

**103<sup>rd</sup> Session of the IOM Council**

**Conference Room XVII, Palais des Nations, Geneva**

**Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> November**

**High-level Segment on Migration Governance**

**Global Migration Group (11:00 – 13:00)**

**Intervention of ILO Director-General, Mr Guy Ryder**

My thanks firstly to Director-General Swing for the invitation to be with you today. It is very pleasing to be in the company of the Special Representative, Peter Sutherland, and my friend, the Executive Secretary, Mr Alkalaj.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentleman, let me say that having listened to the previous interventions in this session, I fear that my intervention risks more to be characterized by repetition than any element of dissonance or disagreement with what I have heard because I agree very strongly with the lines that have been taken by previous speakers. Let me then try to add a few reflections that might add to what you have heard and some thoughts about the way forward, particularly for the GMG.

The first comments are about the particular juncture at which we find ourselves. It seems to be that there are a number of elements which, put together, can lead us to believe, as Director-General Swing has just said, that we are on the cusp of something qualitatively new in respect of migration and that there are new demands on us in the multilateral system to respond to evolving circumstances. What are these circumstances? Well, the first obviously is events, what is happening in the world, and we are constantly shocked and should be shocked by the litany of tragedies related to migration, which did not begin in Lampedusa and have not ended in Lampedusa, but which are the sharpest call to action that I think we can possibly have.

The second is the institutional conjuncture in which we find ourselves in the wake of the Second High-level Dialogue with everything that brought to our work, to the forthcoming Global Forum under Sweden's leadership and of course, as we have just heard, with the evolving circumstances and working methods of the GMG itself. And let's place this against the overall background which the Deputy Secretary-General has reminded us is one of a global landscape – a rapidly changing global landscape – in which migration is an important landmark, a necessary and inevitable part of the globalized economy, and one that we must continue to

insist is a positive element of that global landscape. It is striking of course - and we have been reminded of this - that the very strong feelings of consensus that exist in this room and that have been articulated by speakers this morning contrast somewhat with the manner in which migration is dealt with out there in the Member States of our respective organizations. Director-General, you very courageously spoke about the lack of political courage in dealing with migration issues. We know that migration issues are being dealt with in very complex and sometimes extremely difficult political force fields, and we cannot divorce our discussions from that reality because our future work will be conditioned by those realities.

This said, I have to say that I am much encouraged – and the ILO’s tripartite constituency of governments, workers and employers have expressed their encouragement – from the outcomes of the High-level Dialogue. The very fact is that we did get a consensus Declaration – something which those with greater experience than I tell me would have been an unlikely outcome a number of years ago. We have seen in the outcome of the HLD and the Secretary-General’s eight-point agenda a very clear and very welcome recognition of the rights dimension – the rights and protection dimension – to the migration agenda; what Peter Sutherland has referred to as an agenda which recognized the dignity and equality of persons, and responds, Director-General Swing, to what you said, the need to look at migration as the behaviour and the needs of individual human beings endowed with rights and with dignity – tremendously important.

Now, let me say as well, and I hope you will not think me parochial if I say it, that the ILO is encouraged by the recognition in the HLD outcomes and in the Secretary-General’s eight-point agenda of the importance of the labour dimensions of migration. I think I can defend myself effectively from accusations of being parochial by the simple fact that 90 per cent of international migrants are workers or family members of workers, so labour is very much at the centre of the migration story. That is why we see a very strong convergence between the work being undertaken in these institutions – the IOM and the different governance institutions for migration – and the ILO’s own Decent Work Agenda. And so we very strongly welcomed the attention given by the Secretary-General to areas such as the need for equitable recruitment practices for migration, for skills recognition and certification, issues such as the portability of social security benefits, and, not least, the role of social dialogue in developing migration policies effectively.

Since the High-level Dialogue took place, the ILO itself has held a Tripartite Meeting on Labour Migration to look at how we can plot the way forward in the implementation of the High-level Dialogue outcomes, and I think given the central role of jobs and employment in sustainable development, there is a broad consensus in our constituency that the Decent Work Agenda and the issues confronting migrant workers must become central to debates on migration and

development. In that regard, let me say that it has been of particular importance that the HLD outcomes recognize the need for the promotion and respect of international labour standards, and in that context let me underline the importance which not only the ILO but others have given to the ILO's Domestic Workers' Convention – its Convention 189 – and at this table I want to thank the very strong advocacy, firstly Mr Sutherland by you yourself. I was told by my colleagues that having listened to Mr Sutherland I ought to raise the tone of my own advocacy on the Domestic Workers Convention – marginally embarrassing, but actually quite useful I have to say! We look for significant progress on this Convention.

Colleagues, as you know, the ILO will be taking up the GMG Chair in 2014 in the circumstances, Sven [Alkalaj], that you have described. We are delighted to do so and we do so with a very clear understanding of the responsibilities that are attached to that role. Speakers have referred to some of the evolutions in the GMG and the outcome of the GMG's own internal review processes which were endorsed by GMG Principals in July. We have a multi-annual work plan for 2013 to 2015 and we are clearly intent on helping the GMG become more strategic in its work, more impactful, by better harnessing the voices of its member agencies for joint global advocacy. We need to pool our expertise better to create practical guidance tools and knowledge products, along with training to reinforce agency coordination and capacities.

I see it as an integral part of the ILO's role in the GMG next year to promote close collaboration between the partner agencies and to guide the GMG's work in accordance with the Secretary-General's eight-point agenda for action – and can I just in that context and very telegraphically mention a number of points that seem to me to be of crucial importance.

Firstly, and building on the great work of the IOM in the Chair of the GMG, I think we need to stimulate further engagement in the efforts to ensure the integration of migration in the post-2015 UN development agenda, including through the objective of productive employment and decent work for all, and the protection of migrants' human and labour rights.

Secondly, and as stated in the work plan, we will try to do our best to establish channels for regular and more structured engagement of the GMG with governments in response to their request for greater transparency, and also – and I want to underline this – with civil society organizations, including the social partners, and I want to thank the Special Representative who, as requested by the Secretary-General, has committed to work with us in facilitating closer GMG and Global Forum collaboration. This seems to me the essential part of governance improvement – and in that regard we look forward to working constructively with Ambassador Åkerman as the Swedish Chair of the GFMD and with the incoming Turkish Chair, and at the same time we need to respond to the call from our own constituents to ensure greater space for them – workers' and employers' organizations – in Global Forum processes. They are not yet recognized as distinct actors, but they are critical to improving the governance of migration,

in particular labour migration and mobility, and I think that this is an area that will require further reflection by the ILO and the GMG.

Let me say as well that it is important to create better opportunities to document and exchange good practices at country and regional levels and for bringing these into the global policy debate, and at the same time to strengthen the knowledge base on migration, including practical tools for improved data collection.

Colleagues, I've mentioned already, and I will close with this, the importance of the ILO's Domestic Workers' Convention. I think it is important in its own right, for its own content, because it addresses the needs of more than 50 million workers around the world, many of whom are amongst the most vulnerable on labour markets. But I think that the Domestic Workers' Convention also has the effect and the role of example. There are other ILO Conventions which relate specifically to migrant workers. Next year marks the 65th anniversary of the ILO Migration for Employment Convention, that's No. 97, which was the first ever international standard on migrant workers, and in 2015, the following year, we will be commemorating the 40th anniversary of the Migrant Workers' Convention 143 as well as the 10th anniversary of the ILO's Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration. I don't think that we should be shying away from the normative elements of the migration debate.

Colleagues, I will end with that. I think we are at a moment where we need to bring not just political courage but also multilateral ambition to the tasks before us. In our own way, the ILO is committed to that task and looks forward to working with all partners to that end. Thank you very much.