

**UNHCR High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges
"Towards a Global Compact on Refugees:
Comprehensive refugee responses"
Palais des Nations (Room XVII)
Geneva, 12-13 December 2017**

REMARKS

**Mr Guy Ryder, Director-General
International Labour Organization**

Thank you.

High Commissioner,

Fellow Panellists,

Excellences,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the International Labour Organization, I want to welcome the opportunity to address this Dialogue and to thank you, Filippo, for your leadership, which we greatly admire at the ILO, but also for the partnership which you are helping us to build together which we value extremely highly.

Ladies and gentlemen, during the thematic sessions convened by the UNHCR this year and over the last two days, to which the ILO has been pleased to contribute, there have been many references to good practices in areas of employment, livelihoods, social protection and social dialogue, all of which are of course central to the ILO's normative

standards-driven mandate. And it is this that gives, I think, the sense to this growing cooperation between the UNHCR and the International Labour Organization.

The topic of your Dialogue is of course and aptly the protection of refugees, and our collective experience suggests, I would say, that access to decent work is a key pillar to providing that protection. Having a decent job restores dignity and purpose to refugees, as it does to everybody else, it allows them to provide for their families and to make a meaningful contribution to their host society. And it can, of course, also prepare them for their return home when that becomes possible.

Unfortunately, then, many refugees do not have such access to formal labour markets. And this can have the consequence of forcing them to take work in the informal economy where labour standards may not be respected and enforced, and where they therefore face a very much higher risk of exploitation and abuse.

Ladies and gentlemen, this type of labour market segmentation can also impact national labour markets and ultimately national workers by creating downward pressure on wages and conditions, and social dumping. And that in turn can further destabilize communities, economies and societies, already existing in circumstances of fragility.

It is therefore crucial that we provide appropriate support to member States in such situations, and give due attention to the labour and human rights of all concerned.

And this is why, the ILO's constituents – that means governments, and workers and employers, have called on our organization to engage more deeply in addressing the labour market implications of refugee movements, and it is why the ILO has adopted last year comprehensive guidance in these areas, in the form of our *Guiding Principles on the Access of Refugees and Other Forcibly Displaced Persons to the Labour Market*.

And then in June of this year our International Labour Conference adopted a new landmark labour standard to prevent and to respond to conflicts and disasters. This is Recommendation 205 on Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience. And I want, Filippo, to express particular appreciation for the presence and support that we received from UNHCR in that important endeavour.

Ladies and gentlemen, taken together, these instruments, backed up by International Labour Standards, provide an important policy framework to address the labour market needs and challenges involved in responding humanely to large refugee movements.

It is true that implementing this framework will be challenging, we all know that, given the complexity and the sensitivity of refugees for hosting countries, and particularly in those which already have to face severe labour market challenges, including, but not limited to, that of high unemployment.

This said, nevertheless, in countries such as Jordan, Turkey and Lebanon, in partnership with governments, the social partners, other international actors, we have been able to identify and to implement solutions that have increased pathways to decent work.

We have assisted in providing opportunities for both nationals and refugees, by among other means: improving skills development and productivity that stimulates economic growth and investment; aligning labour market supply and demand more effectively; supporting local economic development through employment-intensive programmes, such as building infrastructure to further attract inward-investment; by establishing local jobs partnerships; by supporting the extension of universal social security coverage and social protection; and aligning all of these efforts with national development plans.

Ladies and gentlemen, these are areas where the joint efforts of the ILO and UNHCR can have greatest impact, and why we are committed to ensuring successful outcomes in our close partnership. The Memorandum of Understanding and the Joint Plan of Action that we have concluded will help us to work more concertedly and more effectively at the global and the field levels. Indeed, the programmes of support that we

are implementing together in Jordan and in Turkey are premised on this Joint Action Plan, as is our support to the Jobs Compact and the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework in Ethiopia, where our local teams are now working increasingly closely.

I am pleased to note that the ILO has provided a summary, and more will be delivered soon, on good practices from our field experience to inform the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework. And this experience will also inform the ILO's development of training and guidance tools that can support government and non-governmental actors in their endeavours to facilitate access of refugees to labour markets, whilst not, and this is of course vital, whilst not disadvantaging national workers.

Commissioner, in closing, I think that we can reflect on the largely positive changes in attitude and political collaboration amongst member States since adoption of the New York Declaration, and their recommendation of the need to ensure a closer connection between the developmental and the humanitarian aspects of our activities. And we find that jobs and decent work is often the point at which these two aspects come together. And it is on this strong connection that our collaboration solidly rests and where together we can help to ensure that refugees, as others, benefit from decent work opportunities.

I want to end by commending UNHCR, its Members and partners for convening a very productive schedule of consultations this past year and I would like to assure you all of the continued commitment and support

of the ILO in the elaboration of the Global Compact for Refugees and the programme of action that you adopt.

Ladies and gentlemen, because of our responsibilities to those in great need, who rightly look to us for support and protection, and also because of the imperative on all of us in the multilateral system to work together in partnerships which optimize the coherence and complementarity of our mandates and what we do to prosecute them. Let me close by reiterating the very great importance that we attached to our renewed and deepening partnership with UNHCR.

I wish you well in the continuation and conclusion of your discussions and I thank you for your attention.