



Briefing by the UN Network on Migration

Monday, 19 October 2020 (Virtual)

10:00-12:00

Briefing by the Network Working Groups:

Thematic Working Group 4 on Bilateral Labour Migration Agreements (BLMAs)

Statement by Ms. Michelle Leighton, Chief, Labour Migration Branch, ILO

- Director-General (Mr Antonio Vitorino), High-Commissioner for Human Rights (Mme Michelle Bachelet), Excellencies, partners and colleagues,
- These are indeed unprecedented times for labour migration. The latest ILO estimates show that in the second quarter of this year, the equivalent of 495 million full-time jobs were lost worldwide. These numbers hit hard our societies and economies, and perhaps most significantly migrant workers, particularly women and youth workers.
- Human mobility is an important vehicle of development, and we can see that the crisis has severely disrupted migration in all regions. According to IOM between March and September 2020 movement restrictions have totaled 86,000 around the world. At the same time, 178 states or territories have issued some 732 exceptions to these restrictions, to enable mobility, many recognizing migrant workers perform essential jobs.
- The pandemic has highlighted clearly the flaws in labour migration governance systems across many regions with migrant workers lacking social protection and rights protection, and there is a recognized need to improve cooperation among states, particularly across migration corridors.
- As recognized by the GCM, bilateral and multilateral cooperation remains essential for promoting human and labour rights of migrants and **decent work**. Cooperation can help to support regular admissions and effective visa policies, social protection and skills portability and matching to better respond to business and labour market needs.
- **Bilateral Labour Migration Agreements (BLMAs)** are instruments to do this, if they can be significantly strengthened to both protect migrant workers and help them to contribute to and benefit from socioeconomic development in a fair and equitable manner.
- BLMAs cover the entire labour migration cycle, including identification of job opportunities abroad; preparation for migration and travel; working and living abroad; and return and reintegration into home labour markets
- The ILO and IOM have established a multi-stakeholder Working Group under the UN Network specifically to help support states in strengthening these agreements and their cooperation, and to better implement the Global Compact on Migration.
- In addition to ILO and IOM, the Thematic Working Group on Bilateral Labour Migration Agreements (BLMAs) includes the participation of FAO, WHO, UN Women, UN Expert Working Group on Women's Human Rights in the Global Compact for Migration (EWG),

Employers` and Workers` organizations, including IOE and ITUC, civil society organizations, youth groups, and academic partners.

- Together, we are developing practical guidance to support member States in negotiating, designing, implementing, and monitoring and evaluating labour migration agreements.
- The guidance can be an effective tool to provide the next generation of agreements with measures that are rights-based, gender-responsive, centred on migrant workers, giving due attention to sectoral needs and opportunities, and which incorporate the experiences and lessons we are learning from countries, businesses, trade unions, civil society, and migrant workers in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- We are making good progress and hope to have the guidance tool by the end of this year, including examples of emerging good practices.
- We would like to pilot the guidance early next year with interested member States. And we would welcome hearing from those of you that wish to be a part of the pilots.
- ILO and IOM, and on behalf of the WG, stand ready to support your work on labour migration governance, and on the next steps States are taking to recover and build back better from the crisis.
- Thank you.