

**UNITED NATIONS HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND
DEVELOPMENT**

Round Table 4: International and Regional Labour Mobility and its Impact on Development

Friday 4 October: 15:00-18:00

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Panelist intervention (6-7 minutes)

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

- International migration for employment continues to increase in volume and complexity. Of the 232 million international migrant, about half are economically active, half are women increasingly migrating for work, and a significant number are between the ages of 15 and 24.
- Demographic and income inequality, the lack of jobs or poor-quality jobs drive millions to migrate in search of a better life. All too often they move in desperate and perilous conditions. The recent tragedy off the coast of Lampedusa is another poignant reminder of this and a palpable result of policy failures at both ends of the migration continuum. We should no longer tolerate such tragic events and we must seize the opportunity of this High-level Dialogue to put an end to the indifference.
- This drive is likely to expand in the coming years, with global unemployment expected to increase from the current 202 million to over 208 million by 2015.
- Most will move from one country in the global south to another. More than 71 million international migrants are in Asia. Regional labour mobility now accounts for 80% of all cross-border movement, making jobs and regional integration ever more critical to development. Beyond the number of new jobs needed, there are also around 900 million working poor, living at the \$2 a day poverty line.
- This poses a tremendous challenge for the international community as it readies a new development agenda.
- A rights-based approach to labour migration governance, one that facilitates migrant-centred and gender-sensitive policies, and which recognizes the labour market dimensions and the actors of the real economy, will ensure that global development protects the rights of all migrant workers.
- The ILO's non-binding Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration contains principles and guidelines for such an approach, and a database on good practices which can serve as an important basis for action. The Framework recognizes **three inter-connected pillars needed to achieve equitable and inclusive development**.
- **The first is to ensure that labour mobility addresses real labour market needs.** This requires better harmonization of employment and migration policies and effective labour market information systems. Labour market needs assessments and skills certification can lead to better jobs matching and help avoid "brain waste" and de-skilling. This, in turn, translates into improved conditions of

work, higher wages, and a greater potential for the positive contribution of labour migration to development. In Central America, ILO has been developing job descriptions and training requirements for less-skilled occupations, such as cooks and chambermaids, for recognition at the regional level.

- **The second pillar fosters improved protection of human rights, including labour rights, of migrant workers throughout the whole migration process.**
- Lower-skilled workers in temporary migration programmes can enjoy better protection if they fill labour market shortages that are genuinely temporary rather than structural, if they receive accurate information on departure, and are not subject to deceptive recruitment practices and fees. The ILO Private Employment Agencies Convention, 1997 (No. 181), provides a means to avoid migrant workers abuse.
- Ensuring equality of treatment with nationals, such as allowing migrant workers to change employers, trade union rights, adequate social protection coverage, gender-sensitive policies, and access to redress mechanisms are critical to development. Ratification and more effective implementation of international human rights and ILO labour standards applicable to all workers and which include migrant workers is essential to sustainable, inclusive and equitable development. The ILO Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189) offers useful guidance on how to protect a group of migrant workers particularly vulnerable to exploitation.
- Another key issue is that while migrant workers help sustain social security systems in destination countries, their own social protection needs are frequently ignored. Establishing social protection floors at the national level and portability of social security through conclusion of bilateral and regional agreements can ensure better development outcomes for migrant workers and their families.
- Our work on the ground shows us that documenting the contributions of migrant workers to economies and societies is key to overcoming poor public perception of migrants and acceptance of the principle of equal treatment.
- **The third pillar is enhancing social dialogue, collaboration with other stakeholders, and cooperation between countries**
- Dialogue with representative employers' and workers' organizations and other pertinent stakeholders can legitimize migration and development policies for regional integration and promote safe and regular labour mobility. ILO is, for example, supporting a tripartite process in SADC, as part of its regional integration process and in the ASEAN Forum on Migrant Labour, as well as agreements, for example, between trade unions in destination and origin countries, that serve as powerful tools to complement policies protecting migrant workers (e.g. Russian Federation – Armenia, Azerbaijan; Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait – Sri Lanka; Italy – Moldova, Ukraine).
- Bilateral agreements between origin and destination countries can also better respond to labour market needs through facilitating effective matching of jobs with skills and improve migrant worker protection in conformity with labour standards. ILO Migration for Employment Recommendation

No. 86 contains a model bilateral labour migration agreement which offers a useful framework (e.g., Georgia-France, Armenia-Russian Federation, Costa Rica-Nicaragua, and Moldova-Italy).