during which a Program of Action was

endorsed, including a chapter on international migration (Chapter X) which ranges across issues such as remittances, temporary migration, transfer of knowledge, skills and technology etc. and calls for "orderly international migration that can have positive impacts on both the communities of origin and the communities of destination".

II. The Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM), established on the initiative of the then UN Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, in 2003, which presented its report and recommendations to UN Members States and the international community late 2005. The report includes 6 Principles for Action covering all aspects of human mobility and migration governance, including the interconnections between migration and development.

III. The UN General Assembly HLD 14-15 September 2006, where the UN Secretary-General and his Special Representative on International Migration and Development proposed the creation of the GFMD. This proposal was endorsed by a large majority of the General Assembly, as was the Belgian offer to launch the GFMD process.

For more information on the GFMD visit: www.gfmd.org

Evolution of the GFMD Business Mechanism

In the past years, a number of efforts through thematic meetings, regional initiatives, informal consultations and roundtables have started to pave the way to bring business leaders to the GFMD tables. However, joint deliberations have never truly taken off and the seats for business leaders remained empty, especially at a senior level. Determined to fill the empty seat at the GFMD tables, the Turkish Chair-in-office and Switzerland built on the efforts by the former Swedish chairmanship to fulfill the recommendation of the GFMD assessment from 2011-2012.

At the 8th Annual Summit Meeting of the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) held in Istanbul, Turkey on 14-16 October 2015 a "GFMD Business Mechanism" was endorsed whose aim is to fill in the empty seat of business at the table and include private

sector in GFMD migration and development policy dialogues. Following a proposal by the **World Economic Forum Global Agenda Council on Migration** and the **International Organisation of Employers** (IOE), the IOE hosts a GFMD Business Coordinating Unit starting February 2016 as a pilot project under the GFMD Chairmanship of the Government of Bangladesh. This pilot project follows a series of exploratory meetings held in 2015.

From 15-16 May 2015, the Turkish GFMD Chair and the Government of Switzerland, GFMD 2011 Chair, co-hosted a GFMD Business Meeting in Istanbul on the subject of global competition for skills and international mobility of skills, with a view to identify potential avenues for regular public-private sector interaction under the auspices of the GFMD.

The meeting brought together decision-makers from companies, business associations and high-level migration policy-makers from various governments as well as selected representatives from relevant international organisations and civil society.

The economic impact of the mobility of skills and its implications for migration policies was the focus of the May 2015 Istanbul interaction. The meeting provided a platform for policy makers and business to discuss the challenges and opportunities of innovative policy-making on skills matching, recruitment mechanisms and labour migration regulations from the perspective of two sectors – information and communication technologies as well as the food, beverage and hospitality industry. The overall goal was to understand the expectations of the private sector vis-a-vis governments in terms of business-relevant labour migration policy, to determine converging and diverging interests and to identify areas of (common) action. The lively debate yielded concrete migration policy issues of relevance to both the private and the public sector:

The need for workforce mobility:

The global economy requires flexible mobility of jobs and workforce at all skill levels in both the long- and short-term in order to enhance business competitiveness and economic prosperity. Mobility and diversity should be a key feature of today's workplaces. The need for closer public-private collaboration is important in order to remove barriers to mobility both for skilled and low skilled workers.

Matching skills to labour market needs:

The private sector should be encouraged to be strong advocates for identifying labour market needs and to make a strong case in favour of migration and its corresponding policy changes, rather than making separate deals with governments.

Supply and demand matching processes for skills as well as long-term skills development is key within any labour migration policy. Strong labour market systems that take labour migrants into account as well as coherent migration policies that adequately acknowledge labour market needs are necessary, with

a view to strengthen inter-ministerial coherence and effective policies.

Similarly, cooperation between local governments and businesses are critical to fill labour market gaps.

Public-private effort is necessary not only for the recognition of skills and qualifications but also for professional experience, which is of particular importance for low- and medium-skilled workers, and for asylum seekers.

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) especially lack knowledge of overseas recruitment and capacities for company-owned training. This is why SMEs could join forces to collectively invest in recruitment strategies and skills development through associations and joint training facilities.

Fair recruitment and decent work:

Fair recruitment and decent work conditions for labour migrants is of mutual interest to the public and private sector, as abuse and exploitation entail reputational damage and are detrimental to productivity and prosperity.

The lack of governance and the existence of some or no laws in countries of origin, transit and destination require businesses, governments, employers and workers to jointly deal with the recruitment industry towards a win-win strategy with shared responsibility amongst all social partners. Promising initiatives are IOM's International Recruitment Integrity System (IRIS) or ILO's Integrated Program on Fair Recruitment (FAIR).

While governments must provide a protective and enabling regulatory framework, businesses through their CSR strategies have a responsibility to fight labour exploitation and trafficking in their supply chains.

Integration and social welfare:

Governments and businesses should complement each other in ensuring economic and social integration of labour migrants. While governments are responsible for creating an enabling regulatory framework, the private sector can offer additional or complementary social benefits, such as packages to encourage foreign

workers to work with local workers, a “migrant social backpack” of social rights and benefits with basic government provisions and additional company benefits or pension funds for migrant remittances provided by financial institutions. Family reunion is an important incentive to attract and retain foreign labour force as well as an effective measure of integration.

Public discourse, perception and attitude:

Businesses and governments need to engage in public understanding on positive aspects of migration.

Governments need to show a pro-migration attitude and the private sector can make a major impact if it were to send a strong message to governments and the public at large, that migration is good for business and thus for overall prosperity and economic and social development of host countries. Demonstrating return on investments in labour migration is an urgent priority, along with the dissemination of evidence-based regional and global data indicating benefits from talent flows.

Objectives of the GFMD Business Mechanism

The Istanbul Meeting concluded that business is concerned by migration and highlighted why there is a business case for engaging on migration policy. Issues of workforce mobility, skills and labour market needs matching, fair recruitment and decent work conditions, social welfare, financial inclusion and public perception are matters of public and business policy. Governments and the private sector have a shared responsibility to

identify migration policy solutions that A) allow governments to exert their regulatory mandate, B) are adequately flexible and responsive to business needs, and C) ensure the protection of migrants at all skill levels. In order to strengthen the added-value of the GFMD for sound migration policy, the GFMD Business Mechanism aims to promote public-private dialogue on migration policy through:

- I. Mobilising business federations from around the world to make sure they are fully engaged on migration issues
- II. Raising the awareness of business federations on the work of the GFMD
- III. Carrying out surveys and studies on best practices on business and migration issues
- IV. Organising a mid-year GFMD Thematic business meeting
- V. Participating and actively contributing to the GFMD Summit meeting, common space and civil society days
- VI. Advocating for business and migration positions in order to promote sound migration policies that take into account economic perspectives