



حوار أبوظبي بين الدول الآسيوية
المرسلات والمستقبلة للعمال
Abu Dhabi Dialogue among the Asian
Labour-Sending and Receiving Countries

Abu Dhabi Dialogue Virtual Meeting of Senior Officials from Abu Dhabi Dialogue Member States 30 September – 01 October 2025

Summary Report

Introduction & Overview

Senior Officials from the Abu Dhabi Dialogue (ADD) Member States convened virtually on 30 September – 01 October 2025 to discuss key developments and future priorities in labour mobility, skills partnerships, and migration governance. Over 120 representatives from Member States, partner organisations, and research institutions participated in the two-day meeting. The discussions focused on climate change and labour mobility, green skills development, the emerging gig economy, and diversity as a driver of productivity. All deliberations reflected the Dialogue's enduring emphasis on practical, evidence-based cooperation that strengthens the resilience of labour markets across the ADD corridors.

The meeting reaffirmed the commitment of Member States to deepening collaboration on Skills Mobility Partnerships (SMPs), enhancing protection frameworks, and advancing gender-responsive and climate-conscious policy approaches. Proceedings were structured around a series of thematic research papers presented by partner institutions, followed by open exchanges and identification of next steps. Day 1 addressed three papers on climate and green-skills themes, while Day 2 covered studies on the gig economy, skills and diversity, and the Global Compact for Migration.

Thematic Inputs

Theme 1 - Climate Change and Labour Mobility (Day 1)

Presenter: Consultant Jacqueline Parry (in partnership with IOM) presented the research entitled

“Gendered Impacts of Climate Change on Employment: Focus on Women in Labour Sending and Receiving Countries of the Abu Dhabi Dialogue.”

The paper examined how climate-driven livelihood disruptions influence female migration trends and identified opportunities for gender-responsive Skills Mobility Partnerships (SMPs). It proposed a pilot model in the hospitality sector linking pre-departure training and green-skills certification with reintegration support on return.

Member States Feedback & Action Points

Participants welcomed the study’s focus on women’s economic participation and proposed broadening its scope beyond hospitality to include agriculture, e-commerce, and other climate-resilient sectors. They emphasised aligning training content with actual labour-market demand and ensuring recognition of prior learning within certification systems. There was overall agreement on maintaining a twin-track approach that strengthens both origin-country livelihoods and destination-country employment pathways.

Theme 2 - Labour Mobility and Skills for a Just Transition to Green Economy (Day 1)

Presenter: Henry Gordon-Smith (Agriitecture) and IOM presented the research entitled

“Skills-based Labour Mobility as a Strategy for Climate Change Adaptation: The Potential of Skills Mobility Partnerships through Two Case Studies on Controlled Environment Agriculture and Waste Management.”

Member States Feedback & Action Points

Discussion highlighted the importance of data-driven workforce planning and of developing GCC-wide frameworks for portable credentials. Delegates underscored the need for coordinated training centres, harmonised standards, and employer engagement in pilot projects. It was agreed that the research should map existing national initiatives and outline a shared roadmap for skills alignment across the corridor.

Theme 2 - Labour Mobility, Skills, and Social Protection for a Just Transition (Day 1)

Presenter: Mette Grangaard Lund (ILO) presented the research entitled

“Labour Mobility, Skills, and Social Protection for a Just Transition in the Asia–GCC Migration Corridor.”

The paper assessed how climate policies and green transitions reshape employment patterns, highlighting the need for inclusive social-protection systems and reskilling strategies to safeguard migrant workers.

Member States Feedback & Action Points

Participants stressed the value of integrating just-transition principles into national development and climate strategies. They called for improved occupational-safety standards, gender-sensitive reskilling programmes, and mechanisms for portable social protection across borders. It was recommended that future research include case studies illustrating differentiated impacts by sector and demographic group.

Theme 3 - Expatriate Gig Workers in the ADD Member States: Addressing Legal, Social, and Career Implications (Day 1)

Presenter: Rada Naji, Social Protection Specialist, World Bank, presented the research entitled

“Bringing Opportunities Home for Virtual Workers.”

The study examined the emergence of virtual labour mobility as a new form of cross-border employment where workers remain in their countries of origin while serving foreign clients through digital platforms and remote contracts. It highlighted how this model includes both freelance and salaried employment arrangements and covers a broad range of occupations such as information technology, administration, sales, creative industries, and data services. The research emphasised its potential benefits for destination countries in addressing skill shortages at lower costs, for origin countries in retaining earnings and fostering knowledge transfer, and for workers in accessing global opportunities without physical migration. The study was based on desk research, large-scale surveys across thirty-four countries, and qualitative interviews with employers and workers to understand trends and constraints in this growing labour segment. It identified key enablers such as legal clarity, taxation policies, social protection portability, and digital infrastructure, while noting challenges related to worker classification, uneven rights coverage, and income inequality.

Member States Feedback & Action Points

Participants welcomed the analysis and acknowledged the potential of virtual labour mobility to broaden economic inclusion and reduce migration pressures. They recommended further development of policy frameworks to enable the registration and protection of virtual and platform workers while maintaining regulatory balance to encourage innovation. It was emphasised that future work should integrate gender and youth dimensions and explore equity considerations such as wage gaps and fair compensation standards. Member States agreed to share relevant data on digital employment trends and training initiatives to support evidence-based policy recommendations under the ADD framework.

Theme 3 - Expatriate Gig Workers in the ADD Member States: Addressing Legal, Social, and Career Implications (Day 2)

Presenter: Stephanie Winet (International Organisation of Employers) presented the research entitled

“Understanding Expatriate Gig Workers in ADD Member States: Addressing Legal, Social, and Career Implications.”

The research mapped the expansion of digital-labour platforms across the region and analysed challenges related to worker classification, regulation, and social protection.

Member States Feedback & Action Points

Member States recognised the growing importance of platform work for inclusive employment and entrepreneurship. They encouraged the development of balanced frameworks that extend protection without constraining innovation and supported integrating gig-work data into labour-force surveys. Participants also underscored the need for upskilling and fair-work standards within digital-labour ecosystems.

Theme 4 - Role of Skills and Diversity for Labour Productivity ADD Member States (Day 2)

Presenter: Pablo Acosta (World Bank) presented the research entitled

“The Promise of Global Skill Partnerships and the Need for Investment in Skills and International Labour Mobility Systems.”

The presentation analysed demographic shifts, skills shortages, and pathways to harness diversity for sustainable growth. They proposed policy options for investment in training, recognition frameworks, and inclusive migration pathways.



Member States Feedback & Action Points

Discussions reaffirmed that demographic imbalances and evolving national visions require agile, skills-driven migration systems. Participants highlighted the role of public-private partnerships, mutual-recognition mechanisms, and digital-credentialing tools in bridging skills gaps. They also noted that diversity and equitable opportunities are essential components of future labour-market resilience.

Theme 4 - Role of Skills and Diversity for Labour Productivity ADD Member States (Day 2)

Presenter: Murtaza Khan, Fragomen, on behalf of the International Organisation of Employers (IOE), presented the research entitled

“Unlocking the Role of Skills and Diversity for Labour Productivity in ADD Member States.”

The study examined the growing importance of skills and workforce diversity in driving productivity across the ADD region. It highlighted how economic diversification and national visions have increased demand for talent in ICT, healthcare, finance, and renewable energy. The analysis showed rising inflows of skilled workers and emphasised that immigration reform must be linked with career progression, fair employment, and quality of life. The research mapped persistent shortages in advanced technical and green sectors and proposed actions such as credential recognition, inclusive immigration pathways, and stronger public-private training partnerships.

Member States Feedback & Action Points

Participants agreed that enhancing skills diversity and recognition frameworks is essential to improve labour productivity. They underscored the value of data-driven policy tools, mutual recognition of qualifications, and wider access to long-term residency schemes for skilled workers. It was also noted that integrating AI literacy and ESG principles into training systems will help align national workforces with emerging global standards.

Global Compact for Migration (GCM) Session (Day 2)

Presenter: UNESCWA, UNESCAP, and IOM provided updates on implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and preparations for the 2026 International Migration Review Forum (IMRF).

The session reviewed progress under regional GCM frameworks and explored modalities for Member States to contribute coherent inputs to the 2026 review.



حوار أبوظبي بين الدول الآسيوية
المرسلات والمستقبلة للعمال
Abu Dhabi Dialogue among the Asian
Labour-Sending and Receiving Countries

Member States Feedback & Action Points

Participants underscored the importance of aligning GCM objectives with national migration and development policies. They expressed support for organising ADD-led side events at the forthcoming IMRF and for strengthening data-driven cooperation between the Arab and Asia-Pacific regions. It was agreed that coordinated reporting templates and shared indicators would enhance efficiency and comparability of Member States' submissions.

Conclusions and Next Steps

The Senior Officials' Meeting concluded with a shared commitment to reinforce the Abu Dhabi Dialogue's role as a collaborative platform linking evidence, policy, and practice.

Member States agreed to advance Skills Mobility Partnerships, expand cooperation on green and digital transitions, and enhance protection mechanisms for both traditional and virtual migrant workers.

It was further agreed that national data on skill gaps, training programmes, and employment outcomes would be shared with the Secretariat to inform ministerial deliberations scheduled for early 2026.

The ADD Secretariat will coordinate follow-up actions with research partners, and compile a comprehensive report of outcomes and recommendations for presentation to the Seventh Ministerial Consultation.



حوار أبوظبي بين الدول الآسيوية
المرسلات والمستقبلة للعمالة
Abu Dhabi Dialogue among the Asian
Labour-Sending and Receiving Countries

Appendix A – Noted Speakers

- IOM: Tanja Dedjovic and Dr Jacqueline Parry - Gendered Climate Impacts and Hospitality
- Agritecture/IOM: Henry Gordon-Smith – CEA and Waste Management Case Studies.
- ILO: Mette Grangaard Lund – Just Transition Framework and Scenario Modelling.
- World Bank: Rada Naji – Virtual Labour Mobility.
- IOE: Stephanie Winet – Expatriate Gig Workers Study.
- World Bank: Pablo Acosta – Global Skills Partnerships.
- IOE/Fragomen: Murtaza Khan – Skills and Diversity for Productivity
- GCM Session and IMRF Preparations by UN Agencies:
 - Sara Salman (ESCWA),
 - Sabine Henning (ESCAP),
 - Sophie Nonnemacher and Phumza Manqindi (IOM)

Appendix B – Glossary & Acronyms

- SMP – Skills Mobility Partnership: Formal origin–destination framework for training and mobility.
- CEA – Controlled Environment Agriculture: High-tech greenhouses/vertical farms with automation/AI.
- Just Transition – Policy approach to maximize green opportunities and minimize social risks (ILO Guidelines).
- RPL – Recognition of Prior Learning: Certifying skills gained informally/non-formally.
- NDC – Nationally Determined Contribution under the Paris Agreement.
- OSH – Occupational Safety and Health.
- Virtual Labour Mobility – Cross-border online work performed from the origin country.
- Platform Work – Digital intermediary-mediated gig tasks; includes but is not limited to virtual mobility.
- ADD — Abu Dhabi Dialogue
- GCM — Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration
- IMRF — International Migration Review Forum (quadrennial global review of GCM)
- IOE — International Organisation of Employers
- IOM — International Organization for Migration (UN Migration)
- ILO — International Labour Organization
- ESCWA — UN Economic & Social Commission for Western Asia
- ESCAP — UN Economic & Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
- PPP — Public-Private Partnership
- RPL — Recognition of Prior Learning
- SOCSO — Social Security Organisation (Malaysia)