

**UN DESA Coordination meeting on international migration  
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- The Business mechanism to the GFMD was created in 2015 to bring the voice of businesses to the GFMD. It is led by the International Organisation of Employers and the WEF Future Council on migration. Its expertise relies on a large network of companies and business associations across the world.
- Global skills mobility is integral to business and economic growth. In 2015, it is estimated that labour migration increased global GDP by about 4 percent, or up to 3.2 trillion USD.<sup>1</sup> Business knows the value of skills mobility in the workplace: 74 percent of employers report that access to global skills is critical to their business objectives.<sup>2</sup> Migrants bring skills that mitigate gaps in native workforces, as well as introduce new ideas and perspectives. They help business compete, innovate, and expand.
- Despite widespread agreement among economists and business leaders on the benefits of international skills mobility, increasing populism and xenophobia distort the public discourse on migration in many countries. This creates a political environment where it is challenging to advance policies that lower barriers to the efficient and predictable movement of workers. In this context, business must explain how well-managed migration can complement and create opportunities for native workers— a win-win scenario.
- We need to find strategies for businesses and governments to partner to advance skills mobility and to craft an honest and compelling business narrative on skills mobility that resonates with governments and sceptical publics.
- While the global business community has long advocated for policies that facilitate labour migration, we realize that migration is a complement to the native workforce. Around the world, businesses are working with governments to invest in education and training, bring women, youth, and underrepresented groups into the labour market, and develop policies that reflect the 21st century economy.
- When migration is part of a broader skills strategy, native workers are better equipped to take new jobs created by business expansion. Instead of fearing migrants as competition for jobs, more of society can appreciate their contributions and the value of skills mobility.

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<sup>1</sup> McKinsey Global Institute, *Global Migration's Impact and Opportunity* (November 2016), available at <http://www.mckinsey.com/global-themes/employment-and-growth/global-migrations-impact-and-opportunity>

<sup>2</sup> Council for Global Immigration, *Employer Immigration Metrics: 2016 Survey Results*, available at [https://www.cfgi.org/us-immigration/our-advocacy/Documents/16-0559%20CFGI\\_EmpMetricsReport\\_FullFNL.pdf](https://www.cfgi.org/us-immigration/our-advocacy/Documents/16-0559%20CFGI_EmpMetricsReport_FullFNL.pdf)

- Labour is a driver not only for migrants themselves, but also for receiving countries and for sending countries. Developed economies are facing the labour impact of aging populations and falling birth rates. By 2020, there is expected to be a worldwide shortage of 38 to 40 million skilled workers.
- The shrinking domestic labour pool means that countries must look abroad to fill worker shortages at all skill levels. Sending countries rely on remittances from their citizens working abroad and on circular migration for the skills and experience brought by returning citizens.
- Migration systems must address the growing need for unskilled and semi-skilled labour in shortage occupations and for seasonal needs. Systems often inadequately consider these labour needs because there is a perception that local workers are available. In reality, though, countries often fill low-skill labour needs with foreign workers who lack proper status; this is one of the key drivers of irregular migration.
- The absence of sound low-skill mechanisms has serious consequences. Creation of more legal avenues for low-skilled migration tends to reduce the incidence of trafficking, irregular migration, informal employment activities, unethical recruitment practices and forced labour.
- The business community can play an important role in this effort. Companies can lend their expertise to the development of advanced technology for immigration processing, programs to match employment opportunities with available workers, and educational and competency assessments.
- Last year the Business Mechanism participated in the consultations process of the GCM and submitted [recommendations](#) that we were pleased to see reflected in the zero draft.<sup>3</sup> Let me recall the four recommendations related to skills mobility:
  1. Migration policies should be timely and flexible to accommodate new and long-standing business models, but also predictable and transparent so that employers can effectively manage compliance.
- A range of migration options must be available to facilitate mobility in all skill levels, including dedicated programs for short-term assignments, as well as client-site placements and other forms of remote work. Policies must also be flexible enough to adapt to changing skills needs, and specifically to accommodate the need for lower-skilled workers.

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<sup>3</sup> GFMD Business Mechanism, *Toward a Global Compact on Migration: Perspectives on Labour Migration* (June 2017) and *Targeted Action for the Global Compact for migration* (September 2017), both available at <http://gfmdbusinessmechanism.org/polar/>

- We urge a number of practical solutions in this area, including trusted employer programs to facilitate processing for organizations with a record of compliance, and work authorization mobility to allow foreign workers to change employers with fewer formalities. These programs conserve resources for government and business and protect migrants. Of course, we must emphasize the importance of consistent adjudications and honest and forthright execution of governmental responsibilities without favouritism or undue influence.
- 2. Employers can be a valuable partner in identifying skills needs and establishing frameworks for assessing foreign qualifications. Policies should avoid rigid qualification requirements and skills definitions, trusting employers to identify the most-qualified candidate.
- Employers should be able to set requirements and identify the most qualified job candidates. Rigid skills assessment frameworks and occupational qualifications are often in conflict with labour market realities and with the business judgments of employers. Moreover, government should work closely with the private sector in identifying skill shortages and long-term measures to address those shortages.
- 3. Migration policies should foster family unity by creating accessible pathways for accompanying family to obtain work authorization.
- Because foreign workers seldom migrate alone, family considerations are an important factor for global assignees and their employers. The inability to obtain work authorization for spouses separates and places financial burdens on migrant families, and can be a deterrent to sought-after migrants at all skill levels.
- 4. Employers should elevate the discourse around migration by highlighting how skills mobility promotes opportunity and publicly committing to fair, responsible, and compliant migration.
- Business can be extremely effective in demonstrating how migrants apply their skills to enrich the local economy and community. Sharing compelling migration success stories can help to humanize an issue that is too often distorted. Sharing, too, examples of fair, responsible and legally compliant skills migration can help to build public trust. This includes publicly supporting voluntary compliance programs and participating in training and educational programs to promote the development of the domestic labour force.