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IOM EXPERT MEETING TO DEVELOP THE IRIS OPERATIONAL PROTOCOL  
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**Speech by Ms. Ronnie Goldberg**

Your Excellency Ambassador William Lacy Swing  
Distinguished delegates  
Ladies and Gentlemen

My job is to make some brief introductory remarks on behalf of IOE. Let me start by saying how pleased I and my IOE colleagues are to once again join the IOM in an important discussion on how to develop the IRIS Operational Protocol.

In December 2013, Ambassador Swing and Former IOE Secretary General Brent Wilton exchanged letters on future collaboration between IOM and IOE, thereby making a firm commitment to build on the synergies between our organizations so as to work together in the area of ethical recruitment. This collaboration has been going on both informally and through joint meetings, such as the one we are participating in this week.

The adoption of a Code of Conduct on Ethical Recruitment Principles last year was of course an essential milestone in our joint efforts. Now, we need to operationalize it in a manner that will both live up to our aspirations and address the challenges in a practical and achievable way. This means recognizing, rewarding and building on the efforts being undertaken by the “good” actors in the recruitment chain and finding ways to identify, isolate, and hopefully eliminate the bad actors.

Why does business care? Recruitment is the first entry point in the labour migration process for many people – and often for the most vulnerable people. By ensuring transparency in their labour supply chain and that all recruitment activities are performed in accordance with ethical recruitment principles, companies can mitigate the risk of unforeseen links to forced labour, child labour or human trafficking.

We all know the scenarios: workers may freely and voluntarily leave their country to accept a job, only to discover upon arrival that they have ended up in a forced labour situation. Their passport may be taken away, or several months’ pay withheld until departure, or the pay is lower than promised, or the salary deductions too high to pay back the recruiting fees.

These are the abuses that the IRIS Code addresses. Addressing them is important for its own sake. But there are sound bottom line reasons for the IOE and its companies to join in this effort. I’m going to mention three – and here I am going to take the liberty of attempting to reflect the views of not only IOE, but the U.S. based multinationals that belong to my own organization, USCIB.

First, there are legal reasons. In the U.S. for example, there are initiatives bearing on recruitment at both the state and federal level -- the *California Transparency in Supply Chains Act* and *US Executive Order 13627*, which deals with federal procurement, being cases in point. There is every reason to believe that such initiatives will proliferate, particularly if there is a widespread perception that business is not (or is not seen to be) sufficiently engaged in ensuring ethical recruitment through its own efforts.

The point is not that legislation and regulation are bad things. Indeed, in many parts of the world, we need much more government action at the national, regional and multilateral

levels. However, too often local or national regulation is ineffective or counterproductive, piling increasingly burdensome requirements on responsible companies and allowing non-compliant actors to slip through the net. Initiatives such as IRIS foster both the necessary multi-stakeholder action, and provide business with an important, voluntary channel through which responsible companies can fulfill their legal obligations, and at the same time engage and leverage their own contributions with those of other companies and organizations around the world.

Secondly, the risk of reputational damage is a great motivator.

And thirdly, ethical recruitment brings with it some more subtle market incentives and advantages. It can help to ensure that vacancies are filled by candidates chosen through a competency-based or merit-based practice, rather than those who can afford to pay or who are most vulnerable. Competency based hiring contributes to global labour mobility and ensures that employers get the right person with the right skills for the right job. This brings the added benefit of increasing retention rates and decreases the need for on-going recruitment of replacement workers. Additionally, workers recruited through ethical and transparent means and who are given fair wages and working conditions are more productive.

Many companies and industry sectors have their own codes of conduct, and it's a pleasure to see some of their representatives in this room. In particular, it is important to have the International Confederation of Private Employment Agencies (CIETT) represented in this meeting. CIETT of course represents the recruitment industry, and it is no coincidence that its own industry code bears a very strong resemblance to that of IRIS. The IOE has been strongly calling for the ratification and implementation of ILO Convention 181 on Private Employment agencies in order to ensure their recognition in as many jurisdictions as possible. Such wider recognition would be an important asset for IRIS.

In short, by committing to ethical recruitment principles and through self-regulatory initiatives such as IRIS, companies can demonstrate compliance with legislation governing the recruitment and employment of foreign workers, demonstrate due diligence in the prevention of forced labour and labour trafficking in their supply chains, thus mitigating reputational risk; and take steps to that support their competitiveness and productivity. That's not a bad set of benefits to accompany the wider goal of attacking forced labour and human trafficking.

With these words of introduction, it's time to plunge into the details. I look forward to participating in this experts meeting, where I'm certain we will learn a great deal from each other. Fred will be following up on next steps for the IOE and I promise to take the results back to the U.S. companies that my organization represents.

Thank you.