



Arab Employment Forum

A Jobs Pact for Recovery and Growth

Guidelines for Thematic Working Sessions, 20 October 2009

Panel 2 Improving Management of Labour Migration, Employment and Development

Time: 10:00-12:00

Organizational Guidelines: Each Panel will consist of a Chair, a Facilitator, and tripartite discussants representing the perspectives of governments, workers and employers. The Chair will designate one of the panelists to serve as Rapporteur, reporting back to Plenary on day 3 of the Forum. The Rapporteur will be assisted by a pre-assigned Forum note taker, who will provide the meeting minutes to the Rapporteur by end of session.

The duration of each panel is two hours. The second half of the session will be dedicated to open discussion, while the first part will be led by the panelists themselves as per the below running order of speakers:

- **Chair (10 minutes):** The Chair will preside over the meeting and moderate the Panel discussion. The Chair will take a few minutes to open the session and introduce panelists. The Chair will also summarize key interventions and provide a wrap-up statement at the end.
- **Facilitator (10 minutes):** The Facilitator (s) will present highlights of the respective background paper(s) prepared for each panel and key issues for debate. Where there are two facilitators, they will briefly address these same issues (5 minutes each).
- **Tripartite constituents (10 minutes/constituent):** A representative from each of the Tripartite constituents will highlight key issues of concern, bringing to the fore priorities and challenges from the perspectives of governments, workers and employers.
- **Other discussants (10 minutes):** Other discussants representing academia and civil society may present their own take on the issue, providing an overview of their own experiences and lessons learned.

The remaining time (approximately 1 hour) will be dedicated to an open exchange of views moderated by the Chair towards a set of Panel recommendations.

Thematic Focus: This Panel will examine the two systems of international labour migration in the Arab region, with the purpose of contributing to the solution of the employment question. In the context of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, the Panel will discuss labour migration as an employment issue with the view to raising productivity, spurring economic growth and development, and thus

promoting the employment of nationals, while protecting the rights and improving the conditions of work for both national and foreign workers. In the Arab-European system, the Panel will consider the labour market outcomes that propel workers to migrate. The objective is to explore ways in which labour migration contributes to the development of countries of origin and destination and reinforces its benefits.

In addressing the concerns of the GCC countries, the Panel will look at recruitment patterns and contractual arrangements of foreign workers, the terms and conditions governing their work, their sectoral distribution and impact on the functioning of labour markets. The Panel will also consider the lack of enforcement of regulations, which leaves workers vulnerable to exploitation and abuse of their rights. With respect to the Mediterranean-European system, the Panel will consider the push and pull factors governing movements, the costs and benefits of migration to origin and destination countries, remittances of migrant workers, the emigration of highly skilled workers, the existence of discrimination against them in Europe and the operation of regional and bilateral agreements for cooperation on labour migration. The incipient impact of the economic crisis on international labour movements and on foreign workers and decent work opportunities in the two systems will also be discussed.

Issues for Debate:

1. What measures are required to defuse the anomaly of large volumes of temporary contractual labour co-existing with high unemployment rates of nationals in the GCC countries? Is reforming the recruitment and contracting system part of these measures? What should the reform consist of?
2. How can Arab countries of the Maghreb and Mashreq expand legal migration opportunities for their workers in Europe while at the same time reinforcing their protection?
3. How can countries in the Arab region benefit from the provisions of international labour conventions on migrant workers and of the non-binding ILO Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration in formulating their labour migration policies?
4. What measures could be taken to reverse the steady decrease of the share of Arab workers in foreign labour in the GCC countries?
5. In the current global crisis, what measures could be taken to help in the reinsertion of returnees into the labour markets of their countries of origin?
6. How could the ILO support in reinforcing social dialogue and the contribution of social partners to the policy process on labour migration and in protecting foreign and national workers?