

**FIFTH COORDINATION MEETING ON  
INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION**

Population Division

Department of Economic and Social Affairs

United Nations Secretariat

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**INITIATIVES IN INTERNATIONAL LABOUR MIGRATION:  
THE FOLLOW-UP TO THE 'HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE'**

*International Labour Office (ILO), Geneva*

The recently convened High-Level Dialogue (HLD) on International Migration and Development in its deliberations reiterated and endorsed the initiatives of the various actors –Member States, United Nations ‘ organisations, non-governmental organisations, the civil society and the private sector- in examining the relationship and synergies between international migration and development. The HLD also underlined the need for embarking on a comprehensive and coherent approach in the overall institutional response to international migration and development and in this regard welcomed the establishment of the Global Migration Group (GMG). It further garnered support for the Secretary General’s proposal for a creation of Global Forum, which was to work closely with the GMG, to discuss the issues in a systematic and comprehensive manner.

The recommendations made at the 61<sup>st</sup> Session of the General Assembly are affirmed in the ILO’s Plan of Action whose main objective is to work towards maximising benefits and minimising the negative impacts of international labour migration; a goal shared by the Secretary-General’s Report on International Migration and Development presented to the United Nations General Assembly for the High-Level Dialogue and indeed, confirmed by consensus at the HLD meeting. It should be pointed out that the ILO’s Plan of Action is an operational mandate endorsed by the Ministers of Labour of the ILO Member States and the Executives of the Workers’ and Employers’ organisations. As such it is an explicitly delineated course.

### ***Salient Aspects of the Plan of Action***

Although the Plan of Action is fairly ambitious, under its aegis, the work of the ILO will be fundamentally directed at issues which cut across all ILO Technical Sectors: Standards, Employment, Social Protection and Social Dialogue. As a result, the organisation is uniquely positioned to adopt an integrated approach to tackling challenges of international labour migration, and follow-up to the recommendations of the HLD.

### **Multilateral Framework on International Migration**

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conditions of dwindling national labour forces, the Office will undertake exercises in countries assessing the need for replacement labour migration, under various demographic and economic scenarios.

A major area of concern is the discrimination encountered by migrants in host countries. In ensuring their protection, the ILO has already conducted many programmes combating discriminatory practices against migrant workers through the promotion of diversity and integration in society and at the workplace, particularly in the European Union. Combating trafficking will be undertaken by assisting constituents in implementing support programmes to victims, improving labour inspection processes, monitoring of private recruitment agencies, setting up national tripartite forums and developing action plans on labour migration to support social integration.

Yet another concern is the working conditions in which most migrant workers are located. The ILO has a long history in advocacy of improvement of working conditions. In the follow-up it will continue its practice of addressing the protection of the safety and health of migrant workers through the strengthening of labour inspectorates and training of labour inspectors in receiving countries. Studies on safety and health in particularly dangerous sectors where migrant workers are often employed, such as construction, will be conducted to highlight areas needing policy attention. International debates will also be organized to raise awareness and develop practical approaches towards solving safety and health problems faced by migrant workers.

To combat HIV/AIDS in the workplace, the ILO's work will focus on the movements of people, as a factor in the transmission of HIV, and the causes of such movements. It also, through technical projects, programmes and research, will assess the use of labour migration policy and legislation as tools to limit and control HIV/AIDS propagation.

### Promoting Social Dialogue

Social dialogue is promoted in all activities related to labour migration undertaken by the ILO. As a tool, social dialogue has, and will be, used in the design and implementation of all activities reported under the Plan of Action for migrant workers. The direct involvement of social partners, will greatly contribute to enhancing social dialogue in labour migration issues, both as a tool and a strategic objective of the Organization, as well as to deliver on the recommendations of the HLD.

In the governance of social policy, particularly in schemes of social protection, the voice of migrants is not heard or taken into account. Unless that is changed, the social and economic position of migrants will always be fragile or ignored. Migrant workers in most countries lack unions, organizations and institutions to give them an effective voice in labour markets and in the development, implementation and evaluation of social policy. Often trade unions have considerable difficulty in organizing and representing such workers, and it is increasingly recognized that innovative mechanisms are required to help unions to enhance their bargaining position and provide all workers and working communities with stronger representation. Bringing reputable and representative interest groups more into the mainstream of policymaking is crucial if the voice of vulnerable social groups is to be taken into account. Assisting unions and other bodies to come together in productive ways is a challenge for the ILO, and must be part of the longer-term agenda of strengthening worker rights and security. It is also important to enable more of those outside mainstream organizations to have their rights, representation and opportunities respected. In many of its programmes the ILO considers which forms of representation offer the optimum or most promising degree of social and economic support, and in doing so consider the advantages and disadvantages for workers, for employers and for governments of different forms of organization.

### Improving institutional capacity

The ILO accords high priority to "capacity building and technical assistance" for carrying out the Plan of Action. Capacity building, awareness raising and technical assistance are means of action that the

Office applies in all areas of activity. Tripartite meetings and seminars, under technical cooperation projects, are essential opportunities for raising awareness of participants to issues of concern in labour migration and at the same time, for building their capacities to address these issues. Projects implemented in Africa, Asia and Europe have already adopted this approach, where technical assistance takes the form of policy advice in the formulation and implementation of policies and programmes as well as in setting up of institutions responsible for this implementation.