GFMD 2020
Theme 6: Fostering Partnerships to Realize Migration-Related Goals in the Sustainable Development Agenda and Managing the Future of Human Mobility
Business position – final draft

General Comments

- Given that migration across borders always involves more than one country and community, a range of cooperation and partnerships is inevitably desirable to harness the benefits and reducing the risks that can arise in migration contexts, including for human and economic development in countries of origin and destination. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought a new sense of urgency for forging partnerships.

- Business and employers welcome the signature push of the UAE Chair on partnership in this year's GFMD. In the private sector, some of our most successful work is achieved in partnerships.

- We are committed to this path of partnership as a way forward not just for the Global Forum *this* year, but specifically for this Global Forum as a process: a place and community of practice that, under clear leadership by States, can look at challenges, and discuss even those that are controversial, in informal, States-led but not States-only dialogue.

- This GFMD process has been instrumental in UN Member States unanimously agreeing to incorporate migrants and migration into the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, and in 2018, adopting the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) in 2018 by a vote of 152 for, 5 against and 12 abstaining. The SDGs and the GCM emphasize that their achievement depends on cooperation and partnerships, including with the business community.

- "Partnership" is not just a word, it is action. Building partnerships also builds capacity: partners bring resources: talent and experience as well financial, and often significantly wider scope, investment and geography. Evidence shows that diversity can multiply such resources and capacity, when different partners across social sectors, like business and civil society, or in public-private partnerships, commit together on a common goal.

- In the same way that so many workers have been recognized as "essential" in the COVID pandemic, employers are an essential partner with governments in crafting migration policies needed for jobs and strong businesses, labour markets and economies.

Partnerships of Dialogue between Employers and Government

- Dialogue among partners is both a builder and a defining characteristic of effective partnerships.

- Working as partners with government towards beneficial development outcomes, it is essential that Business has a seat at the table. Whilst governments can examine data on trends, it is business that is experiencing them first-hand, and it is essential that business provides real-time feedback on skills shortages, mobility and future of work trends within their own organizations and markets.

  The private sector relies extensively on mobile human resources. Business will always contribute different perspectives than governments and have the agility and insight to promote dynamic pathways. Employers Federations and others in the private sector should be directly involved in decision-making on labour and skills migration policies.

- In a joint statement in August, 17 Employers Federations across Asia stated: in order to increase and strengthen cooperation, "it is now high time for stronger collaboration between employers and government on labour migration issues." The Federations call for:
  - an institutionalised mechanism for **regular and organised dialogue** between the private sector employers' organizations and government, as well as investment in data collection to make a stronger case for improved regulations.

  - Consultations should not only happen in times of crisis. More importantly, Health and Disaster Risk Management **mechanisms at national level** should be put in place to ensure that this dialogue is a continuous process to prevent and/or better manage upcoming crisis. Consequences of a lack of consultations include: business discontinuity, resulting in diminished productive capacities, resulting in a more complex path to regaining economic and productive growth. Consequences will also be seen on increased illegal migration with its related negative impacts.

Partnership on expanding regular pathways for labour migration

- Freer frameworks for economic migration are good for business, catalyzing innovation, investment and entrepreneurship— the building blocks of sustainable development.
- As a top-most priority, business and employers worldwide seek predictable and transparent migration policies that reflect demographic realities and labour market needs and facilitate the mobility of workers needed at all skills levels. This includes enforceable frameworks for responsible recruitment of workers from abroad, in particular medium and lower-skilled workers.
- It is important to recognize well-designed and managed labour migration as an area of enormous shared interest and common ground between business and governments, not only before the COVID pandemic, but also during and for recovery from it. The shared interest provides the basis for partnership.

  In the US for example, business organizations have been invited over the years to inform policymakers of important high-skilled migration facts and data to consider in discussions

to develop a merit-based and points-based immigration proposal. Only through these public sector and private sector partnerships can well-crafted migration frameworks be achieved.

As in any partnership, focusing on a shared outcome is key in establishing the partnership and setting up the result for success.

Partnership on improving skills identification, recognition and development

- An array of businesses, and their ability to find the right talent with the skills in the right place at the right time, is the lifeblood of economies: essential both in ordinary time and for recovery from crises like those today.

- For example, post-Brexit the UK has had to implement a completely new immigration system and this has been designed and implemented as a result of a strong partnership between the government and all relevant stakeholders, including business. It was agreed at the outset that the outcome was to produce an immigration system which allowed employers access to a much larger pool of talent than before, including lower-skilled migrants, to alleviate the impact of the closure of free movement of EU citizens to the UK. With this common clear goal, all parties worked harmoniously together to design a new policy. In the words of one participants of the Home Office stakeholder engagement team for more than 30 years, "these government discussions were the most productive and amicable I have participated in. The initial meetings of the partners were focused on the desired outcome of the new system and there was broad agreement at the end of these meetings of what was needed to balance the needs of all parties."

- Another example of a successful partnership between governments and businesses and other stakeholders, is the recent discussion at the European Commission on the consequences of the Posted Worker Directive. The discussions were clearly held on the basis that there needed to be some simplification of the current system across Europe and having this agreed outcome meant that the call for evidence from all parties was constructive and focused.

- As we seek solutions, the pandemic has revealed that many industries rely on migrant workers both high skilled and low-skilled, i.e., "essential workers" who are all critical to keeping the economy running, in sectors like healthcare, technology and agro-food. In Europe for example, cross-border workers were needed to keep hospitals open and bring in the harvest. Despite the Schengen border closures, exceptions were granted for those crucial workers. In the US and many other countries, pharmacies and grocery stores never shut down as their workers were deemed essential.

- But working in partnership with employers, policymakers should not wait to react to such crises but be more proactive in setting frameworks for migration that are responsive to employers' needs, which include the future of work and global mobility. Ultimately this will lead partnerships to orient toward beneficial outcomes.

- In the area of skills recognition and mobility, partnerships that employ digitized information, communications and connectivity technologies are propelling the effectiveness of skills recognition, matching and development in systems that are new, like **Skills Passports** (Sri Lanka) or being improved, e.g., frameworks for **Mutual Recognition Arrangements** (ASEAN) regarding designated skills. However, much work is needed in this whole area, which is primed for partnership between business and others in both the public and the private sector, including universities.

  An example of partnerships recently formed to focus on skills development, recognition and mobility is the **Global Skills Partnership on Migration.** GSP is an initiative between ILO (the International Labour Organization), IOM (the International Organization for Migration), UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), IOE (the International Organisation of Employers) and ITUC (the International Trade Union Confederation) to join forces and mobilize expertise for the development and recognition of skills of migrant workers. It supports governments, employers, workers and their organizations, educational institutions and training providers, and other stakeholders to share the benefits of migration for both countries of origin and destination, and migrant workers themselves, with a particular focus on women, youth and low- and medium-skilled migrants.

Partnership in transfer of remittances and portability of wages, social protection, and earned benefits

- Partnerships between source and host countries are required to enable and foster portability of social security. Bilateral agreements should be put in place to ensure proper calculation of social security contributions, its availability in times of public crisis, enhance security of workers, and to protect employers against retroactive impact. This is of relevance in times of crisis when employers struggle to keep their workforce in place. Bilateral social security agreements are portability instrument that should be further developed.

Focuses for tech and other partnership emerging in the COVID pandemic

- The future of work is tied invariably and inevitably to the pandemic moving ahead. One big trend and one critical solution that come to mind.

- Remote work and an electronic-based immigration system are the key as we look ahead. As remote work becomes more of a practice as opposed to a trend in industries and sectors where it is possible around the world the more important it will become to have electronic based immigration processes and systems worldwide. What we see as a result of the pandemic are countries that have electronic based immigration processes and systems are more successfully in adapting to the change the pandemic has put upon us – which is critical when the next crisis hits.

- For the most part, many countries still have a paper-based immigration system, yet the success stories on immigration during the pandemic, while few and far between, are

indeed ones that center around electronic-based processes for our immigration system for remote workers. This will of course become even more relevant as many business models shift to increased remote workforces and it will most certainly be critical to successful global mobility as we continue to see more borders slowly re-open around the world.

- Appropriate and effective national regulation is naturally required and will ultimately be a key to success in considering trends that may be here to stay in global mobility and the future of work. This will be a critical discussion for employers at national level as we work toward economic recovery, but all related consultations, including at the GFMD Summit.

A Partnership fostering partnerships in tech start-ups and business models

- In 2020 the **IOE-SEEDSTARS partnership** launched a global "Migration Challenge" to support startups proposing innovative migration technologies and business models around the world.

  IOE established this partnership last year to identify and work as a kind of global incubator for business start-ups in the field of international migration. In the GFMD Summit in Ecuador, there was an overflow crowd in the public side meeting that IOE organized where each of 10 finalists made their "business pitch" to a jury of States and business judges, followed by high energy during the award to the winner during a moment in the Closing sessions.

  Welcomed enthusiastically and positively assessed at the GFMD last year, this partnership for new business-creation provides even more of a concrete, multi-level example of the emphasis of this year's GFMD explicitly on partnership-building. Beginning with applications and review of a widened field of 99 start-ups this year, IOE-SEEDSTARS identified 20 finalists with tech-business models focused on e-recruitment, education, immigration processes, remittances and skills matching.