**SIXTEENTH COORDINATION MEETING ON
INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION**
Population Division
Department of Economic and Social Affairs
United Nations Secretariat
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**CONTRIBUTION
TO THE SIXTEENTH COORDINATION MEETING ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION[1]**

International Labour Organisation (ILO)

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[1] The views expressed in the paper do not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of the United Nations Secretariat.

ILO INITIATIVES ON LABOUR MIGRATION STATISTICS

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) is concerned with the numbers and conditions of migrant workers who are of particular relevance in the context of the provision of decent work for all. The SG report 'Making Migration Work for All', as an input to the zero draft of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, reiterates the importance of evidence-based policy debates, grounded in up-to-date, reliable statistical information. The Global Compact will be key in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in general, and in particular targets such as 8.8 (*Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments of all workers, including migrant workers, particularly women migrants, and those in precarious employment*) and 10.7 (*Facilitate orderly, safe, and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies*).

Guidelines on Labour Migration Statistics

Despite significant national, regional and international efforts to provide guidance for supporting and building data-collection infrastructures (e.g. national statistical offices) and instruments (e.g. household-based surveys) that adhere to agreed-upon standards and definitions, continuing data gaps and challenges – including the lack of comparability of concepts, definitions and methods – limit the analysis and understanding of the causes and consequences of labour migration.

In October 2013, the 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS)[2] adopted a Resolution concerning further work on labour migration statistics. This Resolution recommends that the ILO: "(a) set up a working group with the aim of sharing good practices, discussing and developing a work plan for defining international standards on labour migration statistics that can inform labour market and migration policies; [and] (b) prepare a progress report for discussion at the next ICLS."

In response to the Resolution, the ILO created a tripartite Working Group (WG) on Labour Migration Statistics. The WG has met twice so far: in Istanbul in 2015 and in Turin in 2016, and will reconvene again in mid-June of this year for a third and final meeting. The WG is at an advance stage of preparing draft guidelines on labour migration statistics, to be submitted to the 20th ICLS, which will take place in October, in Geneva this year.

In preparation of the guiding principles, choices have to be made between different options, and it is necessary to seek a balance between alternatives, such as the following:

(1) Taking existing concepts and definitions as given, versus their adaptation or even replacement by new concepts or definitions

Concepts, standards and data sources on international labour migration statistics can be developed only within the context of and in relation to the same on total international migration. The existing international standards and national and international data sources are taken as the starting point.

(2) Casting a wide net covering all the diverse labour migration types, versus focusing on the most 'significant' of them

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While it is desirable to be comprehensive, it is also necessary to be selective and specific, focusing on the most important migration and labour migration types. Within each priority migration type, it is useful to elaborate subtypes which are more homogeneous in terms of characteristics, circumstances, data requirements and data sources, and policy concerns. For each of the labour migration subtypes identified, it is necessary to clarify, select and adapt existing concepts and standards. Similarly, it is necessary to identify the statistics required and existing and potential data sources, and to improve data collection methodologies and instruments for each.

(3) Recommending what is ideally desirable, versus what is feasible and achievable, based on the on-going ICLS preparation for labour migration statistics

It is useful to develop a framework or roadmap for step-by-step implementation of a programme of statistical improvement, specifying activities for continuing development of standards, concepts, methodologies and instruments for data collection and analysis. The framework should also consider arrangements for collaboration with other international agencies concerned with similar issues.

The guidelines are work in progress and the above mentioned alternatives continue to be under discussion at this stage.

ILO Global and Regional Estimates on Migrant Workers

In 2015, ILO developed a comprehensive methodology for global and regional estimates of migrant workers and generated new estimates with reference year 2013. There have been previous ILO estimates of migrant workers in 1995, 2000 and 2010. These estimates are not comparable to the 2013 figures due to differences in definitions, methodology and data sources used. Work is in progress to refine the estimation methodology, and to publish in 2018 updated estimates on numbers and basic characteristics of international migrant workers with reference year 2016.

The new global and regional estimates of migrant workers will be based on three sets of benchmark data: UN population database for 2015, UN database on stock of international migrants for 2015, and ILO labour force database ILOSTAT for years 2015 and 2016. The benchmark figures are themselves estimates. The quality of the estimates on migrant workers is affected by the degree of completeness and comparability of the benchmark statistics across countries of the world. For many countries, particularly in less developed regions, empirical information on population, migration and economic activity status is limited or lacking.

Experience with the previous global and regional estimation exercise indicate that it may not be possible to obtain enough empirical data for estimating the distribution of migrant workers according to major sector of activity. Nevertheless, it is necessary to make a concerted effort towards obtaining more complete and up-to-date measures of distribution of migrant workers by major sector of activity.

ILO International Labour Migration Statistics (ILMS) Database

The ILO global database on labour migration statistics was originally inspired by the Canadian-funded project entitled "ASEAN TRIANGLE", which compiled a database of international labour migration statistics covering the ten countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The work was launched in response to an identified lack of a reliable, comparable and up-to-date statistical database that could be used for enumerating and profiling international migrant workers in the ASEAN region. Following two successful rounds of data collection – launched in

November 2013 and July 2014 – the ILMS Database is currently hosted as a special collection within the ILO's ILOSTAT Database and freely available to users online.[3] Currently, the ILO ILMS Database focuses on:

- Providing an openly-available, relevant and comprehensive information source to enable evidence-based policy-making on international labour migration;

- Mapping the existing data sources that countries collect, including their quality, scope, completeness, comparability and possible weaknesses that can be filled through capacity building;

- Defining a set of tables of relevance on international labour migration as a standard reference-point for future data collection and reporting as well as ongoing capacity building efforts.

The ILO is gradually extending the ILMS to cover all ILO member States. All data have been gender-disaggregated.

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[3] The ILMS is available at:
http://www.ilo.org/ilostat/faces/wcnav_defaultSelection;ILOSTATCOOKIE=shVxRWnLAkRLXuwM4GfUQRFIshXgYQJnpjeLCCc6Yprg_iYWIvlX!-402478709?_afrLoop=488367230313814&_afrWindowMode=0&_afrWindowId=null#!%40%40%3F_afrWindowId%3Dnull%26_afrLoop%3D488367230313814%26_afrWindowMode%3D0%26_adf.ctrl-state%3D10m84l2nog_4