

Summary

The vast economic and demographic disparities between countries mean that migration must be an important feature of the 21st century world. The Global Compact on Migration has an opportunity to shape that migration in ways that are more beneficial to all countries involved, by creating new mechanisms for substantial, lawful economic labor mobility. To seize this opportunity, the Compact should commit to piloting Global Skill Partnership agreements between a developing countries of migrant origin and developed countries of migrant destination. A [Global Skill Partnership](#) is a bilateral agreement in which a migrant destination country joins with a migrant origin country to sensibly share the costs and benefits of skilled migration. Destination-country employers and governments provide technology and finance for vocational training of potential migrants before they depart, in exchange for access and placement at the destination, and paired with the training of other workers for the origin-country market. Agreements of this kind ensure that destination countries receive migrants with the skills to integrate quickly and contribute maximally. They ensure that origin countries receive a stronger human capital base without a net drain of fiscal or human resources. And they ensure that migrants and their families can safely pursue international opportunities if they wish. Some features of this approach have been [tested in numerous settings](#), but new pilot programs are needed to test and adapt the model for broader use.

Full Remarks

The Global Compact on Migration is an opportunity for all of us to make history. I came here as an economist because I wish for the Compact to rise to that occasion. To do that, it must propose new mechanisms for substantial, additional, lawful economic labor mobility.

I say that because I don't think anyone who has seriously looked at the demographic projections, for example for sub-Saharan Africa, can avoid that conclusion. 800 million new labor force participants within 30 years. 800 million young, energetic job seekers in sub-Saharan Africa. That's wonderful news. It's some of the best news of our time, because the reason for it is that child mortality rates have been plummeting across sub-Saharan Africa for the last 30 years.

But that means 800 million new energetic youth looking for jobs. Common sense and the historical data suggest that many of them are going to move. The question is not whether they are going to move, but how they are going to move. Are the conditions under which they move going to be conditions that unleash their vast potential, including economic potential, or conditions that waste it?

We need new mechanisms to be specifically included in this Compact. There is a crack, a fissure, at the heart of international discussions for new legal channels of economic labor mobility. That fissure is that many in migrant destination countries perceive their self-interests to be best served by higher skill migration. And many countries of migrant origin are highly suspicious of higher skill migration, and see their self-interests as best served by relatively lower skill migration, if any at all.

I have proposed one way to patch this crack. It's a small part of the solution, but it needs to be included in the Compact and tested and explored and adapted to different situations.

A Global Skill Partnership is a bilateral agreement. It is a way for migrant destination countries and migrant origin countries to work together to maximize the potential contribution of skilled migrants and sensibly share the benefits of skilled migration. It is an exchange of finance and technology for training in the country of origin before migration of potential migrants in exchange for service at the destination.

Consider for example a nursing school in Ethiopia or in southern Turkey, partnering with an employer, for example a network of hospitals in Germany, together with the government, agreeing to provide finance and technology transfer for the training of migrants and non-migrants in Ethiopia, or perhaps in southern Turkey in a forced displacement setting, in exchange for labor market access and service in Germany.

There are huge potential benefits for everyone involved. The destination country gets migrants with precise the skills it needs, and often for employers these are extremely specific, not just categories or sectors of migrants. These are people with highly specific skills, such as nurse assistants with specialty training in elder or dementia care. People with the language and technical skills to work quickly, make maximum contribution quickly—including fiscal contribution—and integrate quickly. The country of origin gets no brain drain, it gets subsidies of additional training for domestic service—meaning human capital increases—as well as technology transfer and strengthened training centers. Migrants get lawful, regular opportunities to change their lives and the lives of their children.

The Global Skill Partnership framework is highly flexible. It can and must be adapted to the highly specific settings of destination and origin countries—which is why it cannot be done unilaterally. We need this to be in a global compact. It also cannot and should not be done multilaterally, as the needs of migrants and the needs of different origins and destinations are so different and highly specific.

Include a specific recommendation of bilateral, global skill partnerships in the Global Compact for Migration.