

Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration: Sixth Informal Thematic Session

Panel 1: Irregular Migration and Regular Pathways

Statement by the UAE

The United Arab Emirates is grateful to the moderators and speakers for their insightful remarks, and to the co-facilitators for their continued commitment to the Global Compact.

All three panels of this sixth thematic session are particularly pertinent to the UAE, and the Issue Brief circulated by the Special Representative of the Secretary General for International Migration clearly captures both the challenges and opportunities inherent in creating regular migration pathways.

The UAE welcomes approximately one million temporary labour migrants every year, making it the sixth largest destination for migrants in the world. Nearly all of those migrants make the journey to the UAE lawfully, following regular pathways, with governance structures in place to enable their movement.

Moreover, many are low skilled migrants, with the UAE providing a vital destination for people from the poorest backgrounds looking to improve their circumstances and find work that supports their families and communities in their country of origin.

The UAE's capacity to create regular pathways for both high and low skilled migrants is dependent on a number of factors, which we take the opportunity to highlight.

Firstly, as is widely recognised, the maintenance of strong external borders is critical to the facilitation of regular migration. The maintenance of state control over external borders is the basis on which all subsequent governance structures relating to migration depend. Without strong borders, the state's ability to implement programs to welcome and integrate migrants is weakened.

The UAE recognises, however, in line with the Issue Brief, that once foreign nationals are on our territory, that they have the right to full protection under both international and domestic law to full human and labour rights. The UAE is currently focused on this through reforms to its legislative and regulatory framework.

Secondly, there is a high level of acceptance of temporary labour migration within the socio-economic framework of UAE society. The demand for labour is sufficiently strong that the perception of migrants undercutting wages is not a major barrier to acceptance.

However, the UAE's migration model also recognises that the rights, culture and economic security of the host community need to be respected and protected, if domestic support for migration is to be maintained. For these reasons, the temporary labour migration model will remain the UAE's mechanism for regulating the relationship between migration and the domestic labour market.

Thirdly, the UAE places a great deal of importance on international cooperation in ensuring that migrants are properly protected and that the integrity of the temporary labour migration model is maintained and improved. We will elaborate on the UAE's work with countries of origin relating to recruitment and skills matching in the second and third panels, but it is important to emphasise that the protection of migrants can only be achieved through international cooperation.

Taken together, these three pillars enable a system of regular migration that is open, flexible, and generates enormous economic benefits for both countries of origin and destination.

Thank you.