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and balanced  
voice for business



## GFMD Friends of the Forum Meeting Geneva, 1 October 2020

### **Update for the Business Mechanism**

- John K. Bingham, Head of Stakeholder Engagement, IOE

*Check against delivery*

Good morning,

I have the honour to be working with the International Organisation of Employers, temporarily, to coordinate the work of the Business Mechanism for the GFMD during the maternity leave of Stéphanie Winet, through the Global Forum Summit in January.

I do this separate from and in addition to my work as Thematic Lead for Theme 4 this year, Addressing Gaps in Migrant Protection, in which I am happy to be working—under the direct leadership of Co-chairs Mexico and Morocco.

With 14 weeks left before the GFMD Summit mid-January, the Business Mechanism offers two points of substance and two quick points on process.

### **I. On substance**

1. **Impact of COVID -19 and economic crises.** We all know that the COVID crisis has sparked a global economic crisis. The linked crises have touched businesses worldwide, big and small, in the informal as well as formal economies, and migrant and native workers in ways no one would have imagined just months ago. And the effect is widening and deepening.

In July, we said—and it is still too true: “Companies, particularly small and medium enterprises, are struggling for their own survival.” We also noted—and it is also true, that “businesses will need even more predictability in migration systems to ensure they have access to foreign workers.”

These are not contradictions. One lesson the current crises teach us all is how essential migrant workers are—across the full range of skills, and not just to businesses and *private* sector services, but to *public* services, from healthcare and homecare to farmwork, meatpacking, food stores, public transportation, and construction.

These are some of the most concrete examples of the connection between migration and development: private and public employers, sometimes big corporations, sometimes individual families, employing migrants in what is more and more openly being called “essential work”. Consider the change in narrative! And it is not “spin”: it is looking at pure need of migrant workers, right in front of us.

As representatives of business in this forum on migration *and development*, we would further mention that migrants and diaspora are not only *essential workers* in the crises, but an essential part of *solutions needed to recover from* the crises. Migrants make enormous financial contributions to economies and development, often in two countries. In countries *where they live and work*, migrants contribute the immense value of their labour itself, plus spending or investing

about 80% of what they earn there. According to the World Bank, migrants send the other 20% across borders as remittances—globally some US \$714 billion in 2019. Most goes to migrant countries of *origin* where it directly supports individual economic activity and healthcare, and provides many the choice to *not* migrate or re-migrate.

Migrants also *create* jobs, and businesses. A few years ago, the Financial Times reported that migrants launched 1 out of 7 *businesses* in the UK, creating nearly 1 out of 7 British *jobs*. The Wall Street Journal noted similar numbers for migrant-created businesses in the US. Between direct hiring and knock-on employment generated in other businesses, one headline said simply “More Immigrants, More Jobs.”

So when business and employers urge and work with you on expanding labour migration channels that match need for workers; on responsible recruitment, skills development and skills mobility, that’s good for both the COVID crisis and the economic crisis. And not just for response: for *recovery*. This includes making many of the widespread *temporary* regularization measures enacted for essential migrant workers during COVID-time *permanent*.

2. **Our members priorities—and common ground.** In this moment of staggering risk and turmoil, IOE and the Business Mechanism have increased contact and research with our 150-member employer and business organizations in over 140 countries around the world, including with those directly concerned with migrants. This is what they are telling us, for example, most recently in an Employers Declaration that 17 national employers organizations across Asia adopted in August. That is, not before the COVID and economic crises, but right in the middle of them:
  - The first need is for predictable and transparent legal frameworks for the mobility of skills.
  - This includes responsible recruitment practices.
  - There is need as well for skills development programmes, skills recognition schemes and skills matching frameworks that respond to labour market realities.
  - Technology should be leveraged to improve migration management.

These priorities match directly with the 6 themes in this year’s GFMD. What has been striking this year is the amount of shared interest and common ground, across all 4 GFMD constituent groups—States, civil society, business and city leaders— to work together on this. Not every member of every group, but many. More than enough to take these things forward concretely.

## II. On GFMD process

3. **Partnering.** One of the things about business is that some of our most successful work is achieved in partnerships.

Partnership is also one of the signature pushes of the UAE Chair this year, and business and employers appreciate that greatly. Some 12 of our members made presentations—and more than twice that many participated-- during the 30 recent regional GFMD meetings between May and July. Our colleague in business just reported as one of the Co-chairs of the new GFMD Ad hoc Working Group on COVID-19; two others are active in the new GFMD Ad hoc Working Group on Narratives.

We are committed to this path of partnership as a way forward not just for the Global Forum *this* year, but specifically for this Global Forum as a *process*: a place and community of practice that, under clear leadership by States, can look at challenges, and discuss even those that are controversial, in informal, States-led but not States-only dialogue. Dialogue that is evidence-

based, practice-oriented, with an effort to identify shared interest and common ground as the most productive starting point.

In this era of too much crisis, what a distinct and essential role for the GFMD! With so much convergence achieved already, including getting migrants and migration explicitly into the Sustainable Development Goals with a unanimous vote by UN Member States, and a full Global Compact devoted to Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration adopted with overwhelming approval, the next step—the next phase and path for this Global Forum—is surely in concrete implementation... and *partnerships*.

In this direction, we congratulate the UAE for taking us up that path so purposefully this year. The LaMP initiative, whose first partnership labs met yesterday, reflects this vision. However, it is clear that it is a vision that must go well beyond the second labs preceding the next Friends of the Forum in December, indeed well beyond the completion of the UAE's chairmanship. Inspired by the UAE vision, the Business Mechanism looks forward to collaborating with the Troika, other States and the full GFMD community to ensure that this emphasis on partnership goes longer and gets even stronger over time.

4. **Finally: the GFMD Summit.** Chair, colleagues: what a lousy year for meetings—you have done a terrific job moving so much of this global work we do together *on-line* these past months, including again today.

Nonetheless, we are sorry to urge the same for the Summit, given the lack of improvement in the pandemic now and projected. As in the regional GFMD meetings, our business members are determined to participate, eager to exchange, and ready to partner during the Summit with States, Mayors, leading civil society actors and others. But this hard year, we can only see that happening *on-line*.

At the same time, we can envision many ways in which that can actually happen *better* on-line than some of how we've convened together in person. How? Depending on how we define the issues and sessions, and how we manage time zones, we can envision more targeted and even higher-level participation from business leaders who might never have been able to participate before. It strikes us that the same could be possible for officials of States and cities who normally have not been able to participate because of the time for travel, etc. *Leaders attract leaders*. "Click and attend" can turn into a virtue—if we work at it together, with ambition and discipline. We pledge to do so with you.

Thank you.