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Roundtable 4

Session 4.1: Building Alliances: Business Engaging with other Civil Society Actors

BUILDING ALLIANCES AND A COMMON AGENDA BETWEEN THE PRIVATE SECTOR
AND CIVIL SOCIETY

Doris Magsaysay Ho, Chief Executive Officer, Magsaysay Maritime Corporation

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Introduction

International labor mobility has been on the rise in recent decades due to intensifying globalization and changing demographics. In fact, labor flows have played a pivotal role in the economic transformation of many labor-sending countries; this is natural since globalization, as a concept, should bring prosperity to all.

Economic analyses show that the international movement of labor benefits both the labor-sending and labor-receiving economies, as well as migrants themselves. However, such flows tend to generate serious political and social problems in both types of economies, while also causing international tensions. They should therefore be managed carefully at the national and international levels.

As of yet, however, there is no international policy regime on labor migration in a globalized world., even though international organizations such as the IOM (International Organization on Migration), ILO (International Labor Organization), the European Union, and the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) have been conducting studies and seminars with the aim of arriving at principles and norms at the global level.

Instead, individual governments have been reacting and responding with national policies to address the problems of international labor migration in an ad hoc manner, with a lack of coherence at the national, regional, and multilateral levels.

The discussions at the Global Forum on Migration and Development are evidence of the need for a major international dialogue on the issues and agenda for cooperation on international labor mobility, including the establishment of an international policy regime on this matter. These efforts would parallel the ongoing efforts at the World Trade Organization (WTO) and other organizations, to facilitate the free flows of goods and capital, and to ensure flows of intellectual property. The fourth key pillar of production—labor—remains the unfinished business of globalization.

The View of Business on International Labor Mobility

International labor mobility has become a significant issue for business' sustainable growth and competitiveness, as shortages of skilled and lower-skilled workers have become a problem in key sectors due in part to the aging demographics of developed economies. Business is eager for the establishment of a coherent and consistent regulatory framework that is fair to the sending and receiving economies, thus ensuring a sustainable pipeline to a trained and skilled labor force that meets business needs.

The View of Civil Society

International labor mobility has become a significant issue for NGO's, unions, and labor associations, who have fought to defend migrants, and who advocate policies that protect the migrant workers in both origin and destination countries. The resounding cry from civil society is that migration should be a choice rather than a necessity, and that migrants should be given the knowledge to make informed decisions and taught skills to have a chance to be successful.

The View of Governments

Migration has throughout history provided the vital impetus for economic development. But government policy on labor migration is vulnerable to political backlash from constituents represented by the broader society, particularly during difficult economic times. Historically, business has not engaged these political debates, although its interests are at stake.

A Simple Goal: Win-Win-Win to build Trust

Since international labor mobility is a permanent feature of the world economy, it is important for governments, civil society, and business to agree that the long-term aim of any future global policy framework must be beneficial to the sending and receiving economy and to the migrant.

The Global Forum's effort to promote dialogue between governments and civil society, and now with private sector as well, must also include an effort to build trust between business and civil society.

Because business has a lot to lose if a policy framework is not developed, it should take the initiative and work on a strategy to convey its message across to governments and to civil society. The goal should be to build the trust needed for a buy-in on the win-win-win goals.

Business must give a clear message to build Trust

GOVERNMENT	CIVIL SOCIETY
<p>Business must give a clear message that access to labor is key to competitiveness and is connected to business growth and national economic development.</p> <p>Business must make long-term data available to governments on their projected workforce needs to allow for immigration policy planning.</p> <p>Business must engage in and offer support to ideas on how to reduce the administrative obstacles to mobility.</p>	<p>The business case must be clear and must be presented as part of the solution for policies that are fair to the worker.</p> <p>Business believes in the ethical recruitment and movement of people, and will pay the cost of migration especially placement fees.</p> <p>Business believes that training workers is an investment and not a cost to business.</p>

Best Practices in Shipping

The shipping industry’s model for labor mobility, developed over decades, provides a compelling example of how businesses and civil society can work together to ensure that all stakeholders win from migration. The shipping industry provides seafarers a career at sea with the opportunity to earn higher wages than they would receive at home, and the opportunity to reside permanently in a low-cost home base. It provides a continuous circular flow of workers with contracts that can be as short as 3-6 months or as long as 8-10 months with a two-month vacation. All expenses for placement and transit are paid by the employer. The shipping industry also has a policy infrastructure based on four pillars:

Governance

The International Maritime Organization (IMO) regulates and sets the standards for international ships that move between different jurisdictions, often far from the country of registry. The IMO provides the machinery for cooperation amongst 167 member states, while also regulating practices relating to technical matters and setting international standards for maritime safety, efficiency of navigation, and prevention and control of marine pollution from ships.

Training and Certification

The IMO Convention on the “Standards of Training, Certification and Watch keeping for Seafarers” (STCW) is another important standard-setting tool in international shipping. It defines the minimum standards for crew competence and sets the rules for training certificates. All flag states must comply with the standards and mutually recognize training certificates, thus providing seafarers with global employment choices.

Workers Rights

The International Labor Organization (ILO) has set minimum standards for the protection and welfare of seafarers regardless of country; the new Maritime Labor Code is now being

ratified by all member states. The MLC covers fair wages; sickness, accident and workmen's compensation insurance; safe and healthy working conditions; reasonable working hours and holidays; shore leave; medical care; social security; repatriation; and death benefits.

Rules on Placement and Deployment

The ILO also regulates fair recruitment and placement practices of seafarers on international ships. Under its regulations, ship owners, by legislated rules, pay for all recruitment fees, medical examinations, travel expenses, work-related medical expenses, permanent disability and life insurance, and other expenses like documentation and visas.

Conclusion

Labor remains the unfinished business of globalization. This is, in part, because the issues surrounding the international mobility of workers are so complex and are often highly contentious. Yet the major stakeholders—including governments, civil society, and the private sector—can work together to ensure that international migration benefits all. In particular, the shipping industry provides a compelling example of how global rules to govern the international movement of people can facilitate movement, protect workers, and enable businesses to grow. Other industries might draw lessons from this example as they develop migration policies at the global level.