

Ninth GFMD Summit – Opening ceremony

10 December 2016, Dhaka

Report of the GFMD Business Mechanism

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I have the honour today of representing the GFMD Business Mechanism and would like to thank the GFMD Chair for the opportunity to report on the work of the Business Mechanism after its first pilot year.

Under the Turkish Chairmanship, the GFMD endorsed the creation of a Business Mechanism at the Eighth Annual Summit Meeting with the coordination of the World Economic Forum Global Agenda Council on Migration and the International Organisation of Employers.

The GFMD Business Mechanism was launched to enhance public-private dialogue and deepen the engagement of international companies in the development of migration policy. The Business Mechanism brings its expertise to the shared goals of the UN system, governments and civil society in creating transparent, effective and humane migration policies which support business and development in creating job opportunities and economic prosperity.

During its first year, the Business Mechanism has operated as a start-up: identifying the role of business immigration policy and while thinking toward the future, adequate solutions, organizing a business constituency ready to engage on migration-related issues, shaping a business agenda, building a lasting institutional framework, creating awareness among the business world and looking for funding to ensure the sustainability of the pilot.

The Business Mechanism started with an inclusive and transparent consultation phase with governments, the civil society, academics, think tanks and international organisations, with a view to refining the private sector's position on a business case for migration.

Key policy issues were identified: (1) the global need for workforce mobility; (2) the matching of skills to labour market needs; (3) fair recruitment and decent work opportunities; (4) integration and social welfare of migrants; (5) the role of entrepreneurship and circular migration for development; and (6) engagement in public discourse to promote positive perceptions of migrants.

The IOE and the WEF set up a business advisory group with the purpose of presenting a well-documented business case on migration. Chaired by Austin Fragomen, who I represent here (and unfortunately could not be with us in Dhaka for medical reasons), the business advisory group is composed of a network of companies and employers' federations from across the world.

Our position paper entitled The Business Case for Migration was informed by a survey of migration and mobility professionals from over 210 companies and business federations worldwide. It addresses the recommendations and roles of the private sector in promoting a coherent and comprehensive migration strategy and toward meeting the global compact on migration. We invite you to join us on Sunday when we will present the paper for a meaningful exchange in this regard.

Why does business have such an interest and such a stake in the success of this venture?

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. By filling labour market needs, migrants 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.

Moreover, 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. The business sector can provide employment opportunities, apprenticeships and tools to match skills and labour market needs. To the extent that part of the problem lies in insufficient certification of training and skills recognition, the private sector can be an important 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, across the spectrum of skill levels.

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 play a critical role in protecting the human rights of migrants and have a deep ethical responsibility toward employees within their organization or supply chain. Moreover, employers have an ethical stake in ensuring that the communities in which they live and do business respect human rights.

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. 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.

It is thus in the interest of all stakeholders that we develop and implement coherent and comprehensive responses to the challenges of migration. The Global Compact on Migration is a historic opportunity to devise a blueprint for creating a more responsible, predictable system for responding to large movements of migrants.

The Business Mechanism has embraced its role during the first year as a start-up. We do hope and trust that with the support of Governments and other GFMD stakeholders, the Business Mechanism will grow and make a significant contribution to the dialogue on migration.

We look forward to interesting discussions over the next days. Thank you.