

**Bangladesh Country Statement at Regional GCM 6-8<sup>th</sup> November 2017: Sharing Experiences  
from the Field**

Honorable Chair

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning

Allow me to thank the Royal Thai Government for hosting this important event at this critical time. My delegation and I offer our deepest condolences at this difficult time to our friends and colleagues in Thailand.

I am honoured to represent the Government of Bangladesh to share our experiences on regular, safe and orderly migration governance, and learn from good practices and successes of other nations and further collaborate with destination countries.

Bangladesh is a country of net migration, and it attracts only a limited number of foreigners to work, most of whom are skilled professionals. Bangladesh is mainly a migrant sending country. Every year 500,000 to 800,000 workers leave the shores of Bangladesh to join the global labour work force in more than 100 countries.

As of October 2017, over 830,000 labour migrants have left Bangladesh through regular channels of BMET. They join more than a million workers who have left our shores in the previous years. More than half of these migrants have gone to work in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, followed by Oman, Qatar and Malaysia. As per 2017 data, 12 percent of these migrants are women. 66% of the women migrating from Bangladesh go to work in KSA. Our workers contribute to the development of the receiving countries and their remittances support the families back in Bangladesh.

We are one of the few countries of the region, who has mainstreamed migration into our national development plan. As you all may be aware Bangladesh has been very active in ratifying international human rights and labour conventions. Bangladesh has shown its commitment to ensuring protection of worker's rights by ratifying 7 of the 8 fundamental ILO conventions. Bangladesh is one of the few countries in Asia Pacific which has ratified the International Convention on the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families. Earlier this year, under the leadership of the Honorable Minister of Ministry of Expatriates Welfare and Overseas Employment, a multi ministerial delegation presented Bangladesh's first ever report on the Convention to the Committee on Migrant workers. The

Ministry is now in the process of developing an action plan to implement the Concluding Observations of the Committee with the support of ILO and SDC. However the lack of ratification of the convention in countries of destination and the lack of compliance of destination country's national laws with international labour and human rights standards is a challenge.

At regional level, Bangladesh has been active in Regional Consultative Processes like the Colombo Process and the Abu Dhabi Dialogue. In the Colombo Process, Bangladesh leads the discussion on ethical recruitment, which is a challenge in many countries of origins and destination alike.

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

Like several sending countries in the region, Bangladesh has adopted laws and policies to protect the rights of migrant workers in line with normative labour rights frameworks. We have MOUs and Bi Lateral Agreements with several critical countries of destination. We provide social protection in the form of workers' welfare and services to our workers when they are in the destination countries through labour wings. We have a system of identification and training for workers so that we send workers who match the demand of the labour market. Our Bureau of Manpower Training and Employment conducts pre departure and skills trainings. They also accredit ethical recruitment agencies. Bangladesh has established a bank which helps departing workers with loans to bear the migration cost and provides other credit facilities. All of these measures taken are meant to protect the rights of our citizens abroad. However all too often they face abuses due to unethical recruiters, visa traders, lack of justice mechanisms. Women domestic workers make huge sacrifices when they migrate and contribute to the economy and their families but they are often rendered vulnerable. The lack of inclusion of domestic work in labour laws of destination countries and the lack of access, monitoring work place opportunities in countries of destination means women domestic migrant workers are often outside the purview of support of our labour attaches.

All too often implementation of laws and policies is a challenge. The Global Compact on Migration provides a renewed opportunity to renew our collective commitment to strengthening the framework of migration governance and to protect people who are migrating.

Migrants who are documented or rendered irregular due to factors out of their control should be protected. Migrants should not face discrimination, violence. The human rights of all workers should be respected irrespective of their legal status.

The GCM should reiterate a strong call to all states to eradicate discriminatory, xenophobic practices and behaviours by both governments, employers and general public towards migrants.

Regular migration opportunities should be identified through effective labour market and skills needs assessments. The need to address shortages in specific sectors by increasing access to safe and regular migration channels for men and women migrant workers is critical to benefit states and migrants. Regularization programmes particularly for low-skilled workers are necessary to offer migrant workers at all skill levels the possibility to access decent work opportunities.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen**

Migration is an economic reality, it is a demographic reality, it's a climate change resulted reality, it's a conflict related reality. In an increasingly interconnected world, people's mobility is inevitable.

Hence to strengthen governance of migration, it is important:

1. To develop comprehensive database on migrant workers flows, labour market needs, skills, places of employment, and shared between sending and receiving countries. Potential migrant workers should have access to labour market data information. Sufficient resources and capacities for Data base development should be invested in. Labour migration data and statistics should be aligned with international standards and International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) guidance.
2. Mechanisms for access to justice should be a key pillar in the global compact. Access to justice is necessary to assist vulnerable migrants affected by labour exploitation and abuse.
3. Mechanisms for stronger enforcement of MOUS/BLAS to prevent labour exploitation must be explored.
4. GCM should call for revision in labour laws in the Countries of Destination, extending legislative coverage to include domestic workers.
5. Climate induced migration is a challenge: Countries should establish mechanisms for the resettlement of climate induced displaced population. The development of the compact needs to include the voice of the voiceless (migrants)

Migration governance often tends to be gender blind and that often gender inequality is unaddressed. Women migrants often face multiple discrimination challenges and tend to be locked into occupations which follow gender stereotypes, often in the context of employer-tied agreements. Bilateral agreements need to recognize the labour market demand for female occupations and ensure their social protection, as well as tackling gender pay gaps with national workers. Migration policies must consider and include promotion of gender equality and women migrant workers' empowerment. Furthermore, the importance of "shared responsibilities" within country, between and among

countries, should be addressed via “whole of society approach” on both countries of origin and destination.

Several normative standards on migration (like the UN 1990 Convention, ILO Conventions 97, 143) are not ratified and implemented. Hence in our view the GCM could be in the form of an overarching legal instrument, legally binding or hybrid, followed by a protocol to manage migration and aspects of human rights. The document could be similar to the 2030 agenda with clear actionable commitments.