

**Global Forum on Migration and Development Civil Society Days
May 12 to 13, 2014
Stockholm, Sweden
Panel on Migrants, Migration, Post-2015 Development
Remarks by Per Olof Sjöo, President of BWI and GS**

Good morning.

The focus of the panel today is migrants, migration and the post-2015 development agenda. In this discussion, I would like to begin by reiterating an important problem facing trade unions, workers and families everywhere: jobs.

Today there are 202 million people without jobs. And many those who have jobs are in part-time, contract, informal, irregular, temporary, and other forms of precarious employment. These are low-wage jobs that have no security and social benefits. However, because of the rising unemployment rate which in some cases such as Europe are in the double digits and the fear of being part of the 900 million working poor, workers are forced to accept whatever job and wherever.

Today the reality of migration is that behind it is not merely “freedom of choice and opportunity” but rather it is the lack of decent work at home forcing people to leave their family, friends, and community to seek what they believe to be better jobs to provide a livelihood for their families. 90% of international migration today is about the search for decent work. I would also like to point out that due to continuous on-going global economic crisis and in Europe the Euro crisis workers in developed countries are increasingly migrating.

And in this process many migrant find themselves victims of unscrupulous recruiters and human traffickers. Enormous recruitment fees have resulted in migrants caught up in the cycle of debt-bondage. Migrants who are promised high-paying jobs with decent living conditions find themselves in different jobs paying far less and in crowded accommodation facilities.

In the sectors that BWI represent---construction and wood and forestry, we know too well the high number of cases where workers find themselves exploited and in forced labour. In Russia, hundreds of Serbian workers who were part of the work force in preparations for the Sochi Winter Olympic were not paid for several months and lived in squalid conditions.

Even here in Sweden, where for the next two days you hear about the “Swedish model” of migration as an enabler for development, there are cases of workers in forced labour.

Last year, we had a case of 47 workers from Cameroon who were forced to work under slave-like conditions in the Swedish forests. The workers were lured by an attractive job offer only to be forced to sign a new contract for much lower wages which was insufficient to repay the debt they had taken to come to Sweden. When they protested to the employer they and their families back in Cameroon were threatened.

With the intervention of my union, GS, we were able to reach a settlement and after months of waiting the workers were able to receive wages and benefits in accordance to the collective agreement here in Sweden. This case highlighted the loopholes and problems with the labour immigration policy in Sweden, which too often can also be found elsewhere.

I highlight this case to reiterate what the global trade union movement has been consistently advocating for in the discourse on global governance of migration since the first Global Forum on Migration and Development.

We need to shift the paradigm to one where the approach to labour migration is about the human rights of workers and not a goal or an enabler for development.

We need to push for stronger and real political commitment towards a multilateral governance of labour migration.

We need to push governments to stop merely paying lip service when they state they are concerned about the welfare and rights of migrants and to ratify the UN and ILO conventions which are a legal framework for a rights-based approach to migration.

We need to have an effective and transparent regulation and enforcement of bad employers, recruiters, traffickers, and smugglers.

Currently there is much debate on migration within the frame of the post-2015 development agenda. We a representative of trade unions who are organizing and campaigning to ensure migrant workers have decent work and basic fundamental rights, I would like to add the following points to the discussion:

1. A paradigm shift is needed. We need a new development agenda for an inclusive and sustainable development that delivers equity, social inclusion, structural transformation and sustainable livelihoods underpinned by a human rights-based approach as well as on the principles of democratic ownership, accountability and leadership.
2. Forced migration, that is, when migrants risk their lives to find work and a better life elsewhere, is a failure of development. Inability to ensure decent work, provide social protection, and deliver quality public services is in essence a failure of development and the current global economic model.
3. Migration is a cross-cutting issue which must be integrated within the three development goals that are critical for the trade union movement, and these are:
 - Full Employment and Decent Work for All
 - Universal Social Protection
 - Gender Equality

4. The post-2015 Development Agenda must aim for a holistic approach, with a clear set of global and universal goals translated into national targets and indicators. In this migration and migrant rights should be integrated into the target and indicators.

Some of the targets that we believe can be incorporated in the Decent Work goal is as forth:

- Full and productive employment and decent work for all in origin as well as destination countries of migrant workers to ensure that workers migrate by choice and not out of necessity;
- Ensuring respect for rights at work for migrant workers;
- Ensuring access to social protection and income security for migrant workers and their families;
- Ensuring equal treatment and non-discrimination of migrant workers;
- Reducing vulnerable employment of migrant workers;
- Reducing the number of migrant workers in poverty;
- Ensuring effective social dialogue for migrant workers;
- Ensuring decent working conditions for migrant workers;
- Ensuring minimum living wage coverage for migrant workers; and
- Ensuring gender equality for migrant workers