

**Regional Review Conference of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular
Migration in the Arab Region**

Wednesday 24 February (14:50 - 15:55)

Round Table 1: Review of GCM objectives 2, 5, 6, 12, 18

Remarks by

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Excellencies, Esteemed Colleagues and Partners. A warm welcome to you all.

1. The Arab region continues to witness significant migration for employment. In 2018, ILO estimated that the Arab States hosted over 23 million of the world's 164 million migrant workers, 1 in 7 of the world's migrant workers. While the majority are men – some 19 million – there are also 4 million women migrant workers, the majority in domestic work. The region also contains the largest share of migrant workers as a proportion of all workers (40.8 per cent).
2. Realizing decent work for all, including for migrant workers, through people-centred and rights-based labour migration governance, is an important dimension of the Global Compact on Migration (GCM) reflected in the GCM objectives discussed in this Round Table. It is also at the core of ILO's mandate.
3. The ILO is a member of the Executive Committee of the global UN Network on Migration, which is supporting Member States to implement the GCM. We participate also in the Regional UN Network and several national UN Networks in the region.
4. The GCM rests on international law, which encompasses ILO international labour standards, including those relating to migrant workers. These standards continue to be paramount in informing GCM implementation.
5. The GCM is also rooted in the 2030 Agenda. SDG 8 on promoting growth and decent work for all urges Member States to protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants (SDG target 8.8).
6. The COVID-19 pandemic has placed migration governance regimes in the region under considerable strain and has impacted heavily on migrant workers, particularly low-income workers. If anything, the GCM has now become more relevant than ever

and will play an important role in building back better. Migrant workers have also made important contributions during the pandemic as essential workers in keeping economies going.

7. The pandemic has highlighted distinct areas of improvement for labour migration governance that would help to promote decent work for migrant workers, both in destination countries and on their return and reintegration in labour markets back home.
8. These include the need for enhanced labour protection of migrant workers on loss of employment to ensure payment of due wages and other entitlements; provision of suitable migrant worker accommodation; unhindered access to basic services; fair recruitment; and greater attention to development and recognition of their skills, qualifications and competences.
9. The pandemic has also demonstrated that enhancing labour market mobility for all migrant workers can have important economic benefits, thus strengthening the business case – in addition to human rights arguments – in support of reforms already undertaken in some countries of the region to dismantle exploitative sponsorship systems.¹
10. The ILO estimated last year that working hours lost due to the pandemic were equivalent to some five million full-time jobs in the Arab region, highlighting the urgency of establishing comprehensive social protection systems for all workers and their families, including migrant workers. This aligns well with GCM objective 22 on social security to be discussed tomorrow in Round Table 3.
11. Lastly, the pandemic has severely tested cooperation on labour migration between destination and origin countries. As a member of the UN Network on Migration, the ILO is co-leading with IOM the preparation of guidance on bilateral labour migration agreements, which will support Member States to conclude enhanced bilateral agreements to regulate labour mobility.
12. Working together with its sister agencies in the UN Network, and in close collaboration with its constituent employer and worker organizations, the ILO stands ready to support member States to successfully implement the GCM, and particularly its decent work and labour migration dimensions.

Thank you.

¹ Developing and strengthening labour migration processes allowing migrants to change employers is one of the actionable commitments listed under GCM objective 6, para. 22(g).