CONCLUSIONS OF THE CHAIR

10.45-12.15: PARALLEL SESSION A. *ATTRACTING, SELECTING AND RETAINING SKILLS: WHAT ROLE FOR MIGRATION POLICIES? [VENUE: ROOM CC13]*

Chair

Mr. Chris Alexander, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration (Canada)

Summary

- There is widespread enthusiasm for **attracting international students** (Brazil, New Zealand). Most countries acknowledge that students are appealing as a potential group of workers as they would have acquired local qualifications and are familiar with local work settings and life in general. However, we also discussed some of the pitfalls, especially how to prevent abuse of the student channel (Ireland), and how to select the best graduates for work permits. Some new measures in place included working with, for instance, foreign credentials recognition, or providing work experience, internships or vocational training, fast track visas (Brazil). All of this is to be done while paying attention to preventing any abuse of the system – we emphasized need for a quality programme along with clarity of pathways.

- This session looked carefully at how our countries can attract the skills – we agreed that most countries may have to work at **becoming attractive choice destinations ("the whole package approach")** if they are to appeal to the right type of skilled migrant (at all skill levels). Migrants are motivated by a number of reasons; in this regard, countries, while building off their natural advantages (e.g. living/work conditions, ease of getting social supports, bank account, driving license, etc.) will have to consider how best to provide attractive features. Such attractiveness, as we discussed, can cover a number of policies, points-based systems (New Zealand, Canada, Australia etc.), easy status change, pathways from work to residence, improved family reunification and better access to the labour market for family members and even offering tax incentives.

- Attracting migrants is one major consideration - keeping them settled, integrated and productive is another. We considered **admission policy measures that help with early integration and settlement**. For instance, the increasing shift in points-based systems towards having a job offer or local work experience, offshore to onshore (e.g. Australia, New Zealand), demand-driven policies in general, give us pointers for the types of admission policies to consider. Other examples include, for instance: Portugal mentioned its five pillars that encompass strong integration, service enhancement, culture/digital services in migration policy; Finland spoke about case-by-case evaluation of family circumstances, quality of education; Estonia discussed its welcoming programme, and Finland focused on its language training.

- We also discussed managing **balance** while attracting and admitting migrants – for instance addressing *brain drain/gain* at the same time, or managing work rights for migrants when unemployment is high (Ireland), rights for temporary workers families (New Zealand), regulation to welcome foreign doctors so that they could return to their origin countries (Brazil), and issues of coordination with education and training for the domestic population.

- For some countries in our discussion, it is becoming clear that *emigration* (e.g. Ireland, New Zealand, Portugal, Brazil, Canada, Estonia) is just as large a consideration now as immigration. A key issue is not about the benefits per se (scale varies across countries) but what will work in the context of OECD countries in attempting to attract back or link up to their diaspora. There were some good examples of how to **engage the diaspora.** For instance, BRA sends 6000 students annually to study overseas and allows Brazilian citizens to return back with an exemption from taxes on overseas earnings, while Portugal cited the online portal for jobs for civil engineers currently overseas.

- We heard about a range of innovative initiatives, from attracting **investors** (e.g. 6 million euro in New Zealand) and researchers to new **Startups** attracting local venture capital funds (Canada, Ireland) and helping them through the incubation period (Portugal, Estonia).