

“Working together to promote due diligence and protect workers’ rights during recruitment”, 16 November 2015, 16:40 to 18:00

The session was organized by the International Labour Organization, the Institute for Human Rights and Business, the UN Global Compact and Verité. The moderator was John Morrison (Executive Director, Institute for Human Rights and Business). Panelists were Beate Andrees (ILO); Sarah Fox (United States Government); Linda Kromjong (International Organisation of Employers); Brent Wilton (Coca-Cola Company); Neha Misra (Solidarity Center); and Philip Hunter (Verité).

The panel aimed at discussing how to improve the protection of workers, especially migrant workers, from abusive and fraudulent labour practices and ensure compliance with national and international standards.

The moderator started by underscoring the specific vulnerability of migrant workers, who often pay high recruitment fees to unscrupulous labour recruiters in countries of origin and/or destination in order to secure a job. Ms. Andrees stressed that ILO Forced Labor Protocol of 2014 received its second ratification and will enter into force in 2016. She highlighted ILO’s response to recruitment challenges through its global multi-stakeholder “Fair Recruitment Initiative”. Ms. Fox explained how the United States public procurement federal regulation on trafficking prohibits employers providing goods and services to the government to collect recruitment fees from workers. Mrs. Kromjong pointed out four key reasons why employers need to take measures to identify, prevent and mitigate the risks of irregular recruitment practices: abusive recruitment practices are hurting the market; businesses need to comply with the law; enterprises may face reputational risk; adequate matching of skills correlates with higher productivity. Mr. Wilton highlighted the challenges related to the enforcement of a company policy and stressed the particular challenge of monitoring the collection of recruitment fees to workers in countries of origin. Ms. Misra highlighted the importance of the workers’ right to organize and explained that workers covered by a collective bargaining agreement are less likely to be victims of abusive recruitment. She also stressed that access to remedy for victims remains a major issue and needs to be strengthened. Mr. Hunter underlined the need to put emphasis on how to monitor recruitment processes in order to push more companies to effectively assess those practices throughout their supply chain, and presented tools to put this into practice, including resources produced jointly by Verité and the UN Global Compact.