

Transcript:

Our sense of dignity is intrinsically linked to our employment – the economic activities that we undertake on a day-to-day basis for an employer or ourselves; and the way in which this career is viewed by our wider communities. It gives us our 'status' – quite literally our 'state', our condition of being.

So it affects each one of us as an individual. And it also impacts on our nation's wellbeing. Indeed, our regional economies are increasingly labelled according to the type of work our people carry out each day – there are rural economies, knowledge-based economies, service-led economies, manufacturing economies.

It would seem that we are all 'world workers' now – whether we wait tables in Geneva, or design cutting edge technology in Silicon Valley; whether we work in high-finance in Manama, or run a small-holding in Mumbai. Our lives, our businesses, our economies are intertwined more deeply than they have ever been in the history of humankind.

So Bahrain is an island, but our economy is not.

We welcome guest workers from across the world who come to the Gulf looking for a better life. We need to protect their access to income and employment, certainly. But in doing so we must recognize that some villages and communities may be left without some of their natural human resources, increasingly vulnerable. At the whim of global market forces beyond their control, and sometimes beyond their sphere of comprehension.

At the same time, we are creating an increasing imbalance within our own labour markets. It is something that is simply not sustainable, and that does a disservice to our own people, their futures, their understanding of what work is and does.

This is why it is imperative that we work together towards Fair Globalization. Globalization with justice.

We in Bahrain are addressing not just the needs of global market forces, but also much more pressing individual needs. The right to decent work. Work with a sense of dignity. Work that allows people to provide for their families and their communities.

We must not forget the efforts and the needs of our brothers and sisters labouring in Palestine. Hardworking people who are struggling – with decency and dignity – against a tide that threatens to overturn them at any moment. We call for the end of the illegal Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territories through dialogue that leads to a mutually agreed two state solution. We also call for the immediate easing of the economic conditions that have led to indefensible levels of unemployment, currently at 60 per cent.

That is why today, here and now, I call on our neighbours, and our partners in the GCC – Gulf Cooperation Council - and across Asia to join with me. I call upon the Heads of State to accept my invitation and come to Bahrain to take part in the first interregional social dialogue Summit on labour issues. To bring together sending and receiving countries for the first time, at that level, to discuss openly and honestly the real impacts of globalization on each of our home nations.

But we have been trusted by the people of our respective nations to build societies that provide the best possible opportunities in life. That give them decency and dignity. We are not bystanders' at the whims of the global economy. We are the people who shape that economy. And if we chose to shape it for the short term gain and by working in isolation then we risk building a future that we may not like when we get there. Today the ILO has given us an opportunity, a platform, a springboard that we can choose to use – or not – to forge a better future for us all. A future for all of our workers and our citizens. To live and work a decent and dignified life.

Let us all put in the effort. Let us not waste this chance.

Thank you very much.