

Abu Dhabi Dialogue 7th Ministerial Consultation Dubai, 11 February 2024

Intervention by the International Organisation of Employers (IOE)

Excellencies,

The International Organisation of Employers is extremely honored to be invited to this auspicious dialogue as an observer. Thank you to the Abu Dhabi Dialogue secretariat, the government of United Arab Emirates, and the current chair, the government of Pakistan for the excellent work at the ADD.

As pointed out in the OECD paper presented today and numerous other global literatures, there is a global skills shortage and competition for talent. This is further exacerbated by the emerging new industries such as renewable green energy, and technology such as artificial intelligence. As per OECD's report, I would like to highlight two facts to set the perspective for the intervention: 77% of employers are facing skills shortages and by 2030 there is a projection for a shortage of 85 million workers.

With this in mind, I will focus on 3 main themes:

- Firstly, migration pathways: These are at the heart of attracting and retaining the right talent, at the right place and at the right time. There has been a lot of positive progress with new categories such as self-sponsored long term residency options. **We call upon governments to further improve pathways such as visas for short term workers, cross border movement within companies, and inter-regional mobility.**
- Secondly, the private sector supports the employment of local nationals and embraces nationalisation schemes launched across the region. However, we call for more data-led decisions which include both quantitative review of skills supply versus demand, but also importantly takes into account the qualitative aspects of what combination of skills and experience are needed. This is an urgent issue for employers in the region, and particularly significant because we are working actively towards economic diversification in the region, and with these new and emerging industries we will initially have to rely on skills wherever they are available. **Therefore, we call for dialogue to create more sophistication to ensure these nationalisation policies are sector and profession specific, but also take into account experience and the specific skills needs.** Ultimately, we all want to ensure these policies are successful and at the same time sustainable and not at the cost of the development and diversification agenda for the economies.
- Thirdly, regarding skills recognition and verification programs. There are clearly commendable initiatives and improvements underway. We do call for more governments to accede to The Hague convention on apostille of foreign documents.

When it comes to skills assessment and verification, companies expend significant resources in the recruitment process to make skills assessments. It is of course just good business sense to do so. **Therefore, we ask for consultations to share this expertise with regards to skills assessments rather than the imposition of onerous requirements to present after hiring.**

In summary, all these recommendations need a framework to work with the private sector. **Therefore, as a pilot program, we do call for the creation of a private sector working group to support the excellent work at the Abu Dhabi Dialogue.**

In conclusion, we would like to congratulate the incoming Chair, the Sultanate of Oman for the Abu Dhabi Dialogue and look forward to working with the new Chair and all of you.

Thank you.