

**GFMD / Bali Process regional consultation
Closing session
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- Excellencies, colleagues and friends; Let me express the most sincere thanks to the GFMD process, under the chairmanship of the United Arab Emirates, and the Bali Process, for hosting these online regional consultations, with the participation of all GFMD stakeholders. It is my pleasure to take part in the concluding session of this GFMD Regional Consultation. We all have a common will and commitment to improve migration and development process. Under the current scenario, this has become even more imperative.
- If I may recall, in the opening plenary of these regional consultations, Linda Kromjong, from Samsung International, gave an overview of why skills mobility is crucial for their operations and the challenges faced by large companies operating in the region related to the movement of skills.
- Let me highlight today in this closing session the perspective of the Bangladesh Employers' Federation. You know Bangladesh is one of the major players in the field of migration in our region. Migration has always been one of the strong macroeconomic pillars for us.
- The Covid-19 pandemic which started as a health problem in December 2019 and now has turned to be a severe economic crisis all over the world has badly impacted the migrant workers. This pandemic is going change the total migration landscape. Over three hundred thousand households in Bangladesh depends on the remittance sent by the migrant workers. By now in less than 6 months, 250,000 migrant workers have returned home due to pandemic losing their livelihood abroad. These returnee migrants are now burden to their own families whereas they were the earning source a few months back. These returnee migrants have put an added strain on the already suffering economy. Policies must now take into account this new reality, but also the new forms of work.

On the three topics addressed in these consultations which are extremely relevant from current and future perspective. Let me touch upon briefly on some of the issues.

- First with **Leveraging Technology to Empower Migrants** where I personally attended:
- Let me make a very simplistic view. Technology is knowledge and knowledge is power. Therefore, it is very simple that technology empowers the migrants individually as well as it overhauls and upgrades the system that governs the migration process.
- Technology increases transparency, accuracy and efficiency. Technology can be a great facilitator in lowering the cost of migration which is a matter of great concerns for most of the countries especially Bangladesh. I feel that technology should be extensively used in the governance of migration by each and every country starting from preliminary registration, to recruitment, documentation, immigration, and subsequently deployment of the migrant workers in their respective field of work in the destination countries including keeping a track of their performance. Migrant workers also use technology to make them more knowledgeable in terms of knowing their legal rights, safety, enhancing efficiency, and ultimately leading a decent life.

- Governments and private stakeholders should consider developing new apps or actively promote already developed apps to communicate policies and procedures including help line access. Various e-platforms can be created for smooth immigration and facilitation of the migration process. We certainly hope to see stronger engagement on technology at the 13th GFMD Summit in Dubai due to be held in January 2021.
- On the issues of **gaps in migrant workers' protection** and on **addressing irregular migration**:
- There are 272 million migrants all over the world; of which 11 million are from my country Bangladesh. Such a huge number of people contribute to the economies of their own countries as well as the country of destination; however, in many cases, they are not under the coverage of required protections. Migrants need protection in every stage, while in transit, in the country of destination, and through policy reforms. To be more precise, the following four fundamental issues need to be addressed to enhance protection and reduce irregular migration.
 1. Formulate Legal pathways for employment – We need to strengthen a formidable legal pathway for employment which will greatly contribute in addressing gaps in migrant workers' protection.
 2. Transitioning from informal to formal economies: Business and governments should utmost try to minimize informality as much as possible. Though informality is a hard reality but the informality should also have some accountability so that the gaps cannot be exploited so ruthlessly by some unscrupulous people.
 3. Frameworks for responsible recruitment: Appropriate and effective national regulation is required to balance the interest of jobseekers, workers and businesses on private labour-market allocation.
 4. Formalize the intermediaries in the migration process: It is an undeniable reality that in most of the countries particularly in South Asia, there are 3rd party intermediaries to look for identifying potential migrant workers. These intermediaries play a crucial role in the recruitment process and they should be covered through a legal framework to have a better accountability.
- In addition, we should enhance Partnership and collaboration: All recruiting agencies and Employers and Business Organizations can open up a separate platform to exchange relevant information on recruitment process thereby reducing chances of exploitation. The example referred by Phillip Morris International how global brands were partnering with suppliers to ensure that the workforce, including the migrant workforce, is recruited through regular channels, ensuring its protection and ensuring legal practices.
- At the end I would like to mention that in our due diligence approaches to eradicate forced labor and modern slavery, through regular migration pathways, we have to acknowledge that one party or one company alone cannot solve this. We need collaborative approaches, multi-stakeholder collaboration at national and international level.
- As policymakers will reflect on revised migration systems, labour market needs and modern business practices will have to be considered. Finally, I would urge upon that any decisions on migration policies should be made in consultation with the private sector stakeholders through national employers' federations. I thank you all.