

UAE WRITTEN STATEMENT

IOM INTERNATIONAL DIALOGUE ON MIGRATION 2017

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Alex Zalami, Advisor to the Minister, Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation, United Arab Emirates:

“The New York Declaration and the Modalities for the intergovernmental negotiations of the global compact on migration clearly recognise the importance of regional cooperation in facilitating safe, orderly and regular migration. They invite contributions from regional consultative processes in the preparatory process.

The United Arab Emirates welcomes that invitation. Regional consultative processes are often where the most in-depth and engaged examples of bilateral and multilateral cooperation on migration reside.

In the Concept Note accompanying this session, the words of William Lacy Swing resonate strongly with our own experience. “We focus too much on problems; too little on solutions”. That is particularly true of our region.

The Asia-GCC migration corridors face significant challenges. Those challenges are well documented in international fora and the media. What is less commonly recognised are the solutions that have come about through regional cooperation between countries of labour origin and countries of destination, particularly through our own regional consultative process, the Abu Dhabi Dialogue.

The challenges that we face are borne out of a very particular context: our migration model is characterised by demand (since the early 70s) for low skilled labour to undertake infrastructure development in the GCC; and a very large supply pool in Asian countries of origin, which far exceeds that demand.

Given that context, the particular challenges that we face revolve around how best to protect and empower migrant workers, while at the same time ensuring that the labour market is sufficiently flexible that the economic benefits of participation are felt by all.

The Abu Dhabi Dialogue has responded to these challenges by coming up with often innovative solutions. At the most recent Ministerial Consultation, convened in Colombo in January of this year, it was agreed to focus regional cooperation, over the next two year cycle, on three distinct areas. Firstly, promotion and enforcement of fair and transparent labour recruitment practices. Secondly, development, certification and mutual recognition of occupational skills. And thirdly, leveraging technology and shared digital platforms for improving the governance of temporary labour migration. In particular, partnerships between countries of origin and destination have been developed to manage pilot projects, with insights and recommendations from those pilot projects shared among all member states.

To take, briefly, one concrete example of this cooperation in action. The UAE, in partnership with the Philippines, is currently looking at strengthening and improving recruitment practices in the UAE-Philippines corridor, with a view to ensuring that legal prohibitions on workers paying for their own recruitment are properly enforced. The context in which this particular recruitment challenge arises is long standing and has deep cultural roots in the social fabric of both countries. But through increased intergovernmental cooperation, it can and is being addressed.

It is these kinds of innovative solutions, borne out of the cooperation that regional consultative processes can foster, which the United Arab Emirates hopes will find their way into the GCM, to enable future monitoring and further engagement at the global and regional levels. We look forward to understanding, more closely, the mechanisms by which the drafting of the GCM will draw on the experiences of the regional consultative processes, but believe that it is important that they allow for a contextual approach that will create value for member states, and, ultimately, are responsive to the needs of the migrants themselves.”