



United Nations
ESCWA



Arab Labour Organization
ALO

**Regional Workshop on
"Movement of natural persons and its implications on development in the Arab states"**

**Cairo, Egypt
5-6 September, 2007**

Information Note

1. Introduction

International temporary movement of labour continues to face several obstacles. These can be exemplified by the hardships faced by the companies and individuals alike in meeting the conditions posed on visa requirements, residency, economic needs test, recognition of skills, competency evaluation, wage parity, social security measures as well as meeting adopted labour and professional standards and regulations on the national level.

Trade in services has contributed by and large to the emergence of new forms of cross border investments and exchange of highly skilled labour. In this context, many countries have assumed regulatory measures to facilitate and organize the importation of skills for a short period of time, allowing specifically the importation of highly skilled labour, professional, managers and business visitors. Others also incorporated intercorporate transferees of international companies operating within their borders. As such, several countries resorted to unilateral, bilateral and even regional arrangements to organize the movement of highly skilled manpower to their countries.

On the international scene, the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) allows member states in the World Trade Organization (WTO) to negotiate market access of labour within a multilateral framework which recognizes the principles of the Most Favored Nation and National Treatment. The Agreement however allows member countries to come forward with their schedules of commitments on a sectoral basis and according to four modes of supply of the service in question. Mode Four of the agreement relates to the supply of service by means of the movement of natural persons, allowing for the temporary admission of foreign nationals or foreign permanent residents as service providers to a member's territory. Currently, commitments made by member states continue to be of limited nature and are confined to the highly skilled, professionals, managers, and businessmen. Demands to broaden the spectrum of liberalization to include unskilled labour was raised during the Doha Development Round of negotiations. The negotiations might result in further liberalization despite the conservative positions assumed by both the developed and developing countries, justified by social, economic, cultural and security concerns.

Within this context, it is imperative that the Arab countries be kept informed on the latest developments on the ongoing negotiations as regards the movement of natural persons of the agreement (Mode 4) and be fully aware of the respective consequences of the different commitments assumed. The consequences arising from the commitments made might have varied implications on Arab economies and societies pending on the policy mix each country will implement in addressing liberalization, infrastructure suitability, business and investment environment, social, labour and economic policies, as well as policies addressing security concerns. As such, it becomes imperative to reach a national consensus as regards the commitments made among the various national stakeholders with the objective of maximizing benefits and minimizing costs.

2. Objectives

The objectives of the two-day Regional workshop are to present the trends and developments in the negotiations for the liberalization of services according to mode four of the GATS agreement. The workshop will address the scope, coverage and implications of commitments made under mode four of the agreement, its relation to the ongoing labour migration and respective implications on Arab labour markets and economies. It will have a closer look at the commitments made by the Arab States and will try to identify the expected impact by means of presenting case studies from Arab countries. It is aspired that the workshop will provide an opportunity to create dialogue on mode four among the various stakeholders responsible for setting national labour, trade and economic policies, as well as representatives of professional, labour and private sector organizations.

3. Date and Venue

The Regional Workshop will take place on 5-6 September 2007, in Cairo, Egypt. It will be held at Pyramisa Hotel, Cairo. Special room rates at Pyramisa Hotel were obtained by the good efforts of the ALO at USD 80 per night for a single room and USD 90 per night for a double room. Breakfast, service charge and taxes are included. All participants should contact the hotel directly for reservations at their earliest convenience.

Pyramisa Hotel- Cairo
Tel: 002-02-33367000
Fax: 002-02-37605347
E-mail: pyramisa@link.net

All participants are responsible for their own travel and accommodation expenses. Please note that no exceptions will be made by ESCWA.

4. Visa Requirements for Entry into Egypt

All participants must issue a visa from the nearest Embassy of the Arab Republic of Egypt in their respective countries of residence well in advance.

5. Organization

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) in cooperation with Arab Labour Organization (ALO)

6. Participants

Representatives and government officials of Ministries of Finance Trade and Labour from the Arab region are expected to participate. In addition, representatives from customs authorities, Professional syndicates and labour and employers organizations in thwe arab countries as well as representatives from the League of Arab States, and the Gulf Cooperation Council

Other representatives from United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), World Trade Organization (WTO), Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), International labour organization (ILO) and International Migration Organization will be invited to participate.

7. Language

The Workshop will be held in English and Arabic with simultaneous interpretation.

8. Additional Information

Any inquiries and requests for additional information should be addressed to:

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Working papers or presentations in any of the sessions by representatives of trade and labour ministries are welcome. Those who wish to make a presentation, under the approval of ESCWA, should submit their working papers no later than 25 August 2007, in order to make the necessary preparations and ensure the efficient organization of the Workshop.