

Panel 2, 1 March. 3-4:30 pm, Conference room 4, UNHQ

Session description:

In order to achieve the SDGs, stakeholders from a large range of areas will need to build new partnerships and strengthen their collaboration on migration-related issues. This includes collaboration between international fora, civil society, cities, international organizations and national governments, to name a few. This final panel will address the issue of partnerships to achieve significant progress on all aspects of migration in the SDGs.

Remarks of Ursula Wynhoven

**Chief Legal Officer/Chief, Governance and Social Sustainability
UN Global Compact**

No one segment of society can achieve the SDGs alone. Increasingly, companies are understanding that they need to and want to collaborate and co-invest in solutions to shared, systemic challenges.

A key starting point when we talk about business and any or all of the SDGs is to consider what is business' role.

At the UN Global Compact – the UN's corporate sustainability initiative – we say that corporate sustainability is business' main contribution to the SDGs. Corporate sustainability is long term value creation by a business in economic, social, environmental and ethical terms. Concretely, this means that what we expect of business is that they will act responsibly AND will look for opportunity to have positive impact on society and the environment where they operate.

Businesses can have enormous positive and negative impacts on the goals and targets in the SDGs including the ones that relate to migrants. It is important that businesses do not give with one hand, but take with the other.

Acting responsibly includes respect for human rights and non discrimination. The UN Global Compact principles including on these key areas are the minimum for any company seeking to advance the SDGs. Companies should undertake due diligence to identify, prevent and address any negative impacts they may have on society and the environment, and ensure that they have a culture of integrity and compliance. Companies should carefully consider business risks related to each SDG, including as they relate to migrants and adjust their business practices to avoid doing harm.

Towards migrants, it means for businesses things like:

- not retaining identity documents of migrant workers and not permitting migrant workers to be charged recruitment fees
- it also means that they will take care to ensure that they are not involved in trafficking of workers including by hiring migrant workers directly or through legal and licensed recruiters and not through shady means
- it means respect migrant workers rights to freedom of association and bargain collectively
- it also covers that businesses will not tolerate discrimination including on the basis of race, ethnicity and religion in their workplaces or in the goods and services that they source and provide.

Going beyond avoiding exploitative practices and discrimination, many companies increasingly recognize that diversity and inclusion also make good business sense, that innovation, new markets and productivity increase when their workforce is inclusive and reflects the population where they operate, including from immigrant communities.

Finding opportunity means companies using core business, strategic philanthropy, advocacy and partnerships to create shared value, to tap new markets and drive corporate growth while also serving societal

needs to engage in partnerships and collective action efforts that pool resources, share risks and can find solutions faster.

Thus, regarding migrants, we are pleased to see companies:

- signing the business action pledge on refugees that we have with UNHCR and supporting government and NGO efforts to address the refugee crisis
- helping each other to navigate the legal frameworks for lawfully employing refugees
- proactively recruiting for and promoting talent with diverse racial, ethnic and religious backgrounds
- providing language, health and safety, and lifeskills training for migrant workers
- advocating for immigration reform to facilitate labour force mobility and supporting advocacy efforts to improve legal protections for migrants
- supporting migrant workers separated from their families in distance parenting.
- innovating products and services and their distribution to better meet migrants needs, for example, to facilitate low cost transfer of remittances and communication overseas.

2. In terms of how to strengthen partnerships, some suggestions are:

Many businesses want to help. It assists businesses to know what the specific needs are and which are the organizations that have proven responses that they can partner with and support. Business.un.org is one such tool. Collaborating with the UN Global Compact to clearly articulate needs from business, such as with the business action pledge in response to the refugee crisis is another way.

3. Some concrete examples of business action:

Tackling Passport Retention in the Supply Chain

The Coca-Cola Company identified the confiscation of workers' passports as a widespread practice in their supplier factories in the Gulf region. The practice was defended by factory representatives as legal and customary, but root cause analysis undertaken by the company revealed that, with only one exception, no country required passport confiscation; in fact, most countries expressly prohibited it. Coca-Cola responded by approaching the ILO, the U.S. Departments of State and Labour, and other external stakeholders for assistance. The company implemented remediation procedures through supplier forums, connected suppliers to national government labour ministries so they could be better educated and monitored, and held one-on-one dialogue with suppliers. Subsequent tracking and monitoring by Coca-Cola determined that practices had rapidly changed as a result.

Prohibiting charging of recruitment fees

The electronics manufacturer HP became one of the very first US information technology company to prohibit fee charging to workers in its supply chain with a new policy adopted in November 2014. The policy encourages suppliers to hire migrants directly, requires them to use only legal and licensed recruiters when hiring directly is not possible, and states that employment contracts with migrants must be signed directly with the supplier, not the recruitment agency. All fees and costs associated with recruitment, travel and migration processing are the responsibility of the supplier. The policy is accompanied by a guidance document to explain the new requirements and in-person training sessions to educate suppliers and share good practice. HP also conducts training for recruitment agencies to promote responsible recruitment.

Clearing Barriers to Refugee Employment

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees, UN Women, a UN Global Compact Local Network and several companies are collaborating to clear perceived legal barriers to companies employing refugees in a Latin American country. Among other things, the project entails providing information to in house legal departments clarifying complexities in the law on this matter paving the way for more refugees to be hired. The project leverages the expertise of one of its founding partners, a company that

provides human resource services to other companies, which is by virtue of its core business very familiar with the law surrounding employment of people with refugee status. The initiative also entails mentoring of the refugee workers with a specific focus on female refugees because they often face greater barriers to employment. (UNHCR, UN Women, Global Compact Network Brazil and various companies)

Call by Business for the Repeal of Freedom of Movement Restrictions for People Living with HIV

In a move jointly sponsored by UNAIDS, more than 40 chief executive officers (CEOs) representing various industries around the world called for the repeal of laws and policies restricting freedom of movement of people living with HIV, calling the restrictions a violation of human rights and bad for business, particularly for those countries that are emerging hubs for international business which insist on maintaining these discriminatory measures.

Developing Technology for Refugee Identification

A global technology company and its corporate partners worked with UNHCR to design and deploy a registration system for refugees, many of whom lacked identification documents. The database created from the registration was used in the distribution of aid and assisted in searching for and reuniting separated families. The refugee registration kit has since been further developed by the company and UNHCR and deployed in several countries in Asia and Africa. (Microsoft)

Supporting distance parenting

Unilever partnered with the All-China Women's Federation in June 2009 to facilitate regular communication between migrant workers and their families in the provinces.

Business pledges to support refugees

At business.un.org you can see more than 30 pledges companies have made on what they are doing to support addressing the refugee crisis.