

United Nations General Assembly
High-level Debate on International Migration and Development
New York, 27 February 2019

**Remarks by Roberto Suarez Santos, Secretary-General
International Organisation of Employer (IOE)**

- Madam President, Excellencies,
- Thank you for the invitation and opportunity to contribute to this debate with the Employers' perspective.
- I am particularly pleased and thankful to be here with you today to follow up on the presentation made by the President of the IOE, Mr. Erol Kiresepi, at the opening ceremony of the GCM adoption conference in Marrakech.
- IOE was born, almost 100 years ago, because of the social commitment of a group of industrialists, company leaders. We believe in a market economy which provides decent jobs and prosperity, and preserves Fundamental rights and principles at work. In fact, we took the initiative, more than 20 years ago, to launch the process which ended in the ILO 1998 Declaration on FPRW.
- We have been actively working with other partners, companies and business organizations, through the GFMD (4 years ago), to engage business in favour of orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies.
- Believe, these are not just words. We have worked intensively in countries to change the policy setting in favour of decent work conditions for migrant workers. We have seriously engaged within and beyond the ILO in fair recruitment practices and we will continue doing so to change the reality of migrant workers which suffer unacceptable abuses
- Our network is not just about numbers (150 independent and representative business organizations and 144 countries, more than 50 million companies) it is about key players which have a central influence on local policy. This is what we can offer and where we can build efficient partnerships.
- And we aim at concrete results on the ground.
- Today I would like to further develop on an approach that we shared with UN members States after the Marrakech Conference about partnering with the private sector: how to entail efficient partnerships on the migration to achieve SDGs.
- Globally, talent shortages are at their highest level since 2006. According to the 2018 ManpowerGroup Talent Shortage survey¹, 45% of employers globally are having difficulty filling positions.

¹ Link to the survey: <https://go.manpowergroup.com/talent-shortage-2018#thereport>

- No country is immune to the skills gap and every industry is becoming more and more impacted. In advanced economies it is estimated that as many as 95 million workers will lack the skills needed. In the developing world, there is already a need of more than 45 million workers with secondary and vocational education².
- According to the last ILO survey on migrant workers the number of migrant workers represent 4.7% of the total labor force. This survey also presents an increase of approximately 11 per cent for international migrants from 2013 to 2017.
- It is unrealistic to isolate the reality of migrant workers from the new realities of work and the need to fill skills gaps
- This requires an ongoing dialogue/interaction and above all commitments (with results) among businesses, governments, workers, and training/skills providers, educational authorities. We need to learn from success and failure. We need to start delivering. The linkage with skills needs does not only help to build a solid business case for migration, it will be an essential step to assure decent work for migrants.
- Vocational and technical training programs are often outdated and not up to the growing and urgent expectations of a constantly changing skills needs. The legal framework to attract and build talent are also often difficult to implement, very often too local and most importantly not up to the drastic/revolutionary change on the skills needs
- Let me give an example. Employers in Sri Lanka report a severe talent shortage. Based on industry surveys³, at least a minimum of 400,000 new jobs will be available at all levels in the hotel, tourism, and industrial sectors per annum in the next three years. Yet more than a million people from the Sri Lankan labour force are in the Middle East and other countries as migrant workers.
- Engaging the private sector can make a difference, believe me. Experience shows how critically important is that Local business and employers' associations get properly involved in partnerships to tackle migration challenges. They have the knowledge and expertise of identifying skills needs in the labour market. Most importantly, they influence on policy makers, they interact regularly and sincerely with all kind of companies. It is not just about regular dialogue, or consultation, it is about involvement and capacity building.
- Also, global multinationals, whose Human Resources Managers deal with immigration laws on a daily basis, have also a big deal of expertise and resources to help policy-makers craft effective migration policies that channel the movement of people and thereby job creation.

² <http://theonebrief.com/how-4-countries-closing-skills-gap/>

³ Link to the research:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327436587_Sri_Lankan_Travel_Tourism_Industry_Recent_Trends_and_Future_Outlook_towards_Real_Estate_Development

- Bear in mind that attracting skilled foreign manpower can also facilitate the transfer of skills to locals and improve countries' productivity, so there is a multiplying effect, often neglected.
- Releasing the skill potential of migrant women and youth is also a driver of success. They have the capacity to transform the dynamics of many local economies and labour markets
- Another area where I see an important place for partnership is at pre-departure orientation and return. Effectively communicating employment opportunities with potential and returning migrants will ensure that those who decide to move, do it in an informed manner.
- But migration policies should not aim at meeting punctual shortages. Properly migrations strategies, that are the results of well-planned policies should be the rule and not the exception.
- These are just some areas on which we should from now work better together. Migration debates are sensitive. We understand and share concerns on social stability and proper inclusion and integration of migrants. Our network can help enormously to change the rhetoric at local level if we can partner in a meaningful way in areas that make a difference in the implementation of the SDGs, as well as the GCM.
- Thank you.