

Abu Dhabi Dialogue 8th Ministerial Consultation Dubai, 1 February 2026

Intervention by the International Organisation of Employers (IOE)

Excellencies,

Thank you to the Abu Dhabi Dialogue secretariat, the government of United Arab Emirates, and the current chair, the government of Oman for the excellent work at the ADD.

As pointed out by many today, there is a global skills shortage and competition for talent. Emerging industries in the region, including renewable energy and technologies such as artificial intelligence, together with efforts to diversify the economy, will increase demand for both technical skills and human and social skills that help individuals boost productivity through new technologies. The green transition is pushing economies to shift toward environmentally sustainable production methods, expanding opportunities in emerging industries and new job profiles, requiring a range of new skills. On a global scale, 74% of employers say they are struggling to find the skilled talent they need¹.

Within this context, employers implement strategic responses, increasingly adopting "skills-based" hiring—focusing on capabilities rather than degrees—and investing in upskilling to close the gap. But this is not enough. We need to work hand in hand to close the gap to ensure countries have access to the skills needed to deliver on the economic transformation, while equipping workers with skills that will serve them for tomorrow's world of work. This is an urgent issue for employers in the region, engaged towards economic diversification. With these new and emerging industries we will have to rely on skills wherever they are available.

With this in mind, I will focus on three main areas for your consideration:

- Firstly, migration pathways: These are at the heart of attracting and retaining the right talent, at the right place and at the right time. There has been a lot of positive progress with new categories such as self-sponsored long term residency options. **We call upon governments to further improve pathways such as visas for short term workers, cross border movement within companies, and inter-regional mobility.**
- Secondly, the private sector supports the employment of local nationals and embraces nationalisation schemes launched across the region. However, we call for more data-led decisions which include both quantitative review of skills supply versus demand, but also importantly takes into account the qualitative aspects of what combination of skills and experience are needed. **Therefore, we call for dialogue to create more sophistication to ensure these nationalisation policies are sector and profession specific, but also take into account experience and the specific skills needs.** Ultimately, we all want to ensure these policies are successful and at the same time

¹ <https://go.manpowergroup.com/talent-shortage>

sustainable and not at the cost of the development and diversification agenda for the economies.

- Thirdly, regarding skills recognition and verification programs. There are clearly commendable initiatives underway. Tech companies are working on solutions to verify and recognise skills and degrees that can be used across borders. When it comes to skills assessment and verification, companies expend significant resources in the recruitment process. It is of course just good business sense to do so. **Therefore, we ask for consultations to share this expertise with regards to skills assessments rather than the imposition of onerous requirements to present after hiring.**

In summary, all these recommendations need a framework to work with the private sector. **Therefore, as a pilot program, we do call for the creation of a private sector working group to support the excellent work at the Abu Dhabi Dialogue.**

A last word as we are all gearing towards the International Labour Conference which will address the standard setting on the Platform Economy. We look forward to constructively engage in negotiations towards a principle-based instrument that will value the opportunities for both SMEs and workers, while ensuring continued economic growth and social development.

We look forward to the continued collaboration.

Thank you.