**34th Regular Session of the Human Rights Council**

**Enhanced interactive dialogue on the human rights of migrants in the context of large movements**

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ILO thanks the Human Rights Council President and OHCHRfor the invitation.

* The ILO welcomes this dialogue, at a time when we face major global challenges. Poverty and conflict are intensifying, as inequalities are widening. Millions of people feel left behind and left out, and a sense of injustice prevails in too many areas. The lack of decent jobs is a powerful force driving migration—the ILO estimates 150 million are migrant workers. And 10 million more become migrants each year. Together with millions fleeing conflict, the governance of migration has strong implications for labour markets.
* It is both tragic and sobering to note that the Italian coast guard rescued nearly 1000 migrants at sea just last week. The numbers crossing to her shores increased 50% over last year’s arrivals, and hundreds have died this year in their attempts.
* Since its creation in 1919, in the aftermath of war and conflict, the ILO was given a mandate to protect all workers, including those working abroad. Its founding values are based on the beliefs that no lasting peace can be achieved without social justice and decent work for all. ILO’s unique tripartite system—involving governments, employers and workers organizations-- was established as a means to strengthen government’s bond with society that social justice should prevail.
* The challenges of today resonate strongly with those of the world nearly a century ago. Then, as now, we saw large movements of migrants and refugees. Many could not find work and those who did so faced poor working conditions and discrimination, or were forced to work in the informal economy without social protection. Rising child labour was a further concern.
* It is worth noting that in the 1930s and ‘40s, ILO organised a series of meetings on the importance of international cooperation around these large movements and the need for bilateral arrangements to ensure proper governance of migration. This led to the adoption of the first migrant workers convention, Convention No. 97.
* These standards—and the model agreement it developed which is still used today-- were meant to support more orderly and safe movements of large numbers of migrants, and to foster equality of treatment. They include:
* Fundamental principles and rights at work, including child and forced labour;
* Equality of treatment, including in wages and working conditions;
* Fair recruitment and work placement;
* Skills recognition and training; and
* International cooperation and social dialogue.
* These issues and ILO standards are as relevant now as any time before in our goal to promote fair and effective global migration governance, and they should feature strongly in the Global Compact.
* Human rights and decent work are in fact cross-cutting and central to the Compact. They are also critical to realizing commitments under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which calls for greater protection of labour rights for all workers, including migrant workers [SDG 8.8], in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment. Their protection requires the ratification and implementation not only of migrant workers standards, but of all relevant ILO standards, including those on Domestic Work.
* **It is important that the Global Compact seek to reinforce and not dilute these standards**. We should not shy away from supporting norms. Rather, in this time of great uncertainty and conflict, the rule of law is needed more than ever to guide our future resolve, and to reduce social tensions.
* The **draft “Principles and practical guidance on the protection of the human rights of migrants in vulnerable situations”** are particularly pertinent in reinforcing commitments to protect migrant workers and those in precarious employment. ILO is ready to contribute to the further progress of this guidance and to deepen our collaboration with the Human Rights Council.
* In addition to standards, the Compacts should reflect practical guidance that is grounded on field experience. One critical area is the recruitment of migrant workers – which is now a multi-billion dollar business. ILO studies show that migrants paying high recruitment fees have a higher risk of being trafficked or entering forced labour. They enter jobs with high debt burdens, and often experience poor skills and jobs matching. This can diminish their future potential and reduce economic productivity.
* The Compact can make a difference by supporting ILO’s new “General principles and operational guidelines for fair recruitment”. This guidance is being implemented across migration corridors and already delivering results. It will be a topic central to the International Labour Conference General Discussion this June that also examines good governance at regional and bilateral levels.
* ILO has also developed practical guidance to address the exploitation of refugees and their access to decent work – these are “Guiding Principles on access of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons to the labour market”. Together with the UNHCR under a new MOU, we are identifying priority areas for action and implementation. Decent work can give refugees dignity and purpose, and is a bridge from humanitarian aid to longer-term development.
* Finally, the effective protection of migrant workers cannot occur without the close involvement of all relevant stakeholders, such as business, employers’ and worker’s organizations, and ministries of labour.
* Social dialogue is in the ILO’s DNA --we have seen first-hand how they can help spur effective action and cooperation in communities on migrants’ protection, especially from discrimination. The Compact’s recognition of their role would be particularly salient to the implementation of our shared goals.

Thank you.