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**INTERNATIONAL LABOUR MIGRATION AND
THE ROLE OF EMPLOYERS:
ILO PERSPECTIVES**

KEYNOTE ADDRESS*

By

Piyasiri Wickramasekara

(wickramasekara@ilo.org)

Senior Migration Specialist

International Migration Programme

International Labour Office

Geneva

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It is indeed a privilege and honour for me to be invited to deliver the keynote address at this East, Central and Southern Africa Employers Organization (ECSAEO) Conference 2009 on the Theme: Labour Migration: Harnessing Africa's Talent for the Continent's Economic Development". On behalf of the ILO's International Migration Programme, and on my own personal behalf, I wish to thank the organizers - ECSAEO, the International Organization for Employers (IOE) and the Federation of Swaziland Employers and Chambers of Commerce (FSE & CC) for the invitation extended to the ILO to this important and topical Conference.

The focus of my presentation is on ILO perspectives on international labour migration, and I will also briefly touch on the migration situation in Africa and the role of employers.

International migration is as old as history, and by no means a new phenomenon. The UN Secretary-General's Report to the High Level Dialogue on International migration and Development, 2006 stated: "*Throughout human history, migration has been a courageous expression of the individual's will to overcome adversity and to live a better life*".¹ Yet migration has emerged as a priority issue on the global agenda in the past decade or so. The ILO welcomes the increasing positive emphasis on international labour migration and its potential to create win-win situations for all stakeholders – countries of origin, countries of destination and the migrant workers themselves.

International labour migration today is primarily a decent work and labour market issue, and less a refugee and asylum seeker or security issue. This is because the bulk of international migrants represent those migrating for employment and their families and dependants. Out of estimated 214 million international migrants in the world in 2010², the ILO estimated that about 90 per cent are migrant workers and their families. One could safely say that about 50 per cent are economically active – migrant workers, and another 40 per cent represent their families.

¹ United Nations (2006). International migration and development: Report of the Secretary-General. New York, Sixtieth session: Agenda item 54 (c)- Globalization and interdependence: international migration and development, A/60/871, United Nations.

² United Nations Population Division, Trends in Total Migrant Stock: The 2008 Revision, New York, 2009.

Most migration today is driven by market forces. The fact is that the bulk of international migration flows are employer-driven with employment for migrant workers provided largely by the private sector employers in destination countries, whether they are multinational companies, large corporations, small and medium enterprises or informal sector enterprises. It is therefore, crucial that employers play an active role in the migration debate.

Labour migration can make a significant impact on source countries. Every year, migrant workers send home to developing countries large volumes of remittances - estimated at US\$240 billion in 2007 - to support their families and communities. These remittances help build better houses, provide health care, enable children to attend school and improve food security for families and communities left behind. Returning migrant workers bring back financial and social capital and skills while diaspora communities settled abroad can contribute to home economies through transfers of skills, technology and investments.

At the same time migrant workers contribute a lot to the prosperity of their destination countries. Under globalization, migrant workers are increasingly in demand for highly skilled jobs in various sectors in advanced countries which try to maintain their global competitiveness. Professionals from Africa and other regions contribute significantly to research, cutting edge technology, and innovations in developed countries. They make up for declining birth rates and ageing populations, and contribute to economic growth and social welfare in advanced countries. Low skilled migrant workers are active in agriculture, cleaning and maintenance, construction, domestic service, and care services, which national workers in high income often shun.

The contributions of migrant workers are often not adequately recognized. In the words of the ILO Director-General, Mr. Juan Somavia: *"Migrant workers are an asset to every country where they bring their labour"*. In this context, I also like to quote from Mr. Kofi Annan, the former UN Secretary-General, in his address to the European Parliament in 2004:

"The vast majority of migrants are industrious, courageous, and determined. They don't want a free ride. They want a fair opportunity. They are not criminals or terrorists. They are law-

abiding. They don't want to live apart. They want to integrate, while retaining their identity".³

Let me also highlight that international migration is going to increase in the future, not decrease, given global demographic trends, widening disparities in incomes, human security, and rights across countries, increasing migrant networks, and environmental and climate changes. In this context, there are currently three major migration issues that demand attention: governance of migration, protection of migrant workers, and maximizing development benefits of migration – also the major themes in the ILO Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration.⁴

Thus the governance challenge is not on how to stop or prevent migration – but on how to govern it for the benefit of all concerned – source countries, destination countries and migrant workers themselves through international cooperation. We need more and better policies, not more policing, and intensified border controls. There is indeed a policy bias against admission of low skilled workers in major destination countries in Europe, Asia and North America, while at the same time encouraging the inflow of skilled workers. This has undesirable effects in three areas: channeling a large part of low skilled workers to irregular status, accelerating brain drain from poor countries and reducing the development benefits of migration by providing less opportunities for low skilled poorer workers.⁵

Even skilled workers who get admission to developed countries suffer what is called 'brain waste' through lack of qualification recognition, and when they cannot find employment commensurate with their specialized skills and previous experience. This type of situation involves a triple loss – to source countries that lose valuable skills, to destination countries which cannot benefit from migrant skills and to migrant workers who cannot make full use of their potential and integrate.⁶ An OECD study found that in all of the OECD countries considered, almost 50 per cent on average (or at least 25 per cent)

³ Annan, K. (2004). *United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan's Address to the European Parliament upon receipt of the Andrei Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought*, Brussels, 29 January 2004. http://www.europa-eu-un.org/articles/sk/article_3178_sk.htm

⁴ ILO (2006). *The ILO Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration: Non-binding principles and guidelines for a rights-based approach to labour migration*. Geneva, International Labour Office. http://www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/migrant/download/multilat_fw_k_en.pdf

⁵ RSA Migration Commission (2005). *Migration: A Welcome Opportunity - A new way forward*, The Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures & Commerce (RSA), London, November 2005. <http://www.migrationcommission.org/publications.htm>

⁶ Wickramasekara, Piyasiri. (2008). "Globalisation, International Labour Migration, and Rights of Migrant Workers", in *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No. 7, pp 1247–1264.

of skilled immigrants were 'inactive, unemployed or confined to jobs for which they are over-qualified'.⁷

A major area of concern to the ILO is the continuing abuse and exploitation of migrant workers in destination countries. Despite the positive experiences of some migrant workers, a significant number face undue hardships and abuse in the form of low wages, poor working conditions, virtual absence of social protection, denial of freedom of association and workers' rights, discrimination and xenophobia, as well as social exclusion.⁸ Women migrant workers, trafficked persons and migrant workers in irregular status are among the most vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. There seems to be tacit tolerance of the presence of migrant workers in irregular status on the part of many governments to sustain large informal sectors in their economies, while officially seen to be 'combating' or 'fighting' irregular migration. The issue is of special relevance to employers who are often blamed for employing migrant workers in irregular status in violation of the law.

Globalization has also led to the emergence of global production chains initiated by multinational corporations involving various levels of subcontracting and outsourcing to different suppliers. In the process, 'labour' brokers have emerged who supply the needs of different enterprises. This has undermined the traditional employer-employee relationship, under which employers are accountable for conditions of work offered to workers. Migrant workers are particularly vulnerable as victims of disguised employment relationships, and therefore they may be easily exploited.

A Canadian survey and study on the role of employers in migration found that "[E]mployers have a positive attitude towards immigrants and immigration.⁹ Employers see many positives and few negatives in hiring recent immigrants and welcome the opportunity to participate in strategies that seek to better integrate immigrants into the workforce." However, the survey and focus groups also found that employers

⁷ OECD (2007), *Matching Educational Background and Employment: A Challenge for Immigrants in Host Countries*, International Migration Outlook: SOPEMI 2007 Edition, OECD, Paris, pp. 137-153

⁸ ILO (2004c). *A fair deal for migrant workers in the global economy*, Report VI, International Labour Conference 2004, 92nd Session. Geneva, International Labour Office.
<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/relm/ilc/ilc92/pdf/rep-vi.pdf>

⁹ The Public Policy Forum (2004). *Bringing employers into the migration debate: survey and conference*. Ottawa, The Public Policy Forum. A summary presentation can be found at:
http://www.toronto.ca/metropolis/metropolistoronto2005/pdf/lopesetal_audc.pdf

overlook immigrants in their human resource planning, do not hire immigrants at the level at which they were trained, and face challenges integrating recent immigrants into their workforce.

International instruments provide a solid foundation for formulation and improvement of migration policies. The ILO has pioneered the development of international instruments for the governance of labour migration and protection of migrant workers since the 1930s.

Universal human rights are applicable to all human beings irrespective of nationality. Moreover, the core labour rights - fundamental Conventions of the ILO enshrined in the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work - are applicable to all workers including migrant workers, without distinction of nationality, and regardless of migration status. At the same time, the emphasis should not only be on the human rights of migrants as human beings, but also on their labour rights as workers. The ILO Conventions on migrant workers - Migration for Employment No. 97, (1949) and the Migrant Workers Convention No. 143, (1975) - spell out labour rights of migrant workers. The 1990 International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families – has expanded on these rights. These three Conventions together define a comprehensive charter of migrant rights and provide a legal basis for national policy and practice on migrant workers, and serve as tools to encourage States to establish or improve national legislation in harmony with international standards.¹⁰

Last but not least, the ILO position is that all international labour standards apply to migrant workers in the workplace unless otherwise stated. There are particularly relevant Conventions relating to private employment agencies, social security, protection of wages, labour inspection, occupational safety and health, and those covering sectors such as agriculture, hotels and tourism and construction where migrant workers are often over-represented. The employers are directly responsible for ensuring protection of these rights in the workplace.

So we are aiming at much more than ‘safe migration’ ‘managed migration’ or ‘orderly migration’ – terms popular in current advocacy

¹⁰ Wickramasekara, Piyasiri. (2007). “Protection of migrant workers in an era of globalization: The role of international instruments”, in R. Blanpain (ed.): *Comparative Labour Law and Industrial Relations in Industrialized Market Economies*, 9th edition. Austin, Wolters Kluwer;

Taran, P. (2007). “Clashing Worlds: Imperative for a rights-based approach to labour migration in the age of globalization”, in *Globalization, migration and human rights: International law under review*, Vol. 2. Bruylant, Brussels;.

campaigns by non-governmental organisations and some international agencies. These are too narrow concepts to capture the wider goal of promoting labour migration in conditions of “freedom, equity, security and human dignity.”

There is now increasing emphasis on the migration and development linkages. Principle 15 of the ILO Multilateral Framework states that: *The contribution of labour migration to employment, economic growth, development and the alleviation of poverty should be recognized and maximized for the benefit of both origin and destination countries.*¹¹ Several global initiatives including the Global Commission on International Migration, the UN High Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development and the meetings of the Global Forum on Migration and Development have recognized this interlinkages.¹²

Employers have a vital role to play in all three areas identified above: governance of labour migration, protection of migrant workers, and promoting development benefits of migration.

In regard to governance, Principle 2 of the ILO Multilateral framework on Labour Migration clearly states: *“Governments, in consultation with employers’ and workers’ organizations, should engage in international cooperation to promote managed migration for employment purposes. Governments and employers’ and workers’ organizations should work with the ILO to promote coherence of labour migration policies at the international and regional levels based on the guidelines set out below.”* Two of the important ones are: establishing tripartite procedures to ensure that employers’ and workers’ organizations are consulted on labour migration issues and their views taken into account; and; and, facilitating the participation of employers’ and workers’ organizations in relevant international, regional, national and other forums, including through the establishment of tripartite consultative procedures. Another guideline adds the need for promoting dialogue and consultation with employers’ organizations on practical opportunities and challenges they confront in the employment of foreign workers. The

¹¹ ILO, The ILO Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration, op.cit., 2006.

¹² United Nations (2006). International migration and development: Report of the Secretary-General. New York, Prepared for the UN High Level Dialogue on international migration and development, A/60/871, United Nations.; GCIM (2005). Migration in an Interconnected World: New Directions for Action., Report of the Global Commission on International Migration, Geneva. <http://www.gcim.org/attachements/gcim-complete-report-2005.pdf> ; GFMD (2007). Report of the first meeting of the Global Forum on Migration and Development, Belgium, July 9-11, 2007, Bruylant, Brussels, 2008. http://www.gfmd-fmmd.org/en/system/files/2080096_FORMON_UK_BAT.pdf

Framework contains major principles and related guidelines on the protection of rights of migrant workers.

The ILO's unique tripartite structure distinguishes itself from the work of many other agencies working on issues of labour migration. Consultative processes involving the two parties most affected by migration – the employers and workers - are a major pillar of the ILO approach. The ILO Multilateral framework Principle 6 states: *Social dialogue is essential to the development of sound labour migration policy and should be promoted and implemented.* This regional consultation itself is a demonstration of strong employer support to the principle of social dialogue.

How is the International Labour Organization responding to these challenges?

The ILO has been for many years attempting to forge an international consensus on labour migration as a positive economic and social force in the global economy. It has promoted an extensive wide-ranging tripartite debate in the past decade or so on international labour migration. The General Discussion on Migrant Workers at the 92nd session of the International Labour Conference in June 2004 was a watershed in this respect. It was designed to review current issues and challenges of labour migration with a view to guiding ILO action. The ILC adopted the outcome of the General Discussion – the 'Resolution and Conclusions concerning a fair deal for migrant workers in a global economy'¹³ by consensus. To address current governance and protection challenges, the Committee on Migrant Workers called upon the ILO and its constituents to carry out a Plan of Action, in partnership with other international organizations. The components of this Plan of Action are:

- Development of a non-binding multilateral framework for a rights-based approach to labour migration, which takes account labour market needs, proposing guidelines and principles for policies based on best practices and international standards;
- wider application of international labour standards and other relevant instruments;
- Support for implementation of the ILO Global Employment Agenda at national level;

¹³ ILO (2004). Resolution concerning a fair deal for migrant workers in the global economy, adopted at the 92nd session of the International Labour Conference. Geneva, in: Report of the Committee on Migrant Workers, Provisional Record 22, International Labour Conference, Ninety-second Session, International Labour Office, pp.55-64

<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/reIm/ilc/ilc92/pdf/pr-22-pdf>

- Capacity building, awareness raising and technical assistance;
- Strengthening social dialogue;
- Improving the information and knowledge base.

The most innovative element and centrepiece of the Action Plan was the “*ILO Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration: Non-binding principles and guidelines for a rights-based approach to labour migration*” adopted by a tripartite Expert group in November 2005, and endorsed by the Governing Body in March 2006.¹⁴ The Framework is a comprehensive collection of principles, guidelines and best practices on labour migration policy, providing practical guidance to constituents on the development and improvement of labour migration policies. The objectives of the Framework are better governance and management of migration, protection and promotion of migrant rights, and promoting greater linkages between migration, decent work and development.

I should stress that the employer group played a valuable role in all the above processes.

Let me now turn to the migration situation in Africa briefly.¹⁵ The African continent comprises about 20 % of the world land area, 14.5% of the world’s population, 2% of world GDP, and 9 % of the world’s migrant stock (2005).¹⁶ The impact of globalization on the global economy has however, been uneven: “*some countries have been able to take advantage of market economy, when others have become more marginalized, disintegrated, and impoverished.*”¹⁷ This is clearly the case for Africa. The report of the ILO-led World Commission on the Social Dimensions of Globalization (2004)¹⁸ summarized the views of African leaders on the process of globalization as it affected Africa as follows: “*No one doubted that over the past 20 years of globalization, Africa has fared far worse than other regions..... At best Africa felt bypassed, at worst abused and humiliated.*” The Global Competitiveness Report 2006-2007 of the World Economic Forum highlighted that while African

¹⁴ ILO (2006). *The ILO Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration: Non-binding principles and guidelines for a rights-based approach to labour migration*, Geneva, International Labour Office
<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/migrant/areas/multilateral.htm>

¹⁵ See Wickramasekara, P. (2007). " Globalization and international Migration: Implications for occupational safety and health", in: Special issue on Migrant Workers, *African Newsletter on Occupational Health and Safety, Volume 17, Number 3, December 2007, pp.61-65*
<http://www.ttl.fi/NR/rdonlyres/2D1F2747-28C0-4F94-89FC-6CDD0593F55E/0/african32007.pdf>

¹⁶ The World Bank, *Africa Development Indicators 2007*, Washington DC, October 2007.

¹⁷ WCSSDG (2004), *A fair globalization: Creating opportunities for all*, World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization (WCSSDG) and International Labour Office, Geneva, February 2004.
<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/wcssdg/docs/report.pdf>

¹⁸ Ibid.

countries represent only two out of the top 50 countries in terms of global competitiveness, they represented 20 out of the bottom 25 countries. About 41% of Africans are in serious poverty earning less than \$1 a day, and one out of five Africans lives in an area affected by war and conflict.¹⁹ In an increasingly globalised world economy, Africa accounts for only about 3% of world trade. Africa's share of global investment is also low at 3.4%²⁰ and it receives only 4-5 % of global remittances.

However, recent trends have given rise to cautious optimism about Africa's integration into the world economy. The region has witnessed higher GDP growth, and attracting growing investments, especially from China and India.

International migration in Africa has two major components. First is cross border migration within Africa. Second is migration out of the African continent to other countries in the developed and other regions. The bulk of African migration – almost two thirds of total- is within the African region itself with only about 25% to high income OECD countries.²¹

There are several special characteristics of migration flows within and out of Africa which pose importance challenges for tripartite partners.²²

- High levels of cross border movements between neighbouring poor and more prosperous states (e.g. Zimbabwe to South Africa).
- Large forced migration flows triggered by political instability and armed strife, and ecological and natural disasters.
- While there are a number of regional economic communities such as the Economic Community of West African States, the East African Community, the Southern African Development community, there is limited progress on free movement of persons and especially relating to labour mobility. Thus, most of the border crossings may be informal in nature, which is tantamount to irregular migration. Migrant workers in irregular status are most vulnerable to exploitation and are usually devoid of any protection. Dealing with migrant workers in irregular

¹⁹ World Economic Forum, Raising the Bar, Report of the World Economic Forum on Africa Cape Town, 13-15 June 2007.

http://www.weforum.org/pdf/SummitReports/africa07/africa_report_2007.pdf

²⁰ African Union & Economic Commission for Africa, *Economic Report on Africa 2007: Accelerating Africa's Development through Diversification*, Economic Commission for Africa, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

<http://www.uneca.org/era2007/>

²¹ Robert E. Lucas, « Migration and Economic Development in Africa: A Review of Evidence », *Journal of African Economy*, 2006; 15: 337-395

²² Piyasiri Wickramasekara, Globalization, cross-border migration and migrant workers in Africa: Implications for occupational safety and health, *African Newsletter on Occupational Health and Safety, Special issue on Migrant workers*, Volume 17, number 3, December 2007.

status poses serious challenges for employers, workers as well as governments.

- A sizeable brain drain of qualified and skilled persons from Sub-Saharan Africa to developed countries.²³ In 2000, some African countries experienced very high migration rates of their tertiary educated: Cape Verde (69.1%), Gambia (64.7%), Seychelles (58.6%), Somalia (58.6%), Mauritius (48.0%), Eritrea (45.8%), Ghana (42.9%), Mozambique (42.0%), Sierra Leone (41.0%), and Liberia (37.4%).²⁴
- Of more concern is the loss of health workers from the African continent. The unethical nature of African health worker recruitment is highlighted by the fact that Africa's share of global diseases is 25 per cent while its share of the global health workforce is only 3 per cent according to the WHO World Health Report 2006.²⁵
- At the same time, informal sector employment predominates in many countries. The ILO report for the 11th African Regional Meeting mentioned that only 10 per cent of the African labour force was in the formal economy.
- There is resurgence of racism and xenophobia against migrant workers as the recent unfortunate incidents in South Africa have shown.

What are the employer challenges and roles in relation to migration?

The Resolution concerning a fair deal for migrant workers in a global economy adopted by the 92nd Session of the International labour conference, June 2004, summed up these challenges as follows.²⁶

Employers confront numerous policy and practical challenges in employment of foreign workers, including: identifying, recruiting and ensuring entry of foreign workers through regular channels; complying with complex and lengthy administrative procedures; addressing document control; facing risks of sanctions for employing migrant workers without authorization; managing relations in multi-ethnic workplaces; and assuring proper training and workplace protection in multilingual contexts (Para 14).

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Docquier, F. and A. Marfouk (2005). *International migration by educational attainment, 1990-2000*. in: C. Ozden and M. Schiff (eds). *International migration, remittances, and the brain drain*. Washington, D.C., The World Bank & Palgrave Mcmillan: 151-199.

²⁵ WHO (2006). *The World Health Report 2006 - Working together for health*, World Health Organization, Geneva, 2006. http://www.who.int/entity/whr/2006/whr06_en.pdf

²⁶ ILO (2004), *Resolution concerning a fair deal*, op. cit., 2004

Employers are working behind the scenes in many countries to promote legal admissions of workers. Recent changes in German immigration policy – a country which refused to acknowledge that it was an immigration country for several decades - particularly the 2005 Immigration Law is in large measure due to employer lobbying.²⁷ By assessing labour market and industry needs for workers, they can assist governments to promote legal migration channels, thereby reducing potential irregular migration. Within regional economic communities such as SADC (Southern African Development Community), EAC (East African Community) and CEMAC, employer organizations can try to further promote the protocols for free movement and greater labour mobility including circular migration.

The theme of this Conference is on “Harnessing Africa’s talents for the Continent’s Economic Development”. Employers can play a major role in minimising brain drain which is seriously affecting Africa by promoting decent job opportunities to national workers to minimise the brain drain, supporting human resource development and training activities to compensate for job losses, and also attracting back skills home. This is already happening in some African countries. It is especially important for African youth who have been described as the greatest asset of Africa by the African Youth Charter.²⁸ The recent tragedy off the Libyan coast involving drowning of more than 500 or so potential migrants is a stark reminder of the challenge of decent work for youth facing all stakeholders.

Recently an Australian employer summed up the challenges faced by their organization in the Pacific in regard to retaining talent as follows, which seems to reverberate the theme of this Conference as well:

“All of us share the challenge of holding onto our labour force and not having them leave us for other bigger countries perceived to offer more opportunities and more excitement. Just as people in various Pacific states may migrate to New Zealand, New Zealanders migrate to Australia, Australia also faces the prospect of a brain drain of our talented young people into central and north Asia, the US and Europe. Each of the states face a shared challenge of maintaining their labour

²⁷ Georg Menz, Employers, Trade Unions and Labour Migration Policies: Examining the role of non-State Actors, paper prepared for European Union Studies Association Tenth Biennial Conference, Montreal, Canada, 17 May 2007. <http://aei.pitt.edu/7976/01/menz-g-03c.pdf>

²⁸ African Union Commission (2006). *African Youth Charter*. Seventh Ordinary Session of the Assembly, held in Banjul, The Gambia, 2 July 2006. http://www.uneca.org/adf/docs/African_Youth_Charter.pdf

force and in particular the talents and intellect of emerging generations”.²⁹

Employers also can play a useful role in minimising brain waste by working towards qualification recognition in collaboration with governments and concerned professional bodies, trade unions and migrant associations.

Corporate social responsibility also requires that employers follow good practices in protecting migrant workers. Equal treatment and non-discrimination in the workplace are important. A recent study by Business for Social Responsibility shows how employers can help migrant workers caught up in supply chains of products in outsourcing of production operations under globalization forces.³⁰ It concluded that proactive supply chain management with better attention paid to issues unique to migrant workers, and enhanced engagement with key stakeholders, would enhance migrant workers’ rights while creating business benefits. Employer organisations have cooperated with the ILO in combatting trafficking for labour exploitation and child labour in many regions.³¹

Let us recall the ILO Decent Work Agenda 2007-2015 for Africa target for migrant workers adopted by the 13th African Regional Meeting in Addis Ababa: *“Three-quarters of all African States have policies to ensure that migrant workers have regular, authorized status and are fully protected by the labour legislation of the host country by 2015.”*³² While this target needs concerted efforts by all tripartite partners, employers can work jointly with other partners in achieving this target.

The Canadian Public Policy Forum study on bringing employers into the migration debate³³ mentioned earlier made a number of

²⁹ Peter Anderson ‘Reflections on Representing Pacific Employers in 2008 And Beyond’ , A Background Paper for the ILO Regional Office, Bangkok on the occasion of the visit of the Regional Director to Australia , August 2008 , Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) , Australian Representative, International Organisation of Employers

³⁰ Business for Social Responsibility, *International Labor Migration: A Responsible Role for Business* October 2008. http://www.bsr.org/reports/BSR_LaborMigrationRoleforBusiness.pdf

³¹ UN.GIFT, 2008. The Roles of employers’ organizations, businesses and trade unions in combatting trafficking for labour exploitation, ILO Background Paper, The Vienna Forum to fight human trafficking, 13-15 February 2008, Austria Centre, Vienna.

³² ILO, Conclusions of the 11th African Regional Meeting: The Decent Work Agenda in Africa 2007–15 Addis Ababa, 24-27 April 2007.

<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/relm/rgmeet/11afirm/conclusions.pdf>

³³ The Public Policy Forum (2004). Bringing employers into the migration debate: survey and conference.

recommendations to address the challenges identified as follows: a) Employers in regions with a high concentration of immigrants should be informed and engaged in discussions about selection and levels; b) Employers should be engaged in regionalization strategies; c) Employers should be encouraged to develop strategies to hire immigrants more effectively; d) Hiring practices that may discriminate against immigrants should be addressed; e) Promote existing credential recognition services and develop new services or procedures where appropriate; f) Improve language training, especially occupation-specific language training; g) Promote and create tools to encourage cultural understanding; h) Provide Canadian work experience for immigrants, especially in small and medium-sized companies.

Employers are also playing a major role in combatting racism and xenophobia in many parts of the world. The ILO online database on anti-discrimination action profiles has documented a number of good practices by employer organizations in this regard.³⁴ A European Task Force on Employers and Migrant Integration chaired by Göran Hultin³⁵ highlighted the challenges and the role of employers in promoting migrant integration.³⁶ It recognized that employers often lack the necessary expertise and resources to implement integration strategies in-house. It proposed five basic tools to develop a comprehensive and effective integration strategy for migrant workers: coordination at all levels of governance; guidelines to raise awareness of employers; standard setting by the public sector; clear policies and goals; and, partnerships and funding. Another interesting conclusion was: *'Migrant workers and their families with temporary work and residence permits should not be excluded from local and national integration strategies'* (EPC report, p.56). This is especially relevant in the context of the current financial and economic crisis when migrants can easily become scapegoats.

Employers are also contributing to promoting development benefits of migration. Provision of decent work for migrant workers will increase migrant capacity for better development contributions to home countries. Employers also can advise on more effective utilisation of remittances for

Ottawa, The Public Policy Forum.

³⁴ See ILO online Database on Anti-discrimination Action Profiles on the following page:

http://www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/migrant/info/dbase_practices.htm

³⁵ Former Executive Director, ILO's Employment Sector.

³⁶ European Policy Centre, *Making migration work: the role of employers in migrant integration*, EPC Working Paper No.30, Report prepared for the EU Integration and Citizenship Programme, May 2008.

http://www.epc.eu/TEWN/pdf/608394341_EPC%20Working%20Paper%2030%20Making%20migration%20work.pdf

investment including small enterprise development. They also have the infrastructure to engage with diaspora communities and promote return of qualified migrants. It is worth quoting from the ILO', Decent Work Agenda for Africa:

“To ensure that migration benefits development, efforts are necessary to minimize or compensate for brain drain, enhance skills and knowledge acquisition opportunities for migrants, facilitate enterprise creation by migrants, obtain safe and inexpensive channels for remittances, promote productive and employment-producing investments of remittances, and mobilize diasporas abroad for home country development. Since much migration in and from Africa reflects decent work deficits, wider efforts must be targeted at employment creation, job-intensive capital investment, and fair trade rules in the international system that support agricultural and industrial production in the region.”³⁷

This sums up well the contribution that employers can make in enhancing development benefits of migration for Africa in cooperation with other key actors.

The ILO greatly appreciates the employer initiative to launch this dialogue on harnessing Africa's talents for the continent's economic development. While recognizing that migration alone cannot be expected to address fundamental development problems of Africa, let us create more and better decent work opportunities at home to retain talent, and also make it easier and rewarding for those who want to work across borders. While there is interest in EU-Africa mobility partnerships, it may be also be useful and productive to promote South-South partnerships within Africa itself using the regional economic community framework. The ILO stands ready to work with you and also learn from you in this worthy endeavour in collaboration with all other concerned stakeholders – governments, workers, migrant associations, civil society and non-governmental organisations, regional economic communities, the African Union, and regional and international agencies and organisations.

I wish great success in all your deliberations in this conference.

³⁷ ILO 2007. The Decent Work Agenda in Africa 2007–15, Report of the Director-General, Eleventh African Regional Meeting: Addis Ababa, 24-27 April 2007, ILO, Geneva.
<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/reln/rgmeet/11afrm/dg-thematic.pdf>