

14 November 2019

Dear colleagues,

On 3 June 2019, the ILO and UNHCR held a high-level meeting to review progress made against the objectives set out in the 2016 Memorandum of Understanding between our organizations and the accompanying joint action plan that was adopted in 2017.

These efforts have already enabled thousands of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons around the world to benefit from innovative initiatives to expand employment opportunities. Furthermore, our approach ensures national workers and migrants are not disadvantaged.

During the meeting, we renewed our commitment to reaching the overarching goals and strategic objectives of the Action Plan focusing on (1) the dissemination and operationalization of global normative policy frameworks to increase access to labour markets and decent work for refugees and other forcibly displaced persons; (2) the protection of fundamental principles and rights at work and the improvement of working conditions and access to social protection, including social safety nets; and (3) increasing employment, decent work, income and livelihoods opportunities for refugees and host communities, as well as other persons of concern to UNHCR and the ILO.

As of June 2019, more than 70 million persons were displaced worldwide, including 25 million refugees. Many find themselves in protracted situations. To better address the increasing scale and duration of global displacement, we intend to:

- 1) Improve collaboration in technical and operational areas but also from a geographical standpoint, building on progress achieved to date and on mutual strengths to increase refugee access to livelihoods opportunities, decent work, social protection and skills development;
- 2) Work jointly around the jobs and livelihoods theme of the Global Refugee Forum to encourage pledges and mobilize additional resources for improving refugee and host community self-reliance;
- 3) Uphold and strengthen institutions and programmes that support employment opportunities and/or facilitate labour mobility to third countries, ensuring decent work and international labour standards are respected;
- 4) Pursue joint advocacy and capacity building efforts to improve the understanding of international refugee and human rights standards as well as labour standards around access to employment and decent work. Ensure these efforts translate into national or regional laws and policies, paying special attention to strengthening the coherence between regional frameworks and national policies and regulations; and

- 5) Monitor ILO-UNHCR collaboration more closely and systematically, at country and regional levels in particular.

In addition to capitalizing on opportunities stemming from the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), which defines a comprehensive approach to improving resilience, finding solutions and offering protection for refugees and host communities, we will consider key ILO guidance, which will inform the nature of our collaboration over the next biennium, including:

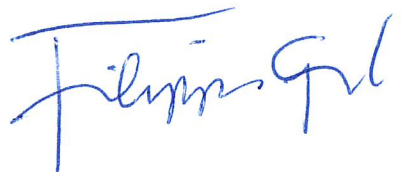
- 1) ILO Guiding Principles on Access of Refugees and Other Forcibly Displaced Persons to the Labour Market (2016).
- 2) Recommendation No. 205 on Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience (2017) which, in addition to the guiding principles above, aims to respond to the increased need for resilience-focused interventions in refugee-hosting countries, while also addressing the importance of access to decent work for returnees.
- 3) ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work (2019), which recognizes that “decent work is key to sustainable development, addressing income inequality and ending poverty, with special attention to areas affected by conflict, disaster and other humanitarian emergencies.”

We look forward to your collaboration in taking these objectives and ambitions further, as we continue to work jointly to foster decent work for refugees, other forcibly displaced persons and national workers.

Yours sincerely,



Guy Ryder  
Director-General,  
International Labour Organization



Filippo Grandi  
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees