

The Fourth Ministerial Consultation of The Abu Dhabi Dialogue

The Colombo Declaration

Colombo, Sri Lanka, 24 January 2017

We, ministers and heads of delegations from Afghanistan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Kuwait, Malaysia, Nepal, Oman, Pakistan, the Philippines, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, United Arab Emirates and Vietnam to the Fourth Ministerial Consultation of the Abu Dhabi Dialogue, convened in Colombo on this day, the 24th of January 2017,

Noting with appreciation the excellent organization of our Fourth Ministerial Consultation by the government of Sri Lanka and looking forward to its able leadership as incoming Chair-in-Office of the ADD process,

Having recognized and welcomed the first-time participation by UN Women in an ADD Senior Officials' Meeting and Ministerial Consultation,

Having deliberated and approved the Senior Officials' Report to our 4th Consultation on current and prospective collaborative initiatives by member governments,

Taking note of the valuable contributions, presentations and proposals by observer delegates of guest governments, international organizations, civil society, academia and private sector actors on partnering with and/or assisting ADD member states in advancing our collaborative agenda and realizing our common goals over the next two-year cycle,

Recalling that the implementation of collaborative initiatives that we endorse by consensus is voluntary and subject to sovereign decisions by member states, we

Firstly- Express our satisfaction over the many concrete successes that we achieved through our cooperation relative to enhancing the outcomes of temporary contract employment in our region and improving the quality of the lives of workers and their families, and over the credibility that the Abu Dhabi Dialogue process today enjoys at a regional and international levels and the respect and support it receives from various international organizations.

Secondly- Adopt the following guidelines for a collaborative agenda during the next two-year cycle:

1. On Labour Recruitment

Practices associated with the contract workers in our region's corridors continue to represent a challenge and to compromise our shared goal of fair and equitable governance of labour mobility. We will, therefore, continue to lend priority to regional cooperation aimed at promoting lawful, fair and transparent labour recruitment practices and further empowering member governments to scrutinize and prevent unlawful practices and to hold to account any and all non-compliant actors in recruitment processes. This by way of:

- Pursuing efforts to align our respective regulations to achieve the above goals;
- Developing and implementing joint responses to non-compliance, in accordance with the national laws of member states, taking into account the findings and recommendations of the recently completed IOM-commissioned Research on The Labour Recruitment Industry In UAE, Kerala (India) and Nepal and, more broadly, by the set of voluntary “Principles and Guidelines on Fair Recruitment” recently adopted by ILO;
- Developing, assessing and cooperating in the implementation of recruitment schemes that promote lawful and fair practices
- Cooperating to expand the scope of the proposed worker orientation program (CIOP) to include pre-employment orientation in order to empower workers who aspire to foreign employment to learn their rights and make informed decisions prior to seeking recruitment services.
- Welcoming the announcement by the following pairs of member states: Sri Lanka and UAE, KSA and Bangladesh, the Philippines and the UAE, that they will cooperate in the design and implementation of localized CIOP programs.
- Directing the ADD Permanent Secretariat to keep member governments abreast of the progress of the pilot project on labour recruitment that will be jointly implemented by the governments of the Philippines and the UAE, with technical assistance from ILO, allowing for shared benefit from outcome and lessons learned

2- On skilling, skill certification and mutual recognition

Recognizing that training and skill development have become essential, both as an imperative for successful national employment policies in Asian countries of origin and to accommodate the growing need for skilled workers in the GCC’s transition to knowledge economies,

And that the certification of workers’ skills across all phases of the contract employment cycle is empowering to workers and employers alike,

And building on the progress achieved in implementing the Pilot Project on Skills Development, Certification, and Recognition by Kuwait, UAE, Philippines, Sri Lanka, India and Pakistan

We endeavour to:

- Cooperate bilaterally and explore multilateral cooperation in aligning our respective qualification standards;
- Facilitate the certification of skills and up-skilling and document and mutually recognize the skills of departing workers, those acquired in the place of work and the accumulated skills of returnees;
- Leverage skill certification to improve practices associated with the recruitment of contract workers, labor market policies and return and reintegration policies, thus contributing to improved governance of the temporary contract employment cycle in our region.
- Facilitate the continued research of the impact of skilling and skill certification on labour market outcomes and the contribution of temporary labour mobility to human capital, economic and social developments in our region.

3- On the use of technology to facilitate and improve the outcomes of labour mobility in Asia

Noting the increased use of technology and digital platforms by member states in administering labour mobility, as well as the development and deployment of successfully shared platforms by pairs of ADD governments, notably the Musanid platform developed by KSA and jointly implemented by KSA with Bangladesh and other member states.

Recognizing the potentially significant contribution of a shared multifunctional digital platform to improving the governance of regional labour mobility,

We

- Recommend building on current national government and bilateral initiatives in designing a prototype of a regional digital labour platform that streamlines labour mobility subject to considerations of national sovereignty, privacy and confidentiality of personal data;
- Welcome the engagement of reputable national and multinational technology firms in assisting with the development of such a digital platform;
- Direct the Permanent Secretariat to keep the ADD Quartet abreast of progress and report on such progress to interim Senior Officials' meetings.

4- On global consultations on the adoption of a "Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration"

Noting the large labour mobility flows in the Asia- GCC corridors and the immense contribution the mobility of temporary contract workers has made and is expected to continue to make to the development of countries of origin and destination alike,

Mindful of the potential of significantly enhancing the development outcomes of labour mobility by acting to improve its governance, and

Recognizing our shared responsibility to extend full and effective protection to contract workers so that they are empowered to contribute to and equitably benefit from these development outcomes, and

To the extent that our joint action in the context of the Abu Dhabi Dialogue, now a lasting and maturing regional voluntary and nonbinding consultative process, enables us to develop sound and effective solutions to the challenges faced by labor mobility that can be shared with the rest of the world.

As a means to highlight our collective contribution to the realization of the relevant Sustainable Development Goals of the UN 2030 Agenda.

- We request from the Troika and the ADD Permanent Secretariat to inform member states of the progress and modalities of this global dialogue, and explore the prospects of engagement.