

GFMD Business Mechanism Qatar workshop

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Remarks delivered by
Ms. Stephanie Winet, Head of Stakeholder Engagement
International Organisation of Employers (IOE)

Opening Session

- Minister, Second Vice-Chairman of the Qatar Chamber, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,
- I am honoured to represent the International Organisation of Employers at today's high-level forum. The IOE is the largest global business network, with representative business organizations in 144 countries, which together represent more than 50 million companies of every size. We are delighted to count the Qatar Chamber of Commerce and Industry as one of our members.
- The IOE was created 99 years ago to bring the voice of Employers at the ILO; it is since then the representative of one of the three ILO constituents. We are particularly pleased to co-host this event today with the Ministry of Labour, with the Qatar Chamber and with the ILO, and thank the Government of Qatar for hosting us in Doha.
- We are here with a view to strengthening the dialogue between governments and the private sector on one of the most sensitive and highly charged issues on the international policy agenda: migration.
- I would like to use my time this morning to answer two questions: why is this topic of such importance to business globally; and what is the IOE doing about it ?

I. Business case for migration

- The private sector has a three-pronged stake in well-regulated migration frameworks: to fill skills shortages; ensure social stability; and contribute to the protection of the most vulnerable migrant workers. Let me turn to the economic aspect of this highly political issue.
- Almost everywhere, businesses face skills and talent shortages. By 2030, the shortage of around 85 million people could cost trillions of dollars in lost economic opportunity. The global manufacturing industry alone could experience a deficit of almost 8 million workers¹.
- Continued access to the right skills and experience is one of business's biggest concerns and investing in talent acquisition and skills development is a priority.
- Too restrictive migration policies hamper growth. If skills are not available locally and hiring talent from abroad becomes too costly, companies, particularly SMEs, cannot compete and create new jobs.

¹ ["The Global Talent Crunch"](#), Korn Ferry Institute, May 2018

- Competitive and profitable companies require the ability to recruit skills and talent from the largest possible pool and to move personnel around the world. Increasingly, business models require the movement of personnel, as well as goods and information across borders.
- Companies need therefore to operate in a flexible legal framework that enable them to hire the skills they need, creating thereby employment and contributing to economic growth.
- Employers are also keen on working with governments in supporting enforcement mechanisms with a view to creating level playing fields that ensure that all migrant workers, in particular lower skilled workers, are treated responsibly. Appropriate regulatory frameworks under effective rule of law is key for employers. On this, we support the efforts undertaken by the Government of Qatar for taking a progressive stand in developing its National Vision 2030.

II. IOE Action

- Businesses are frequent users of migration systems. They should therefore be an important resource for those interested in crafting effective migration policies and practices. Alas, this is not always the case!
- In 2016, we established the GFMD Business Mechanism. The Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD), is an intergovernmental body through which governments exchange best practices and discuss migration issues. The Business Mechanism, which is housed at IOE in Geneva, brings together businesses (MNEs and SMEs) and employer federations from all regions to address governments with one voice. It works at both the multilateral and regional levels :
- At the multilateral level -- In addition to providing recommendations to governments in the GFMD, the Business Mechanism was the primary channel for private sector participation in the negotiation of the non-binding UN Global Compact for Migration (GCM) – which was adopted last December.
- The GCM is 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 needs, predictable labour mobility schemes, and appreciation of the role and expertise of the private sector, in particular in identifying skills needs.
- At the regional level -- recognizing that the labour market needs and migration policy interests of the private sector vary greatly among companies, industries, countries, we have organized major regional events in North Africa and Asia. We are hosting a regional workshop in Buenos Aires next week. And we are pleased to be here in Qatar today. The aims of our workshops are to bring together businesses and governments for a better understanding of the challenges faced in the governance of migration; and to collect input/data/evidence on the business case for migration.

- The outcome of these regional and national events are presented at the annual GFMD Summit, which will this year be held in Quito, Ecuador.

III. Conclusion

- Demographic realities and business imperatives are driving the need for greater mobility of workers at all skill levels. At the same time, the abuses associated with unethical recruitment practices are bringing attention to gaps in governance and failures of enforcement affecting large numbers of vulnerable people. Employers have a vital interest in the development and promulgation of clear and consistent migration policies and practices that address both issues. They also bring to the table essential experience and expertise.
- The IOE looks forward to fruitful sessions this morning and to sharing the outcome of today's discussion at the GFMD Summit in Quito next month.

Closing Session

- We would like to express our wholehearted gratitude to the hosts, the State of Qatar, the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs, the Qatar Chamber, and the ILO for commencing this dialogue with the private sector.
- Today we have heard valuable insights about what works well and what areas could require further development. These include successful use of technology platforms in immigration as demonstrated by Qatar, the excellent work that Qatar continues to deliver in relation to fair and ethical recruitment practices, skills recognition and classification systems in the modern era and with a reference to the global 'future of work' agenda, expanding migration pathways to incorporate international best practices such as intra-company transfers, corporate structures and, last but not least, the importance of ongoing dialogue.
- We believe this forum represents an excellent start to an ongoing discussion to partner and deliver better, stronger governance in migration that contributes to the development of Qatar in line with its diversification agenda enshrined in Vision 2030.
- I would like to highlight three important points that came out of the discussions this morning:
 1. The economic case
 - For businesses, well managed migration is a necessary and positive force. It is a vehicle for fulfilling personal aspirations, for balancing labour supply and demand, for sparking innovation, and for transferring and spreading skills.
 - The labour market needs and migration policy interests of the private sector vary greatly among companies, industries, and among countries and regions. But all employers – as well as their employees – benefit from clear, predictable, transparent, and efficient national immigration laws and policies that permit the movement of workers when and where they are needed. Overly complex and sometimes frequently changing systems hinder compliance with national laws and threaten labour market protections. They also

make it difficult for businesses to recruit necessary skills and for migrants to pursue their careers and support their families.

2. The need for partnership

- Today's discussions have highlighted the need for public-private dialogue to ensure that that legal framework for skills mobility are adapted to current realities and needs.
- Partnerships will be key: On one hand, employers need regulatory frameworks that support skills mobility and regular migration. Businesses of all shapes and sizes require access to talent. Employers can be valuable partners in identifying skills needs, setting up skills programmes and in making policy effectively work.
- On the other, employers can support governments in their efforts to put in place enforcement mechanisms to reducing abusive practices in the recruitment process. This is necessary to protect migrant workers and domestic labour markets, and to ensure well-functioning immigration systems.
- Employers are active in various multi-stakeholder initiatives which aim at protecting the most vulnerable migrant workers: We support the ILO Fair recruitment initiative; Business groups develop their own codes of conduct on responsible recruitment; we engage in the IOM IRIS initiative; and most recently we agreed with workers and governments on a definition of recruitment fees and related costs at an ILO tripartite meeting.
- This will also happen with concrete changes in national legislations, like the ones that are implemented by the State of Qatar. We support these efforts and are pleased by these developments.

3. Forward looking approach

- The world of work is changing fast. The skills set requirements are changing and the recognition of skills and qualification will have to be adapted to the new business needs.
- The need for labor migration will not go away – indeed, it will become greater as demographic challenges intensify in many parts of the world, and as the well documented skills gap grows. This is not a call for unregulated borders. On the contrary, it is a call for more flexible and well-regulated migration systems.
- Well-functioning legal pathways for workers can help to reduce irregular and unlawful recruitment practices. Companies alone cannot enforce regulations; but can support governments in promoting regulations and enforcement mechanisms to ensure responsible recruitment.
- The IOE stays committed to engage with governments, UN agencies, as well as with civil society, contributing with its piece of the puzzle to the benefit of all stakeholders. We plan to continue to deepen our work on skills mobility as a response to the skills shortages that persist in all regions of the world.
- We would like to thank you for your participation in the event today and look forward to engaging further at the regional and global levels.