

Ninth GFMD Summit GFMD Business Mechanism Meeting

Role of Business in achieving orderly and responsible migration, particularly in view of the Global Compact on Migration

Co-hosted by the Government of Bangladesh, the International Organisation of Employers (IOE) and the World Economic Forum Global Agenda Council on Migration (WEF GACM)

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SUMMARY REPORT

Introduction

The Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) Summit took place from 10-12 December 2016 in Dhaka, under the chairmanship of the Government of Bangladesh. For the first time, the private sector was invited to participate as an independent GFMD stakeholder. The International Organisation of Employers (IOE) and the WEF Global Agenda Council on Migration (WEF GACM) were tasked with coordinating the work and the participation of business in the GFMD Summit in Dhaka. The Business Mechanism was launched in 2015 to enhance public-private dialogue and deepen the engagement of international companies in the development of migration policy. The Business Mechanism brings its expertise to the shared goals of the UN system, governments, and civil society in creating transparent, effective, and humane migration policies which support business and development in creating job opportunities and economic prosperity.

During the past year, the Business Mechanism met twice, in April in Geneva and in July in New York, and conducted a survey of migration and mobility professionals from over 210 companies and business federations worldwide. Both meetings, as well as the results of the survey, enabled us to collect information to feed into the Business Mechanism position paper which was presented at a well-attended business meeting during the GFMD Summit in Dhaka. The paper, entitled [The Business Case for Migration](#), addresses the recommendations and roles of the private sector in promoting a coherent and comprehensive migration strategy toward meeting the Global Compact on Migration. The paper highlights six key policy issues: (1) the global need for workforce mobility; (2) the matching of skills to labour market needs; (3) fair recruitment and decent work opportunities; (4) integration and social welfare of migrants; (5) the role of entrepreneurship and circular migration for development; and (6) engagement in public discourse to promote positive perceptions of migrants.

The conclusions of the business meeting called for the strengthening of the public-private partnership on migration issues, beyond the GFMD. It called on governments to adopt clear, transparent, and coherent migration policies that allow for the movement of skills and economic growth. It also called on all stakeholders to develop a positive narrative on the impact of international migration. The speakers on the panel represented governments, private companies, and business associations, as well as civil society. They highlighted the need for international skills mobility and for fair and ethical recruitment practices. Programmes for matching skills to labour market needs were also presented.

The participation of the private sector as an independent stakeholder received strong political support from many governments at the Summit. The Business Mechanism was endorsed as a permanent feature of the GFMD and will therefore continue its effort to bring a strong and united voice of business to future GFMD Summits.

Takeaways from the business meeting

I. The global need for workforce mobility and the matching of skills to labour market needs

Governments, private companies and civil society agreed on the importance of workforce mobility to ensure development, as well as economic growth. Employers highlighted the global mismatch of workers' skills with the needs of the labour market, in both high-skilled and low-skilled occupations. This is caused in part by demographic realities and an inadequate alignment of educational programming and skills training with the needs of business. By meeting labour market needs, migrants increase productivity and raise consumption, thereby generating additional jobs, and benefiting society at large. The mobility of talent across borders is a small but important part of maximising global economic opportunities.

Employers encouraged policymakers to recognise labour market needs and modern business practices in the revision and reorganisation of immigration systems. A balanced migration system should include a robust and flexible framework for labour migration, including a range of categories to spur innovation, fill skills gaps and promote development. Policymakers should also adapt to the evolving workplace.

Concrete examples were provided by employers facing challenges hiring migrant workers or with difficulties securing visas/work permits. A programme to match migrants' skills to labour market needs, as well as a global study on international mobility, were presented. These initiatives will be further developed in 2017.

II. Fair recruitment and decent work opportunities

Most of the panellists addressed the importance of fair and ethical recruitment practices to promote human rights, reduce abuses and avoid the negative consequences of migration. Employers of skilled and unskilled workers alike recognised that they must ensure that employees they recruit are not the victims of trafficking, and are adequately informed of their rights and obligations. They recalled that there must be, however, shared responsibility between the private sector and government. Governments should enforce existing laws and facilitate employer portability to prevent exploitative labour recruitment, protect foreign and domestic workers, and ensure that labour migration systems function effectively.

Companies called on governments to work with stakeholders to identify regulatory gaps that enable exploitative recruitment practices. Where gaps exist, governments and stakeholders should partner to reach a consensus on standards for fair and ethical recruitment that effectively combat exploitation, promote the development of ethical recruitment agencies, and target bad actors.

III. Role of entrepreneurship and circular migration for development

The business position paper addresses circular migration and development from the perspective of migrant entrepreneurs and investors, with special attention paid to remittance policies. In addition to competition for migrants who can help close skills gaps, there is ongoing worldwide competition for capital and ideas from migrants who can make contributions in a unique way. A prime example is in the technology sector, where many of the top global companies are run by migrants.

Employers recommend that migration systems include robust categories for foreign entrepreneurs and innovators to foster development in both the home and host economies. The business community as a whole has been limited in its ability to directly impact the factors that influence remittance costs and access to technology and services. This exposes a need for a collaborative framework that is inclusive of business with civil society and government to highlight market barriers to innovative, technology-based remittances, to reduce the perception of migrant risk among bankers and regulators and to leverage remittances framework for migrant investment and benefits portability.

IV. Role of the Business Mechanism beyond the GFMD

The governments' representatives on the panel welcomed the creation of the Business Mechanism in 2015 under the Turkish Chairmanship. The business network created for the GFMD could serve other international dialogues on migration, and particularly the Global Compact on Migration to be adopted in 2018 by United Nations member states. The Business Mechanism stands ready to collaborate with member states in this regard and agrees that the recommendations of the position paper could feed into the preparation for the Global Compact on Migration.

Switzerland, as the main donor to the Business Mechanism, called on other states, as well as on private companies, to share the financial burden. A multi-stakeholder and multi-governmental funding scheme would further strengthen the credibility of the platform. Provided with a larger budget, the Business Mechanism could enhance its visibility across the globe and could also envisage an extension of its scope to other relevant international dialogues.

Next steps

GFMD 2017-2018 Germany-Morocco Co-Chairmanship: The Business Mechanism will coordinate with Germany and Morocco to ensure meaningful business participation in the 2017 GFMD Summit to take place from 28 to 30 June 2017. Additional elements will be added to the current business paper to best reflect the position of the private sector on migration related issues.

Four working groups will further develop the following topics: (1) the global need for workforce mobility; (2) the refugees' access to the labour market; (3) fair recruitment and decent work opportunities; (4) the role of entrepreneurship and circular migration for development.

Next meeting: The GFMD Business Mechanism will convene a thematic meeting on 3-4 April 2017 in Geneva to prepare for the June Summit. All interested business representatives are welcome to attend and contribute to the discussion. Governments, UN entities and civil society will also be invited to a dialogue with business leaders. The agenda will follow in due course.

GFMD Business Mechanism institutional foundation: the GFMD Business Mechanism is currently co-funded by the Swiss Government, the European Union, The Coca-Cola Co. and the International Organisation of Employers (IOE). These funds allow representatives of business federations of least developed countries (LDCs) to participate in the meetings and to contribute to the debate with their unique perspective. The GFMD Business Mechanism's support team will focus on strengthening and developing new partnerships to ensure that a cross-regional perspective informs the debate.