

**FIFTH COORDINATION MEETING ON  
INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION**

Population Division

Department of Economic and Social Affairs

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**INITIATIVES IN INTERNATIONAL LABOUR MIGRATION:  
THE FOLLOW-UP TO THE 'HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE'**

*International Labour Office (ILO), Geneva*

The recently convened High-Level Dialogue (HLD) on International Migration and Development in its deliberations reiterated and endorsed the initiatives of the various actors –Member States, United Nations ‘ organisations, non-governmental organisations, the civil society and the private sector- in examining the relationship and synergies between international migration and development. The HLD also underlined the need for embarking on a comprehensive and coherent approach in the overall institutional response to international migration and development and in this regard welcomed the establishment of the Global Migration Group (GMG). It further garnered support for the Secretary General’s proposal for a creation of Global Forum, which was to work closely with the GMG, to discuss the issues in a systematic and comprehensive manner.

The recommendations made at the 61<sup>st</sup> Session of the General Assembly are affirmed in the ILO’s Plan of Action whose main objective is to work towards maximising benefits and minimising the negative impacts of international labour migration; a goal shared by the Secretary-General’s Report on International Migration and Development presented to the United Nations General Assembly for the High-Level Dialogue and indeed, confirmed by consensus at the HLD meeting. It should be pointed out that the ILO’s Plan of Action is an operational mandate endorsed by the Ministers of Labour of the ILO Member States and the Executives of the Workers’ and Employers’ organisations. As such it is an explicitly delineated course.

### ***Salient Aspects of the Plan of Action***

Although the Plan of Action is fairly ambitious, under its aegis, the work of the ILO will be fundamentally directed at issues which cut across all ILO Technical Sectors: Standards, Employment, Social Protection and Social Dialogue. As a result, the organisation is uniquely positioned to adopt an integrated approach to tackling challenges of international labour migration, and follow-up to the recommendations of the HLD.

### **Multilateral Framework on International Migration**

The basis of the ILO’s work is the draft Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration, including a compilation of best practices. There is a substantial degree of convergence in recent international initiatives on policies for maximising positive effects and minimising the negative effects of labour migration. The ILO Multilateral Framework addresses many of these concerns and highlights principles and guidelines to deal with them. While recognising the sovereign right of states to determine their own migration policies, the objectives of the Framework are to assist member States to develop more effective labour migration policies.

The Multilateral Framework is fairly encompassing and deals with a wide range of issues. These include, above all the promotion of Decent Work, promotion of managed migration for employment through bilateral and multilateral agreements, promotion of ethical recruitment procedures, prevention of abusive practices through the strengthening and creation of institutional capacities, making remittance transfers efficient and more productive in sending countries, promoting social integration of migrants in host societies, development of social security and other social protection entitlements through innovative schemes and finally, of course, the promotion of migrant workers rights.

### **International Labour Standards**

Where international labour standards are concerned, ILO will continue to promote the ratification of Conventions Nos. 97 and 143 and the application of their principles relating to the protection of migrant workers, with a view to adopting a coherent approach to improving the situation of men and women migrant workers,

It will also promote the two fundamental Conventions on forced labour, C.29 and C.105, and assist in their implementation to combat trafficking and forced labour situations. It will provide technical assistance to member States revising their national legislation to effectively criminalize trafficking in persons and forced labour as well as to improve the protection of victims and compensation mechanisms.

Finally, in this regard, the ILO's work will address linkages between child labour and trafficking and assist in the implementation of relevant Conventions. It will do so through the implementation of a number of regional programmes to combat child trafficking for labour and sexual exploitation.

### Employment Promotion

On the employment front it is recognized that labour migration is a manifestation of the new employment challenges emanating in a globalizing world. The ILO will work at the national level and supports member States in mitigating the circumstances driving migration in source countries through the generation of decent work opportunities (of adequate and rewarding employments), which reduce decent work deficits nurturing pressures to emigrate. Moreover, in recognition of the stresses which are brought to bear on different population groups, the ILO will conduct labour market analyses which, at a general level, have borne out the relationship between trade and international labour mobility. Specifically, such analyses have also brought out *inter alia* the links between youth employment, women's employment, and sectoral employment and international labour migration.

*The ILO will also use its technical cooperation (TC) facility to undertake pilot activities in migration and development. The overall objective of these exercises will be to elaborate and promote adoption of new policy frameworks, strategies, systems and mechanisms for managing labour migration as an instrument for development, particularly by elaborating institutional mechanisms within and between formal regional economic and social integration initiatives, as well as within concerned countries. Thus, endorsing the HLD's call for strengthening bilateral, regional and multilateral cooperation*

The huge growth of migrant remittances, the 'most tangible benefit to the countries of origin', has served to highlight the positive contribution of labour migration to source countries. The ILO already participates in the Inter-Agency Task Force on remittances, steered by the World Bank and DFID. With a view to better linking remittances to domestic financial sectors, it is reviewing regulatory and policy frameworks in a number of countries. Given, that remittances hold great possibilities for the employment of migrants upon return to their home countries the ILO has prioritized work on the interface of remittances and their potential productive use in the economy, an issue underscored by the HLD.

### Enhancing Social Protection

This is a crucial intervention on ILO's part. The level and pattern of insecurity faced by persons from particular groups in society differ, and migrants usually tend to be most vulnerable to contingency risks and are generally not covered by conventional forms of social protection in destination countries. In responding to the widespread lack of entitlements to benefits, the ILO will work towards the development of methodologies and, taking account of national norms, levels of development and institutional structures, and identifying promising ways through which adequate social protection can be provided to migrants.

In matters of social security, the ILO will continue to address equality of treatment of migrant workers with national workers in coverage and entitlement. Policy advice will be provided to member states and to regional and sub-regional institutions in drafting bilateral- and multilateral agreements for the maintenance of migrant workers' social security rights. Legal advice will also be provided for the implementation of social security conventions. In studying the sustenance of social security systems in

conditions of dwindling national labour forces, the Office will undertake exercises in countries assessing the need for replacement labour migration, under various demographic and economic scenarios.

A major area of concern is the discrimination encountered by migrants in host countries. In ensuring their protection, the ILO has already conducted many programmes combating discriminatory practices against migrant workers through the promotion of diversity and integration in society and at the workplace, particularly in the European Union. Combating trafficking will be undertaken by assisting constituents in implementing support programmes to victims, improving labour inspection processes, monitoring of private recruitment agencies, setting up national tripartite forums and developing action plans on labour migration to support social integration.

Yet another concern is the working conditions in which most migrant workers are located. The ILO has a long history in advocacy of improvement of working conditions. In the follow-up it will continue its practice of addressing the protection of the safety and health of migrant workers through the strengthening of labour inspectorates and training of labour inspectors in receiving countries. Studies on safety and health in particularly dangerous sectors where migrant workers are often employed, such as construction, will be conducted to highlight areas needing policy attention. International debates will also be organized to raise awareness and develop practical approaches towards solving safety and health problems faced by migrant workers.

To combat HIV/AIDS in the workplace, the ILO's work will focus on the movements of people, as a factor in the transmission of HIV, and the causes of such movements. It also, through technical projects, programmes and research, will assess the use of labour migration policy and legislation as tools to limit and control HIV/AIDS propagation.

### Promoting Social Dialogue

Social dialogue is promoted in all activities related to labour migration undertaken by the ILO. As a tool, social dialogue has, and will be, used in the design and implementation of all activities reported under the Plan of Action for migrant workers. The direct involvement of social partners, will greatly contribute to enhancing social dialogue in labour migration issues, both as a tool and a strategic objective of the Organization, as well as to deliver on the recommendations of the HLD.

In the governance of social policy, particularly in schemes of social protection, the voice of migrants is not heard or taken into account. Unless that is changed, the social and economic position of migrants will always be fragile or ignored. Migrant workers in most countries lack unions, organizations and institutions to give them an effective voice in labour markets and in the development, implementation and evaluation of social policy. Often trade unions have considerable difficulty in organizing and representing such workers, and it is increasingly recognized that innovative mechanisms are required to help unions to enhance their bargaining position and provide all workers and working communities with stronger representation. Bringing reputable and representative interest groups more into the mainstream of policymaking is crucial if the voice of vulnerable social groups is to be taken into account. Assisting unions and other bodies to come together in productive ways is a challenge for the ILO, and must be part of the longer-term agenda of strengthening worker rights and security. It is also important to enable more of those outside mainstream organizations to have their rights, representation and opportunities respected. In many of its programmes the ILO considers which forms of representation offer the optimum or most promising degree of social and economic support, and in doing so consider the advantages and disadvantages for workers, for employers and for governments of different forms of organization.

### Improving institutional capacity

The ILO accords high priority to "capacity building and technical assistance" for carrying out the Plan of Action. Capacity building, awareness raising and technical assistance are means of action that the

Office applies in all areas of activity. Tripartite meetings and seminars, under technical cooperation projects, are essential opportunities for raising awareness of participants to issues of concern in labour migration and at the same time, for building their capacities to address these issues. Projects implemented in Africa, Asia and Europe have already adopted this approach, where technical assistance takes the form of policy advice in the formulation and implementation of policies and programmes as well as in setting up of institutions responsible for this implementation.

Tools for capacity building are also being developed. The Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration is a major tool kit at the disposal of member states in this respect. To assist countries in the Asia Pacific region, which have recently experienced rapid growth in labour migration, the Office has produced a Training Manual for the Management of Labour Migration. The Office intends to adapt the manual and use it in capacity building in other regions. The Office has also published a set of national studies and a training manual on working with women migrant workers. More recently a handbook on labour migration was developed jointly with OSCE and IOM. The Handbook aims to assist states in their efforts to develop new policy approaches, solutions and practical measures for better management of labour migration in countries of origin and of destination.

The International Training Centre of the ILO in Turin has also contributed to capacity building by organizing special courses on labour migration issues at the specific request of member governments. Moreover, courses on international labour standards, social protection, and social dialogue often include components on labour migration.

#### Developing an Information and Knowledge Base

A final mention must be made of the development of a sophisticated and sound information and knowledge base on labour migration as an intrinsic aspect of social and economic policy formulation. The ILO is working towards improving the knowledge base on labour migration, through the collection and sharing of statistics on labour migration, and will continue to provide technical assistance to many countries in this regard. It will develop an active research and dissemination programme which, among other, will include the impact of globalization on labour migration, the impact of skilled migration on sending countries, analysis of irregular migration, the assessment of emigration pressures, patterns of labour market discrimination against migrant workers, gender issues and the productive use of remittances.

In support of its planned, the ILO has established liaison with other international bodies such as the United Nations Statistical Division (UNSD) and the Statistical Office of the European Community (EUROSTAT), as well as academic and research institutions, in advancing the work programme on a comprehensive information system on international labour migration.

In conclusion, it should be said that the work of the International Labour Organization is multi-tiered. It utilises a gamut of measures ranging from policy advice, technical assistance, legal support, awareness raising, capacity enhancement, articulation of innovative methodologies, policy research and the development of an information and knowledge base. However, the Multilateral Framework goes beyond the mandate of the organisation. Commensurately, ILO's work recognises the importance of work being carried out by other actors in the field of migration and development. Accordingly, the ILO welcomes the establishment of a Global Forum to effect an increased policy coherence and a more constructive and useful dialogue on international migration and development.