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NEWS RELEASE

“Support Labour Migration Policies that take into Account Labour Market Needs,” Employers ask the ILO

Employer delegates attending the ILO Tripartite Technical Meeting on Labour Migration in Geneva last week called on the ILO to support a broad-based approach to migration that takes into account labour market needs. The meeting was attended by 12 experts from each of the ILO tripartite constituencies, who were joined by observers from UN agencies and international organisations such as the IOM.

Among the issues on the agenda of the meeting were the follow up to the High-level Dialogue on Migration and Development, and in particular challenges and opportunities for the ILO in the follow-up to the UN High-level Dialogue and Post-2015 development debate; the effective protection of migrant workers; sound labour market needs assessment and skills recognition; and cooperation and social dialogue for well-governed labour migration and mobility.

Speaking on behalf of the Employers, Ms Ellen Yost from the United States Council for International Business (USCIB), and a migration lawyer, said, “Demographic realities and business needs increase the need for greater labour mobility. However, government policies around the world increasingly have the effect of restricting mobility. The Employers’ group urges governments to recognize the importance of international labour mobility for economic growth, competitiveness and development and to adopt clearer, simpler and more consistent rules and procedures for easier cross-border movement of skills”.

Her views were echoed by Ms. Jacqueline Mugo, Secretary-General of Business Africa and Chief Executive of the Federation of Kenya Employers (FKE) who called on the ILO to support developing countries in designing migration policies in consultation with the social partners. Ms Mugo pointed out that migration was no longer a South-North phenomenon, but increasingly South-South and North-South. She gave an example from Kenya, where IBM had set up the first research laboratory in Africa which was expected to bring in researchers and expertise from all over the world. It was important that the economic turnaround in Africa was supported by up-to-date migration policies that would enable investors to bring in much needed skills.

CIETT president, Ms. Anne Marie Muntz who represented VNO-NCW of the Netherlands, highlighted the contribution of private recruitment agencies in helping to bridge the skills and talent gap. Referring to a joint study carried out by Randstad and the University of Amsterdam, she indicated that demographic transitions would see OECD countries face skills shortages in healthcare, science and engineering, education, trade and repair services. It was important that these countries adopt less restrictive migration policies.
There was heated debate with regard to ILO’s approach to global discussions on labour migration, which was particularly important given that in 2014 the ILO would be chairing the Global Migration Group, bringing together 15 United Nations Agencies and the International Organization for Migration. While the Workers’ group called for the ILO to adopt a rights-based approach to the debate in order to ensure effective protection of migrant workers, the Employers’ group argued for a more balanced approach that took into account not only the rights of migrants, but also the needs of the labour market. The Employers saw their call for balance reflected in the conclusions.

For further information, please contact IOE Senior Adviser, Mr Frederick Muia.