

**International Conference on
Labour Mobility – Enabler for Sustainable Development**

Abu Dhabi, 14-15 May 2013

**Keynote address by the Chair of the Global Forum on Migration and
Development, Ambassador Eva Åkerman Börje**

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to start by thanking the government of the United Arab Emirates for the opportunity to speak here today on behalf of both the **Minister for Migration, Tobias Billström**, and the **Minister for International Development Cooperation, Gunilla Carlsson** of Sweden in their joint capacity as **Chair of the *Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD)***. The fact that we have two Swedish ministers united in their efforts to communicate the synergies between migration and development is a clear signal of the importance that Sweden attaches to the Global Forum and the shaping of a new international development agenda where the impact of migration on international development is acknowledged.

The Forum has been in place since 2007 and has successfully carved out a role as a platform for governments and other stakeholders from across the globe. It has facilitated trust building, exchange of views and experiences in the area of migration and development. More than 160 governments come

together in regular meetings in Geneva throughout the year in Government Teams around issues such as labour migration, diaspora contributions to development, migration and development policy coherence.

The United Arab Emirates has been a very active participant in these Forum meetings. It is highly appreciated that the initiative to host this conference on *Labour Migration as an Enabler for Sustainable Development* can make the link between the debates at the global level and the regional level. The selected theme reflects the overall Global Forum agenda under the Swedish Chairmanship and we look forward to bring back some important lessons learnt.

This year could form a **landmark** in our **joint efforts** at the national, regional and global levels to **identify synergies** between migration and development for mutually positive outcomes. Many governments around the world are getting prepared for the UN **High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development** in October. Preparatory conferences are being arranged in most world regions, and I will take part in one of these conferences in Cairo in early June. Preparations are also in progress for the revision of the **post-2015 UN Development Agenda**. I strongly believe that it is of key importance to fully integrate the role of migration in this agenda. Earlier this year, the Swedish **Minister for International Development** Cooperation, Ms Gunilla Carlsson, who is on the **High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda**, hosted an **Expert Policy Dialogue** in Stockholm to explore this issue. We hope that a dual track approach could ensure that migration is incorporated as an enabler for development in sectorial policies and also a visible target for new partnerships.

All these efforts are **important**. Together, we have the **opportunity** to ensure that the positive **impacts** of migration on development can be enhanced and that the downsides of migration can be reduced. When formulating such aims, it is important to focus on the migrants themselves, as well as their host and home communities, host and home countries.

Identifying concrete synergies between development and migration is a **priority during Sweden's Chairmanship** of the Global Forum, and I am happy to **share some of these objectives** with you **today**.

Sweden chairs the Global Forum until June 2014. The Forum meeting in **Stockholm in May 2014** will gather a large number of **states and other stakeholders around the table to discuss migration and development issues**. The Global Forum remains a **unique**, interactive process. Neither the Global Forum nor any other global platform on migration existed before the **High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development in 2006 in the UN General Assembly**.

Thanks to the Forum, more and more governments are realizing how migration has become an essential facet of development, in particular when adequate policies and programmes facilitate it. The Forum has **inspired initiatives and reforms** in this direction, as well as **cooperation and partnerships**.

Sweden wants to build on these strengths by setting clear thematic priorities for our chairmanship.

Our first objective is policy coherence and a stronger focus on development in the migration and development nexus. This is key when **mainstreaming** migration into development policy and vice versa. We

would like to build on the progress already made in this regard. Sweden has chosen to **strengthen the development focus** of the discussions by setting an agenda that could **encourage more development practitioners to become engaged**. This means that we can look beyond mobility and migration to examine more closely how we can maximize the positive outcomes of migration. **Mobility offers opportunities** for the migrant, our challenge is to find ways to make the best use of these opportunities. We need collaboration between states and development practitioners whether they be found within their government's development agencies, ministries or among our civil society partners.

Our **second priority is inclusive economic development**. Migration has important effects on **fundamental economic conditions** related to labour markets, income levels, trade and investments. Labour migration and circular forms of mobility, labour market matching, and the diaspora networks that stimulate entrepreneurship, trade and investments, can all contribute to positive development outcomes. Remittances sent to family back home usually help to cover the daily consumption needs, which can in itself contribute to eradication of poverty and hunger. **Remittances are**, in addition, often **invested in health, education** and housing. Such investments often come with important impacts on the achievement of the millennium development goals (MDGs) linked to education and health.

The **potential to attain a higher income** through migration is also of great **importance for social development** which is our **third thematic objective**. By working together, both source and host countries can stimulate improvements in the contribution of migration and remittances to education, health, job creation and gender relations. The empowerment

of migrants, social protection and insurance are key issues in this regard that can unlock the positive effects on development. The **transfer of values and ideas** brought about by migration also means that migration can facilitate reaching the gender equality ambitions in the millennium development goals framework.

But there are also **significant downsides**, which negatively impact on the health, economic and social wellbeing of migrants and their families unless these **inhibiting** factors are **acknowledged** and **addressed**.

Adequate **legal frameworks** for migration are often **necessary** in order to enable the positive outcomes and minimize the negative effects. So far, however, there **has been a lack of systematic attention** to both the **benefits and downsides of mobility in a development perspective**, since migration has been absent from the current set of millennium development goals.

As the discussions on the post-2015 UN development agenda evolve, the **GFMD stakeholders and all of us here today can contribute** by providing **further analysis** and **elaborate** on the ways in which regional and global migration **as enablers of inclusive development** can be fully incorporated in the future framework.

Coherent development policies that fully **incorporate migration** as an enabling factor are better equipped to maximize the benefits and minimize the downsides of migration for nations and for individual migrants.

Governments that ensure the protection and empowerment of migrants can help them seek **safe and gainful opportunities** that also bring clear development benefits.

More and more governments realize that we are **co-dependent on migrant labour**. While some countries have shortages in specific sectors, others have a surplus of labour, and willing migrants who are ready to multiply their potential income abroad. The labor migration law in my country, Sweden, reflects our understanding that **migration is a necessary element of our own development potential**. We have a demand-driven immigration system, based on employers' needs. We need to be **attractive to migrants**. We also recognize that we must embrace the skills, capacity and ambition of others to achieve own development goals. So we offer them attractive conditions and access to a wide range of rights.

This **synergy is strengthened** when migrants are empowered and protected with adequate rights, and **diminishes when migrants are not properly protected**. Migrants with better opportunity for integration and access to **rights are better placed** to contribute to the **development of both their home and host countries**. In a **globalized world** with increasing **interdependence** there is much to win by supporting a **rights based** agenda for all migrants - **and much to lose if there is abuse**. If employers are allowed to exploit or abuse migrant workers, their contribution to development will diminish. Furthermore, if migrant skills are not recognized in foreign labour markets, this will result in a waste of human capital and reduced remittance flows.

Within the Global Forum process, a great deal of effort has been made to pin-point **specific areas of concern** that can be **discussed between states** to enhance positive development outcomes. The **private sector** can be regarded as another important development actor. Many companies and governments recognize the importance of safeguarding their human value

chains and the labour involved. Increasingly a **rights-based approach for business** becomes a **sensible economic argument**. A further objective of the Swedish Global Forum chairmanship is to identify a new format for engagement with private sector actors that builds on this understanding.

As acknowledged in the title of this conference, labour migration has been pivotal to the impressive growth of this region. You have shown foresight by recognizing early the value of bilateral labour migration initiatives and in fact have opened up opportunities for many to improve the lives of their families back home. **Like businesses, states also have brand value** and by **increasing engagement to protect the labor migration value chain**, this **region could be pioneers** in moving the development agenda forward.

This year we stand **at a defining moment in time**. **At no point in recent history** have we had a **similar opportunity to link** migration with development outcomes. The **Swedish Global Forum Chair** will continue to work closely together with **all stakeholders** - governments, civil society, the private sector and international and regional organizations to ensure that the future global development agenda recognizes the contribution of migration to our common goals. **We encourage open engagement with all parties in a transparent, consultative and inclusive process. We share a common goal, and we have a joint responsibility** to ensure that these processes pave the way forward to *Unlocking the potential of migration for inclusive development* – which is the theme for the Swedish chair of the Global Forum.

Thank you.