

Notes by the Session Rapporteur¹
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I am pleased to deliver an impressionistic report today on the outcome of discussions of roundtable 2.1: *Enhancing the development impacts of labour migration and circular mobility through more systematic labour market and skills agreement*. The roundtable was ably co-chaired by Morocco and Spain. The discussions were framed by the background paper, which was endorsed, but by agreement our discussions in Stockholm focused on a few of its key questions. Our roundtable also commended the innovative work of Sweden to ensure the involvement of the private sector at the Forum, which also informed our work.

Much of the discussion in this roundtable dealt with the matching skills and labour, and encouraging skills recognitions including through public-private partnerships. Initial discussion was framed by interventions on the part of Philippines and Spain.

In general, the roundtable recognized mobility as contributor to development and for meeting demographic challenges. Labour mobility has economic and cultural benefits to countries of origin, and remittances and accrued wealth have an economic benefit to countries of origin, along with the experience and skills that migrants bring back with them.

While it was recognized that more and more skilled people are on the move, there is no assurance that skills will be used properly and this can too often result in brain waste. In the context of growing skepticism about value of migration in some countries of destination, there was also a stronger need to show gains. To maximize benefits there was a need to ensure migrants have the necessary skills (in countries of origin) and to ensure they are employed appropriately (countries of destination) and are prepared appropriately including through training.

More specifically it was noted that the benefits of labour mobility can be undermined by poor skills matching, and it was noted that the challenge of matching supply and demand has been a recurring theme for the GFMD. Generally, the importance of managed approaches to labour migration, including circular approaches, was emphasized as a necessary foundation for addressing this challenge.

The OECD provided some useful statistics of what is happening, now, as this mismatch exists: 35% of migrants have tertiary are underemployed (compared to 26% native born) and gap is increasing. Over qualification rates of 39% underscore a foregone investment in human potential.

It was recognized that bilateral and also regional agreements can play a role including in recruitment, training, skills development and skills and qualifications agreement. Skills matching needs to be a core objective. Philippines raised value of agreements with sub-national authorities in Canada, which has including the vetting of employers, and enforcement of employers including those who try to invoke placement fees. USA underscored difference in skills and labour market matching and planning for the longer-term, particularly given the sometime short-term drivers of private sector actors. Accordingly there was a need for the right mix of private and public policy,

¹ These are preliminary notes from the rapporteur of Roundtable session 2.1. The final report from Roundtable 2 will be provided in the Chair's Report.

recognizing that while employers know best the kinds of skills they need, it is not necessarily timely or directed at structural needs. UAE raised the desirability of a global framework for recognition and outlined a pilot it is developing. A number of speakers supported the idea of a skills passport, while at the same time noting that certification standards could not meet challenges on their own.

The roundtable concluded that recognition of education certification was also important, as many highly educated are not getting commensurate employment, leading to under-employment.

Another key foundation for effective labour migration program is timely labour market information including of job opportunities. This should start at the national level and aim to be real-time, and be widely available. The EU portal was an example of a regional approach; USA and Canada system also models, but these programs were not necessarily used to their potential. And such labour market information was only valuable to the extent it could be kept up to date. While we often talk about labour migration information in destination countries, the roundtable noted it was also important for countries of origin so migrants can bring back their skills and experience to suitable positions back home and to facilitate their re-integration more generally. A necessary first step for any global system would be to develop common occupational standards.

Mexico stated and the group agreed that Migrants also need to be aware of labour market conditions, and expectation prior to departure, including of their rights for redress.

Language is key and we noted should be designed to meet professional needs. It was recognized that language can be a barrier and factor in over qualification.

Broader training should also be made available to migrants, including through apprenticeship schemes, and in bilateral agreements. The development of practical experience can help to ensure that migrant can secure jobs more commensurate with abilities over term. France also raised the applicability of this to young professionals, and students seeking their first work experience. The importance of student placements was also flagged by Mauritius.

In general, the importance was underscored of engaging private sector, recruiters and employers, education institutions and also local authorities. With respect to recruiters, the UAE in particular stressed that ethical conduct of recruiters is as important as skills matching, particularly given that migrants can be burdened by debt from high recruitment fees. The entire recruitment chain must be part of any solution. Transparency of recruitment efforts would be a good first step, and also understanding the risks faced by migrants.

Finally it was recognized that discrimination and lack of networks can also lead to poor migrant outcomes, and countries of destination can play a role on both fronts.

2/ This discussion was concerned further in treatment of the second theme on a holistic approach to the mobility cycle, which looked more at the front end – notably with respect to recruitment, as well as the reintegration of migrant workers.

It was recognized that both countries of origin and destination had responsibilities that should be pursued in collaboration – including to ensure fairness. The importance of ethical recruitment and lowering counterproductive recruitment fees was recognized by a large number of delegations. It was noted that bilateral agreements can sometimes help mitigate. It was also recognized that global approaches could be pursued for advancing collaboration on recruitment, with the Public-private alliance for fair recruitment and IOM's IRIS initiative cited as promising models that should be pursued further.

Other elements can undermine the ability of migrants to achieve their potential is lack of portability of skills, poor enforcement of regulation, lack of knowledge of rights and access to justice. Lower skilled workers were especially vulnerable to abuse – wages, housing standard, dispute resolution needed attention.

The need to address the needs of returning migrants through reintegration was also underscored in the roundtable, and in this regard Georgia in particular emphasized that the originating state has a role in supporting migrants – prior to migration during the migration experience and on return. Prior to migration measures included to encourage training and support) and in this regard language training important and should be designed to meet professional needs. Encouraging return and employability on return need to be pursued while migrants were abroad. Finally with respect to supports on return – especially through appropriate placements or assistance in starting business and investments to maximize the potential contribution of the skills of returning migrants. This was a point especially emphasized by Professor Munz, whose expertise helped focused are discussion.

It was recognized that migrants develop useful knowledge and know-how from their experiences – even in the agricultural sector – and countries need to find vehicles for ensuring they can pass on acquired experience and knowledge – including through training of trainers.

A number of speakers emphasized that partnerships with private sector and development actors are critical, and bilateral agreements can play a role in facilitating reintegration, with Tunisia citing agreements in play with the EU targeted at returning irregular migrants. UAE outlined a commendable model – the Abu Dhabi dialogue, which encouraged a holistic approach at all stages of the migration experience, including on how to increase employability and potential for higher income employment.

Finally, several speakers highlighted the challenges they face as countries of origin, transit and destination, and in addressing mixed flows and also in hosting refugee populations in some cases – and in finding the right mix of policy approaches for each.

These are just highlights from a very rich discussion ably chaired by Ambassador Hilal of Maroc and Secretaria General de Corral of Spain, and coordinated by Frida Lecovic Westin of the Swedish Secretariat. I invite you also to review the background paper for a more detailed discussion and the identification of useful models and practices in this area.