



SUMMARY

Fair Migration and the Post-2015 UN Sustainable Development Agenda

Convened by the Republic of Turkey, Chair of the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) and the International Labour Organization (ILO), Chair of the Global Migration Group (GMG)

Wednesday, 9 July 2014 1:15 – 2:30 p.m.

Conference Room 10 (Conference Building, Ground Floor), UNHQ, New York

Mr. Vinicius Pinheiro, Deputy Director of the International Labour Organization (ILO) Office for the United Nations (New York) opened the meeting and welcomed all participants. He underscored the timeliness of the meeting given the ongoing discussions in the Open Working Group (OWG) on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on how best to integrate migration into the post-2015 UN development agenda. He then gave the floor to **Ambassador Yasar Halit Çevik, Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations** and co-convenor of the event.

Ambassador Çevik concurred that the meeting came at a crucial juncture. Turkey had assumed the chairmanship of the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) on 1 July 2014 and was eager to support the process of ensuring that migration, in all its complexity, was reflected in the post-2015 UN development agenda. He made reference to the Declaration at the 2013 High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, the eight-point agenda for action of the Secretary-General and the discussions at the seventh GFMD summit meeting in Sweden; three important milestones which had called for ensuring that migration was adequately reflected in the SDGs. Turkey identified the latter as one of the priorities of its GFMD chairmanship. Ambassador Çevik concluded by presenting a brief overview of the priorities of the Turkish Chair-in-Office, observing that the overarching theme of the eighth GFMD meeting would probably be *Strengthening partnerships: Enabling human mobility for sustainable development* and would focus on three objectives: (i) a migrant-focused migration governance; (ii) recognition of the impact of migrants on development; and (iii) ensuring one space for all stakeholders.

Ms. Michelle Leighton, Chief of the Labour Migration Branch, ILO reiterated the important nexus between migration—particularly labour migration—and development. While drawing attention to the benefits of migration, she also cautioned that such benefits would remain elusive if appropriate policies were not in place. Challenges included labour and skills mismatches, lack of decent work opportunities for young people in countries of origin, inequalities with regard to working conditions and wages, abuses of human and labour rights, fraudulent recruitment and human trafficking. Further, the most vulnerable, including low-skilled workers, women and children, too often did not reap the full benefits of migration.



Ms. Leighton made reference to the report *Fair migration: Setting an ILO agenda* launched by the ILO Director-General Guy Ryder at the 103rd Session of the International Labour Conference in 2014. The report had identified the need to: (1) create decent jobs so that migration occurred out of choice and not as a necessity, (2) uphold human rights standards and protections, and (3) strengthen multilateral cooperation. She also called attention to a number of recent initiatives undertaken by ILO in collaboration with GMG partners and in the context of the GMG working groups and task forces on regional labour mobility, standards for fair and ethical recruitment, human rights indicators for migrants and their families, and the evidence base on bilateral labour migration agreements. She noted that the GMG Principals' meeting which had taken place on 8 July 2014 had supported the proposal for guidelines to help mainstream migration into development plans including the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and other processes. She concluded by noting that the debate on the post-2015 UN development agenda was far from concluded and that further efforts were needed to ensure that the scope and breadth of concerns related to migration were reflected in the final negotiated text.

Mr. Pinheiro opened the floor to the three panellists inviting them to reflect on how migration should be included in the post-2015 development framework. **Ms. Ronnie Goldberg Executive Vice President, United States Council for International Business (USCIB)** focused on the perspective of the business sector. She identified harmonised multilateral policies on migration as an important area. The fragmentation of the current system had negative implications for employers, the native-born and migrant workers alike. While acknowledging the highly politicised nature of the discussion, common ground could be found since all constituents had much to gain if migrants were treated in a fair and equitable manner. She cautioned against viewing the SDGs as the only avenue for addressing the issue of migration. Moreover, making the post-2015 development framework too broad, might come at the price of weakening the effectiveness of the entire process. According to Ms. Goldberg, there was a tension between the comprehensiveness of the post-2015 development agenda and what is achievable.

Ms. Sarah Fox, Legal Counsel to the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) noted that lack of decent work opportunities at home remained one of the main factors compelling people to migrate. Migration was a multifaceted and cross-cutting issue which required a greater emphasis on the protection of human and labour rights, as well as on access to social protection mechanisms. In reference to the proposed OWG goal 8 "Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all", she expressed satisfaction that it included a reference to migration, contending, however, that it should also have more clearly emphasised the creation of decent jobs in countries of origin. In relation to the proposed goal 10 "Reduce inequality within and among countries", Ms. Fox expressed concern about the lack of references to creating decent work. Further, she argued that migration should not be viewed as a tool for reducing inequality or as a development strategy. Instead, migration would be better addressed in relation to proposed goal 16 "Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels", with



appropriate references to: (1) ratification of relevant international labour standards, (2) reducing gaps in wages and working conditions, (3) promoting social protection and the portability of social security benefits, (4) increasing the registration and licencing of recruitment agencies, and (5) reducing the fees related to the recruitment of migrant workers.

Ms. Eva E. Sandis, Chair of the NGO Committee on Migration, noted that civil society was supportive of an inclusive agenda for human development that was person-centred – observing that migrants are subjects as well as actors of development – and that viewed economic development as a means rather than an end in itself. Given the large number of people whose lives were affected by migration, it was important to integrate it into the post-2015 UN development agenda to ensure that migration occurred as a choice rather than a necessity. Other priorities identified by Ms. Sandis included: (1) creating decent work opportunities and promoting access to social protections, (2) avoiding the criminalisation of migrants, (3) reducing the risks associated with migration, and (4) addressing the plight of migrants, particularly women and children, in situation of crises or in transit. Further, she called for the creation of a permanent institutional mechanism to ensure the participation of civil society—particularly migrant or diaspora organisations—in policy discussions at the national, regional and global levels. A possible approach could be to create a standing committee of interested stakeholders. The business sector could play an important role by ensuring fair wages and equal treatment of migrants as well as by giving a more balanced portrayal of the contributions of migrants to host societies. She also called attention to the good practice identified during the Swedish chairmanship of the GFMD, which had emphasised greater involvement of migrant communities in local government decision-making.

Mr. Pinheiro then opened the floor for questions. **A representative of the International Organization for Migration (IOM)** thanked the organisers for convening the meeting and drew attention to the progress made since the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in framing migration as an enabler of development. The participant noted that the OWG draft (as of 30 June) still had a number of gaps, including the lack of a clear reference to migration under the proposed goal 17 “Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development”. **A representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)** reiterated the importance of integrating migration into the post-2015 UN development agenda, drawing attention in particular to the human rights of migrants. **A representative of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)** underscored the complexity of migration and called attention to the challenges in addressing aspects such as forced or mixed migration flows.

Mr. Pinheiro gave the floor to the panellists to respond. **Ambassador Çevik** observed that migration was a development issue which also had security and safety implications. More streamlined policies to facilitate migration and reduce some of its costs, as well as the involvement of a larger set of stakeholders, including civil society, would ensure better protection of the human rights of migrants. **Ms. Leighton** observed that the complexities involved in migration were not insurmountable and that practices on the ground were important. She also underscored the need to continue supporting governments to ensure that migration was reflected in the final draft of the



SDGs. **Ms. Goldberg** called for creating more and better jobs in countries of origin as an alternative to migration. Ensuring peaceful societies would also encourage more people to come. **Ms. Fox** underlined that she was not against migration but drew attention to the poor conditions of most people who migrate. She warned against the risk of treating migrants as commodities and called for a vision of shared prosperity. Strengthening migration governance and ensuring the rights of migrants were identified as priorities. **Ms. Sandis** noted the importance of ensuring that the voices of migrants were heard in policy circles in an institutionalized manner and that greater emphasis was given to addressing the root causes of migration. Following these interventions, **Mr. Pinheiro** thanked the panellists and closed the meeting.