



GFMD Thematic Meeting No. 4:

The Role of Business in International Migration

March 12, 2014, Geneva

Opening remarks by Ola Henriksson, Director General, Swedish Department of Migration and Asylum

- I would like to take this opportunity to officially welcome you all to the Global Forum's Thematic Meeting on the Role of Business in International Migration. I stand here today representing Sweden as the incumbent Chair of the Global Forum but I am also here as part of the World Economic Forum's Global Agenda Council on Migration, which I was chairing before Khalid Koser.
- The GFMD is a state-led, voluntary process. Today we have with us more than 100 participants representing 87 countries – all of us with an interest in making migration policies work for social and economic development. We all have a keen interest in today's topic and the GFMD has identified engagement with the private sector as a priority.
- Over the years, the participating states of the GFMD have met regularly to discuss issues related to labour migration, migration governance and the links between migration and human development. Through this process, we have learned that states share common goals and because of this, the relationship between us has been strengthened and trust has been built.
- Our dialogue also includes civil society and international organisations, each bringing a valuable perspective to our discussions.
But the one stakeholder missing from our discussions on migration policies has been the private sector.
- Why is this important to governments? The answer is clear. With increased globalisation of human resources, work and services that also impact national development goals, the private sector is an important stakeholder and negotiating partner within the area of migration and development.
- How the private sector works, what employment opportunities are created and where the jobs are located are key concerns for governments.
- Talking with the private sector about their needs is important for governments. That is why I want to make a point of acknowledging the participation of the private sector here today. We hope that this meeting today, and the work that has been done throughout the year to understand your priorities and challenges, will lead to the development of a sustained partnership that can help us develop migration policies that work for development.

- Governments understand that in a globalised world, the private sector must have access to the skills they need to remain competitive, and therefore migration policies play a crucial role in recruitment of talent.
- Having said that, businesses must be cognisant of the fact that governments have a responsibility to **balance the need** for businesses to recruit skills, with **adequate protection** of domestic labour markets.
- Negative public perceptions of migration make it difficult for governments to justify flexible migration policies. For the public it is difficult to accept the reality that skills shortages can exist even when unemployment rates remain high.
- Here there is an opportunity for businesses to join with governments to clearly and publically articulate arguments in favour of migration and to say that the skills you need can't be found at home.
- The Swedish Chair has focused on the global competition for skills as the point of convergence between the needs of business and the interests of states. By inviting businesses to this candid discussion about the mutual challenges faced by businesses and states, we have an opportunity to listen to each other, ask questions and get the answers we all need in order to build a partnership that can help us address the challenges facing us all.
- We are interested in understanding how policy-makers and the private sector can cooperate to improve access to skills and talent on the global labour market.
- We would also like to understand the best format that states and businesses can use to discuss the impact of migration policies.
- We understand that this is a process; that a solid foundation can only be built over time, but with the experience gained over the past eight years with the GFMD process, we know that this is an achievable goal. We look forward to working together with the private sector representatives as the GFMD process continues to evolve.
- Thank you.