



GLOBAL
LABOR MARKET
CONFERENCE

GLOBAL LABOR MARKET CONFERENCE

3rd Edition Outcomes Report

January 26-27, 2026

King Abdulaziz International Conference Center
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

#GLMC2026

GLOBAL LABOR MARKET CONFERENCE © 2026

TABLE OF CONTENTS

00 GLMC In Motion: 3 Editions, 1 Trajectory

- 04 The Minister's Opening Vision
- 05 GLMC at a Glance
- 06 How GLMC Drives Labor Market Design
- 08 What Makes GLMC Distinct
- 09 From Launch to Leadership: How GLMC Evolved
- 10 6 Core Signals from the First 2 GLMC Editions
- 12 Future Outlook: Calls to Action

01 The 3rd Edition Executive Summary: Outcomes Snapshot

- 14 GLMC 2026 in Numbers
- 15 Strategic Partnerships
- 17 The 3 Strategic Shifts
- 18 Agreements

02 Global Alignment at GLMC 2026: The Ministerial Roundtable

- 21 The 2026 Roundtable: A Turning Point
- 22 The Shared Policy Map
- 24 The Alignment Grid

03 Strategic Milestones of GLMC 2026

- 26 Anchor Voices
- 29 GLMA: Forging the Next Generation of Labor Market Leaders
- 31 Knowledge Products Released at GLMC 2026

04 GLMC 2026 Themes: The Pillars Guiding Global Dialogue

- 35 The 6 Pillars of Progress
- 39 New Formats that Drove Action in 2026

05 Thematic Outcomes Digest

- 43 Day 1
- 55 Day 2

06 Innovation Labs & Applied Policy Programming

- 65 From Dialogue to Design
- 66 Redefining the Social Contract at Work
- 68 Rethinking Risk, Value and Voice

07 The Big Picture: 5 Cross-Cutting Insights From GLMC 2026

- 70 5 Cross-Cutting Insights From GLMC 2026

08 The Forward Protocol: GLMC 4th Edition and Beyond

- 75 GLMC 3rd Edition Closing Remarks
- 76 Calls to Action: A Shared Agenda for 2026-2027
- 77 Workstreams for GLMC 4th Edition

00

GLMC IN MOTION:
3 EDITIONS, 1 TRAJECTORY



The Kingdom's pride in hosting GLMC is not about showcasing our own progress; it is about contributing to the global conversation in labour market transformation.

H.E. Eng. Ahmad bin Sulaiman AlRajhi

Minister of Human Resources and Social Development,
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia





GLMC AT A GLANCE

WHAT IS GLMC?

The Global Labor Market Conference (GLMC) is an international policy convening and knowledge platform focused on the dynamics and transformation of labor markets. It brings together decision-makers and practitioners to exchange evidence, policy experience, and implementation insights related to workforce development, employment systems, and labor institutions.

Launched in 2023 in Riyadh by the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, GLMC was established as a dedicated forum for labor ministers and global stakeholders to advance labor market reform in a rapidly changing world. The conference addresses structural shifts affecting labor supply, demand, productivity, and participation, with an emphasis on practical, implementable policy approaches.

GLMC convenes ministers of labor from around the world, leaders of international organizations, policymakers, academics, business executives, and other labor market stakeholders. Its mandate centers on structured policy dialogue and knowledge exchange, highlighting the shared role of governments, employers, and institutions in strengthening labor markets that support long-term economic, technological, and social development.



HOW GLMC DRIVES LABOR MARKET DESIGN

Labor markets across regions are undergoing simultaneous pressures, including demographic change, technological adoption, skills mismatches, and shifting worker expectations. These forces are testing the capacity of existing institutions and policies to deliver employment, productivity, and social stability at scale.

GLMC matters because it provides a structured space for public and private stakeholders to examine these pressures collectively, compare policy responses across countries, and translate evidence into policy-relevant insight. The platform enables cross-country learning on issues including youth employment, workforce participation, productivity, job quality, and the evolving relationship between employers and workers.

Through research collaboration, analytical outputs, and ministerial-level exchange, GLMC supports continuous engagement beyond a single event, helping policymakers and practitioners navigate labor market reform in real time. By convening those responsible for policy design and implementation, the conference facilitates the sharing of comparative lessons, institutional approaches, and practical tools.

In essence, GLMC serves as the driving force behind effective labor market systems. By strengthening coordination among public institutions, private sector stakeholders, and workers, it ensures that policies are not only well-designed but also grounded in evidence and executed through meaningful collaboration. This commitment to data-driven decision-making, practical implementation, and cross-sector partnership is what makes the conference especially relevant in a time of rapid economic transformation.



HOW GLMC DRIVES LABOR MARKET DESIGN



Vision

To shape a future-ready global labor market that generates quality jobs and delivers inclusive prosperity built on sustainable growth.



Mission

To be the leading global knowledge hub and driver of labor market progress through a flagship event and year-round initiatives that engage different perspectives from the world of work, policymakers, regulators, business leaders, academics, and voices from different generational cohorts – advancing solutions that balance quality employment and productivity amid ever-changing market dynamics.



Objectives

Generate and Transfer Knowledge

Unveil, debate, and share cutting-edge theoretical and practical insights that can shape the future of labor.

Bring Every Voice to the Table

Ensure no one is left behind by bringing together diverse voices from across the globe - particularly those that are underrepresented – to collaborate and innovate solutions.

Promote Transparency and Courageous Dialogue

Confront complex and sensitive labor issues head-on, fostering open and honest conversations that lead to meaningful, evidence-based knowledge.

Drive Impact Through Action

Transform bold ideas into tangible change by translating dialogue into concrete initiatives, policies, and partnerships.

WHAT MAKES GLMC DISTINCT

GLMC is defined by a policy-first design. The conference is structured around ministerial-level engagement, technical depth, and implementation relevance, ensuring discussions remain anchored in the realities of labor market reform rather than broad debate.

A core strength of GLMC is its integration of evidence into policy dialogue. Analytical work, data, and research partnerships are embedded directly into the program, providing a shared evidence base that supports comparative analysis and more rigorous policy exchange across countries.

GLMC also functions as a continuity platform. Beyond the annual convening, it sustains engagement through year-round initiatives, knowledge products, and partnerships that support follow-up dialogue on emerging labor market issues and reform trajectories.

Its cross-sector architecture broadens its impact. Governments engage alongside international organizations, the private sector, academia, and labor institutions, enabling alignment across actors whose decisions directly influence employment outcomes.

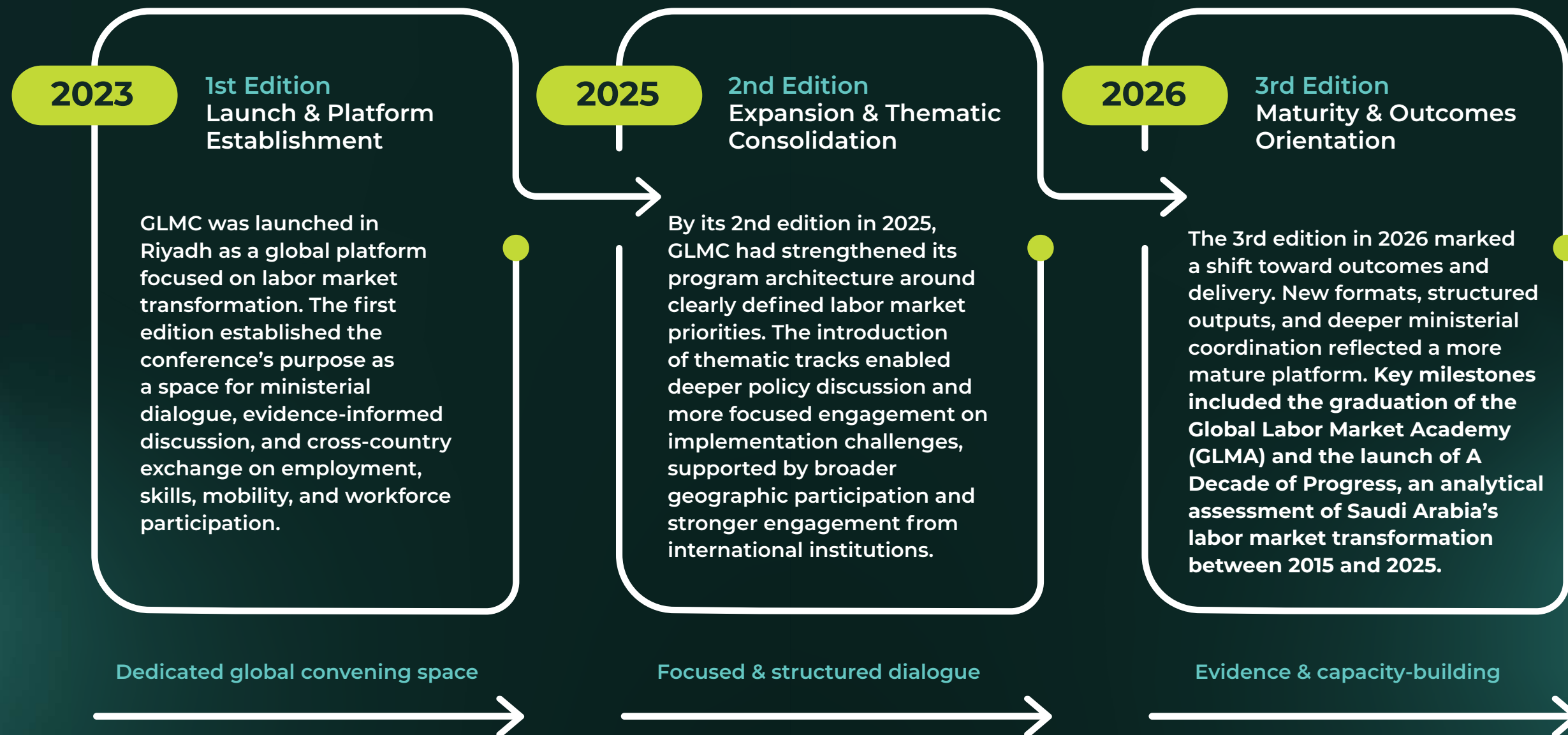
Hosted in Riyadh and informed by Saudi Arabia's labor market transformation experience, GLMC combines regional anchoring with global reach. GLMC aligns international labor market discourse with the practical realities of ongoing reform efforts.

This 3rd Edition was delivered in collaboration with 9 leading global knowledge partners, ensuring that discussions were grounded in research, comparative data, and policy experience. Their contributions were instrumental in session design, laying out thematic pillars, and strengthening the analytical depth of the conference; a partnership model that ensures discussions are anchored in evidence and aligned with international best practice.



FROM LAUNCH TO LEADERSHIP: HOW GLMC EVOLVED

Across its first 3 editions, GLMC progressed from platform creation to institutional leadership, supporting labor market reform through a structured, evidence-based approach.



6 CORE SIGNALS FROM THE FIRST 2 GLMC EDITIONS

Across its first 2 editions, GLMC surfaced a set of recurring signals that cut across regions, income levels, and labor market models. Together, these signals point to a fundamental reconfiguration of how work is accessed, governed, and valued. They reflect a shift away from static labor systems toward dynamic, skills-driven, and data-enabled models that prioritize adaptability, inclusion, and resilience.

01

Skills as Qualifiers

Verified, portable skills are replacing credentials as the basis of mobility.

73%
employers using skills-based hiring

72%
hiring likelihood with micro-credentials

65%
entry-level hiring based on skills

21%
wage premium from complementary skills (AI)

Shift _____ Degrees → Skills

System Response _____ Digital credentials

02

Labor as Strategic Capacity

Countries frame labor policy as part of security, stability, and competitiveness.

2.5x
faster recovery

5.3m
potential net jobs

70%
of wealth = human capital

\$6.5t
unlocked by skills alignment

Shift _____ Social → Strategic

System Response _____ Workforce planning

03

AI as a Social Partner in Work

AI becomes an active participant in how work is designed, verified, allocated, and governed.

52%
worried about AI

60%
of C-suite expect reskilling

71%
say AI moves too fast

Shift _____ Tool → Partner

System Response _____ Continuous reskilling

6 CORE SIGNALS FROM THE FIRST 2 GLMC EDITIONS

Across its first 2 editions, GLMC surfaced a set of recurring signals that cut across regions, income levels, and labor market models. Together, these signals point to a fundamental reconfiguration of how work is accessed, governed, and valued. They reflect a shift away from static labor systems toward dynamic, skills-driven, and data-enabled models that prioritize adaptability, inclusion, and resilience.

04

Modular Work & Plug-In Employment

Work unbundles into short cycles, tasks, and project-based roles across platforms.

435m

platform workers

2–3

year job tenure (under 35)

37%

hybrid/remote/freelance

Shift _____ Jobs → Tasks

System Response _____ Modular employment

05

Data as Labor Infrastructure

National labor data systems, taxonomies, credentials, dashboards, become the operating layer of workforce policy.

38

indicators, 18 tracked measures (OECD)

250m

labor data points for predictive modeling (ILOSTAT)

1bn+

job postings processed daily to classify emerging skills

Shift _____ Static → Live

System Response _____ Predictive governance

06

Enablement Focus Over Regulation

Policy shifts from rigid regulation to portable, flexible benefits.

80%

want portable benefits

50%

projected freelance workforce by 2028 (US)

34%

involved in gig/independent work

Shift _____ Rules → Mobility

System Response _____ Portable protections

FUTURE OUTLOOK: CALLS TO ACTION

Aligning policy and investment with the future of labor

01

Choose skills over degrees

Hiring, training, and mobility frameworks should prioritize verified competencies, micro-credentials, and demonstrated capability over formal qualifications alone.

02

Acquire labor capacity before it becomes scarce

Countries that invest early in reskilling, redeployment mechanisms, and talent pipelines will be better positioned to absorb shocks and sustain growth.

03

Upskill with AI in mind

Workforce strategies must therefore treat AI-related skills as foundational rather than specialized. This includes embedding AI literacy, data fluency, and human-machine collaboration into mainstream skilling systems, while ensuring that reskilling pathways are continuous, modular, and accessible at scale.

04

Tax productivity gains responsibly

Productivity gains driven by automation and AI should contribute to financing workforce transitions, reskilling, and social protection, ensuring that efficiency gains reinforce economic inclusion rather than deepen inequality.

05

Redesign pensions and benefits around hours and mobility

Benefits, contributions, and entitlements should follow individuals across jobs, sectors, and work arrangements, measured by participation and hours rather than tenure alone.

06

Apply intelligence to guide decisions on skilling, sectors, and protection systems

Data must become the operating layer of labor policy. Governments should invest in shared taxonomies, real-time dashboards, and predictive analytics to anticipate skill needs, identify emerging sectors, and calibrate protection systems proactively.

01

THE 3RD EDITION
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:
OUTCOMES SNAPSHOT




GLMC 2026 IN NUMBERS

GLMC 2026 brought together the scale, diversity, and decision-making authority required to move labor market dialogue into action. Over 2 days in Riyadh, the 3rd edition brought together ministers, policymakers, business leaders, and representatives of international institutions from more than 100 countries, combining high-level participation with concrete policy and implementation outcomes.

 **Global Participation**


40 Global Labor Ministers

100+ Countries Represented

 **Convening Power**

10,000+ In-Person Attendees

200 Influential Speakers

 **Program Scale**

50 Impactful Sessions

 **Policy & Institutional Outcomes**

90 MoUs & Agreements Signed

>6 mn Beneficiaries Linked to Signed Agreements

KNOWLEDGE PARTNERS



AUTOMOTIVE PARTNER

محمد يوسف ناغي للسيارات
Mohamed Yousuf Naghi Motors

PLATINUM PARTNER

الخبر كابيتال
AL-KHAIR CAPITAL



الإقامة المميزة
Premium Residency



STRATEGIC PARTNER



DIAMOND PARTNER



مجموعة مستشفيات الحمادي
Al Hammadi Hospitals Group

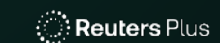
MEDIA PARTNERS



الإخبارية



Bloomberg Media



THE 3 STRATEGIC SHIFTS

GLMC 3rd Edition marked a clear evolution in how the conference operates and delivers value. Beyond scale and participation, the focus shifted toward translating evidence into action, strengthening coordination across institutions, and grounding dialogue in policy design. These 3 strategic shifts reflect GLMC's progression from a forum for discussion to a platform for structured outcomes and practical policy advancement.

From Evidence to Implementation

GLMC 2026 marked a clear move from idea sharing toward practical application. Evidence was translated into usable tools for policymakers and practitioners through structured outputs and sessions designed to support action. This shift was reflected in knowledge products developed with partners such as the World Bank, as well as discussions grounded in data and comparative analysis rather than abstract insight.

From Participation to Coordination

While representation remained strong, the emphasis moved toward coordination across institutions. Ministerial alignment, formal collaboration mechanisms, and agreements signed during the conference signaled a focus on activating policy intent through coordinated action, particularly in areas related to modern work practices and service delivery.

From Dialogue to Policy Design

Discussion was no longer treated as an end in itself. GLMC 2026 increasingly operated as a space where dialogue fed directly into policy directions. Thematic tracks, applied workshops, and leadership development formats such as the Global Labor Market Academy (GLMA) supported this shift by strengthening practical policy capability and institutional readiness.

AGREEMENTS



Freelance Pathways for the Entertainment Workforce

Partners:

1. Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development
2. General Entertainment Authority (GEA)

Objective:

Enable freelance and modern work models in the entertainment sector by defining professions, linking them to the national freelance platform, and expanding skills and employment opportunities for targeted groups.



Inclusive Digital Access for People with Disabilities

Partners:

1. Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development
2. Saudi Mobile Telecommunications Company (Zain)

Objective:

Improve and expand digital and employment-related services for people with disabilities, supporting inclusion and accessibility in the labor market.



QIADA Leadership Pipeline for Air Navigation

Partners:

1. Saudi Air Navigation Services Company
2. Dimensions Consulting Group

Objective:

Build a sustainable leadership pipeline at Saudi Air Navigation Services through structured development, coaching, and succession planning aligned with operational priorities.

AGREEMENTS



Logistics Talent Diploma Partnership

Partners:

1. Saudi Logistics Academy
2. Abdullah Al-Othaim Markets Company

Objective:

Deliver a joint diploma program to train and prepare 30 trainees with sector-specific logistics skills aligned with private sector needs.



AI-Driven Quality and Compliance Automation

Partners:

1. Takamol
2. Akor Information Technology Company

Objective:

Automate quality control and compliance processes in professional assessments using artificial intelligence technologies.



Digital Solutions for Work and Insurance Services

Partners:

1. Takamol Business Services
2. Elm

Objective:

Develop innovative digital services and data-driven solutions to enhance process automation, user experience, and digital integration in work and insurance-related sectors.



Youth Skills Pathways Collaboration

Partners:

1. GLMC
2. King's Trust International

Objective:

Deliver skills workshops in 2026 to strengthen youth employability and workforce readiness in line with Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 priorities.

02

GLOBAL ALIGNMENT
AT GLMC 2026:
THE MINISTERIAL ROUNDTABLE



THE MINISTERIAL ROUNDTABLE

THE 2026 ROUNDTABLE: A TURNING POINT

The 3rd GLMC Ministerial Roundtable in Riyadh marked a pivotal transition toward deep-tier policy coordination and cross-border synergy. Chaired by H.E. Eng. Ahmed bin Sulaiman Al Rajhi, Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, and attended by 40 labor ministers from across G20 economies and regions spanning Europe, Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and the Americas, the 2026 Roundtable underscored a shared mandate: that modern labor challenges require a sophisticated, interconnected response.

This edition was defined by a strategic sharpening of the GLMC mandate, evolving global dialogue into a concrete framework for coordinated action. Building on the foundation of previous ministerial conventions, and with the participation of H.E. Gilbert F. Hougbo, Director-General of the International Labour Organization (ILO), the 2026 Roundtable committed to 6 decisive actions: advancing skills recognition and portability; governing the responsible integration of AI; adapting social protection for modern mobility; harnessing labor market data to bridge opportunity gaps; optimizing workforce planning; and expanding sustainable pathways into employment.

THE SHARED POLICY MAP

The Ministerial Roundtable at GLMC 2026 concluded with a shared policy map anchored in 6 decisive actions, reflecting broad alignment among participating ministers on how labor systems must evolve to remain resilient, inclusive, and responsive to structural change. These actions move beyond diagnosis toward coordinated policy direction, signaling a shift from fragmented reform to shared implementation priorities.

1 Advance approaches to skills recognition and portability

Ministers agreed on the need to improve skills recognition and liquidity across labor markets, enabling workers to move more easily across sectors, occupations, and borders. Strengthening mutual recognition frameworks and portable credentials was identified as essential to unlocking mobility and reducing friction in workforce transitions.

2 Guide the responsible use of AI in labor market systems

Participants aligned on applying artificial intelligence to workforce and employment systems with clear principles of transparency, accountability, and oversight. AI was recognized as a tool to enhance decision-making in matching, forecasting, and service delivery, provided its use remains explainable and trusted by workers and institutions.



3 Adapt social protection systems to support mobility and transitions

Ministers emphasized that social protection must evolve alongside changing work patterns, ensuring that protections follow workers as they shift roles, employers, or forms of employment. Supporting transitions rather than static employment was identified as a core requirement for inclusive labor markets.





THE SHARED POLICY MAP

4 Enhance the use of data to actively connect people to opportunity

There was consensus on strengthening labor market data infrastructure to better link individuals with jobs, skills development pathways, and training opportunities. Improving the integration of data and analytics was seen as critical to moving from passive labor systems to active matching and guidance mechanisms.

5 Strengthen workforce planning to anticipate disruption

Ministers agreed that employment systems must be better prepared for economic shocks, technological change, and structural shifts. Forward-looking workforce planning was identified as a necessary capability to anticipate disruption rather than respond after displacement occurs.

6 Improve first-job and re-entry pathways into employment

The roundtable highlighted the importance of creating clearer and more accessible pathways into first employment and back into the labor market after periods of inactivity. Connecting individuals to meaningful progression opportunities was framed as essential for long-term participation and productivity.

Together, these 6 actions form a shared policy map that positions labor markets as dynamic systems requiring coordination across skills, technology, protection, and planning. They reflect a common understanding that resilience and competitiveness depend on how effectively workers can enter, move through, and remain connected to opportunity.

THE MINISTERIAL ROUNDTABLE

THE ALIGNMENT GRID

The Ministerial Roundtable also demonstrated how alignment is increasingly taking place across institutions, regions, and policy domains. GLMC 2026 brought together national governments alongside international organizations including the ILO, the World Bank, OECD, UNDP, IOM, UN Tourism, King’s Trust International, and the Mohammed bin Salman Foundation (Misk), reinforcing a shared commitment to coordinated action.

This alignment grid facilitates a model of enduring cooperation, ensuring that agreed-upon priorities are integrated into long-term partnerships. The 2026 Ministerial Roundtable delivered a unified roadmap for policy exchange and collective problem-solving, providing the international community with a structured coordination mechanism during a period of rapid market evolution.



	Skills & Mobility	Technology & AI	Social Protection	Data & Planning
Policy Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills recognition • Portability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible AI governance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portable protections • Career transitions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Real-time labor data • Workforce planning
System Lever	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualifications system • Mobility frameworks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AI oversight • Transparency rules 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaptive benefits • Coverage continuity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analytics • Forecasting tools
Primary Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governments • Education systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governments • Employers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governments • Social institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governments • International Organizations

03

STRATEGIC MILESTONES
OF GLMC 2026

ANCHOR VOICES

OPENING THE 3RD EDITION

The 3rd edition of the Global Labor Market Conference (GLMC) opened with remarks from H.E. Eng. Ahmad bin Sulaiman AlRajhi, Minister of Human Resources and Social Development of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, who addressed attendees on behalf of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud.

From the outset, the opening address placed GLMC within a global context defined by acceleration rather than stability. H.E. Eng. AlRajhi spoke to a labor market landscape under simultaneous pressure from technological change, demographic transitions, evolving trade patterns, and rising expectations from workers and employers alike. These forces, he emphasized, transcend borders and cannot be addressed through isolated national responses.

Reflecting on the conference's trajectory since its launch in 2023, the Minister pointed to GLMC's progression from a high-level forum into a sustained international platform for labor market dialogue. Each edition, he noted, has added depth to the conversation, moving from broad diagnosis toward more structured understanding. Building on earlier discussions around technology, youth pathways, and mobility, the 3rd edition places stronger emphasis on evidence, learning, and practical exchange across countries.



Ladies and gentlemen, the world of work is changing too fast for countries to learn on their own. GLMC was created to bring together diverse perspectives, share what works and turn ideas into action. By learning from one another and working together, we can build labor markets that are more resilient, more inclusive, and more prepared for the future.

H.E. Eng. Ahmad bin Sulaiman AlRajhi

Minister of Human Resources and Social Development,
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

ANCHOR VOICES

SETTING THE DIRECTION

The opening address grounded Day One in the urgency of today's labor market realities. Drawing on international data, H.E. Eng. AlRajhi pointed to persistent global pressures, including youth disengagement from employment and education, uneven job creation, aging populations in some economies, and skills requirements evolving faster than education and training systems can respond.

Looking toward 2030, he highlighted 4 forces influencing labor markets worldwide. Technological advancement, particularly artificial intelligence and automation, is altering job composition and skills demand. The transition toward lower-carbon economies is generating new forms of employment linked to sustainability objectives. Economic and geoeconomic pressures, including cost-of-living dynamics and geopolitical uncertainty, are affecting labor market resilience. At the same time, demographic trends are redefining labor supply, creating divergent challenges across regions.

The address underscored that countries are already testing varied responses, from skills-based pathways and lifelong learning systems to digital platforms supporting small and medium enterprises. These experiences, he noted, reinforce the importance of shared learning and practical exchange rather than uniform solutions. Hosting GLMC, he stressed, is about contributing to that collective effort and advancing cooperation in a world of work changing faster than any single system can manage alone.



Under Vision 2030, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has taken steps to expand economic participation, strengthening skills, development and modernization efforts to develop partnerships in many regions and helping us learn from global experiences.

H.E. Eng. Ahmad bin Sulaiman AlRajhi

Minister of Human Resources and Social Development,
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

ANCHOR VOICES

DAY 2 OPENING: FROM POLICY INTENT TO LABOR MARKET OUTCOMES

The second day of the conference opened with remarks from H.E. Dr. Abdullah Abuthnain, Vice Minister of Human Resources and Social Development for Labor in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, who centered the discussion on a challenge shared across labor markets worldwide: the distance between policy ambition and tangible results.

Reflecting on the first day, he noted that while strategies and reform agendas are increasingly well defined, implementation remains the decisive test. Ministerial dialogue underscored a common reality: progress depends not on the volume of ideas, but on the ability to translate intent into action.

H.E. Dr. Abuthnain also highlighted the role of capacity building in narrowing this gap, referencing the Global Labor Market Academy (GLMA), launched in Riyadh in partnership with the World Bank, which brings policymakers from across countries into applied learning on labor market reform. He further pointed to ongoing efforts to address skills mismatches, including Saudi Arabia's establishment of sectoral skills councils that align education and workforce priorities.

Looking ahead, the opening remarks set the direction for Day 2 discussions, with attention turning to the influence of artificial intelligence on workforce models and decision-making, and to the need for timely labor market data to support effective policy responses. The message was clear: there is no universal model, only shared challenges that require learning across contexts and practical cooperation.



In today's global economy, collaboration is essential to bringing together countries, and demographic, economic, and institutional experiences in complementary ways to address shared labor market challenges. This is necessary to help people navigate transitions.

H.E. Dr. Abdullah Abuthnain

Vice Minister of Human Resources and Social Development for Labor
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

GLMA: FORGING THE NEXT GENERATION OF LABOR MARKET LEADERS



The Global Labor Market Academy (GLMA) has become a core capability pillar within the Global Labor Market Conference, advancing applied leadership development for labor market policymakers and practitioners. The Academy was inaugurated in Riyadh by H.E. Dr. Abdullah bin Nasser Abuthnain, Vice Minister of Human Resources and Social Development for Labor in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, marking a deliberate move from dialogue toward structured execution and delivery.

The GLMA Class of 2026 brought together participants from 31 countries, including 19 countries participating for the first time and 12 returning from the 2025 cohort. That cohort model aimed at strengthening continuity across editions while steadily expanding geographic reach. Participants span government and institutional roles across employment policy, skills systems, social protection, and workforce strategy, creating a peer-learning environment grounded in diverse labor market contexts.

Delivered in partnership with the World Bank Group, GLMA's curriculum focused on translating evidence into policy action. Priority areas included youth employment, women's economic participation, social protection, and the labor market implications of artificial intelligence and digital jobs. Those themes reflect shared pressures across labor markets, while anchoring learning in comparative data and applied frameworks.



GLMA: FORGING THE NEXT GENERATION OF LABOR MARKET LEADERS

The Academy integrates preparatory learning with in-person engagement. An online pre-Academy module established a common foundation in labor market systems and terminology, enabling deeper exchange during the Riyadh sessions held from 26–28 January 2026. The in-person component emphasized immediate applicability, equipping participants with tools designed for use within their institutions

Graduation milestones have become central to GLMA's identity. At GLMC 2026, the Academy marked the graduation of its inaugural multi-national cohort of 34 countries, while simultaneously launching the new class. That moment underscored GLMA's role as a sustained leadership platform supporting long-term labor market reform.

Across its cohorts, GLMA is building a growing regional and global network of labor market leaders connected by shared learning, comparable policy challenges, and a common emphasis on implementation.



KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTS RELEASED AT GLMC 2026: WHAT WORKS FOR WORK

THE EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW

What Works for Work is a World Bank–led guidebook developed in close alignment with the Global Labor Market Conference to address one of the most persistent challenges facing labor market policy: understanding which employment interventions deliver results, and under what conditions. Drawing on a broad body of evaluated programs across low- and middle-income countries, the guidebook distills evidence into a clear policy logic that links specific labor market constraints to interventions with demonstrated impact.

THE STRATEGIC IMPERATIVE

At a time when labor markets are under strain from demographic change, skills mismatches, informality, and uneven job creation, governments face increasing pressure to act decisively while resources remain limited. The guidebook responds to this reality by shifting the focus from policy ambition to measurable outcomes. It shows that well-designed employment programs can generate significantly stronger gains in employment and earnings, while making clear that results depend as much on program design, targeting, and incentives as on the choice of intervention itself.



THE ECOSYSTEM FOCUS

What Works for Work is intended for policymakers and practitioners responsible for designing, financing, and implementing labor market programs. It is particularly relevant for those working on youth employment, skills development, labor intermediation, and the interaction between employment policy and social protection. Its structure supports decision-makers who must move from diagnosis to delivery and operate across institutional and sectoral boundaries.

THE POLICY MANDATE

What Works for Work offers a disciplined approach to policy decision-making. Rather than promoting a single model, it provides a framework for diagnosing binding labor market constraints and selecting interventions accordingly. By emphasizing context sensitivity, incentive alignment, private sector engagement, and integration with social protection systems, the guidebook strengthens policy coherence and increases the likelihood of effective implementation.

THE PILLAR ALIGNMENT

The guidebook reinforces GLMC’s policy-first orientation by placing evidence at the center of labor market decision-making. It supports the Conference’s focus on skills, inclusion, productivity, and resilience by offering a shared analytical reference for cross-country learning and comparison. As part of GLMC’s broader knowledge agenda, What Works for Work anchors global dialogue in evidence that is directly relevant to policy design and execution.

KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTS RELEASED AT GLMC 2026: WHAT WORKS FOR WORK



The Scale of Global Impact

100 million

rural women mobilized into self-help groups in India

60,000+

young people provided with training, internships, and grants in Kenya

75,000

extremely poor women targeted across all provinces in Zambia

80,000+

young entrepreneurs supported through national youth opportunities projects in Kenya



The Efficiency Premium

3 to 5

times larger earnings improvements in high-performing programs compared to the average ALMP

7 to 10

years duration of sustained gains in income and consumption for “graduation” program participants

1/3rd

increase in female employment in Saudi Arabia following reforms to independent mobility

2x

higher performance in youth programs launched after 2008 compared to earlier iterations



Economic Returns & Value for Money

100%

Internal Economic Rate of Return achieved by Kenya’s entrepreneurship grants, recovering costs in 10 months

29.5%

Internal Rate of Return on investment for vocational training and internship models in Colombia

256%

employment increase for participants of vocational training “plus” models in Bangladesh

103%

employment increase for women supported through micro-entrepreneurship and cash grant programs in Uganda



The 2030 Global Challenge

1 billion

people the projected shortfall in the supply of medium-skilled workers by 2030

71%

workers in low-income countries who are currently undereducated for their specific jobs

US\$387

annual earnings gain per beneficiary from a program with a unit cost of only US\$374

KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTS RELEASED AT GLMC 2026: A DECADE OF PROGRESS



Human Resources and
Social Development



THE WORLD BANK
IBRD • IDA | WORLD BANK GROUP



AN ANALYTICAL BENCHMARK OF LABOR MARKET TRANSFORMATION

A Decade of Progress is a joint analytical report released by the Global Labor Market Conference (GLMC) in collaboration with the World Bank and the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development (MHRSD). It provides a comprehensive, evidence-based assessment of Saudi Arabia's labor market transformation since the launch of Saudi Vision 2030 and the Labor Market Strategy, positioning the past decade as a measurable reform cycle rather than a series of isolated initiatives.

The report is grounded in a time-based comparison between 2015 and 2025, using 2015 as a pre-reform baseline and 2025 as an outcome reference point. This longitudinal lens allows policymakers to assess the cumulative impact of reforms across participation, employment structures, and social attitudes toward work, distinguishing structural change from short-term movement in indicators.

The analysis reflects MHRSD's central role in designing and implementing labor market reforms, complemented by the World Bank's global analytical expertise and comparative policy insight. As part of GLMC's research agenda, the report serves both as a national stocktake and a global reference, offering policymakers a disciplined framework for understanding how sustained, data-led, and institutionally anchored reform translates into long-term labor market transformation.

THE TRANSFORMATION AREAS

The report identifies 3 major transformations observed in Saudi Arabia's labor market over that time span.

FIRST, LABOR MARKET ACTIVATION AND STRENGTHENED INCLUSIVENESS.

Labor force participation reached 67.1% by 2025, accompanied by a significant expansion in employment among Saudi citizens. Overall unemployment declined to 2.8% by mid-2025, reflecting a direct transition from inactivity into employment. Gains were particularly notable among women and youth. Female employment increased from 11% in 2015 to 32% in 2025, while employment among mothers rose from 8% to 45%. Youth employment (ages 18–24) increased from 10% to 33%, alongside a decline in the share of youth not in education, employment, or training from 40% to 25%.

KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTS RELEASED AT GLMC 2026: A DECADE OF PROGRESS

SECOND, PRIVATE SECTOR DYNAMISM AND EXPANDED JOB CREATION.

By Q2 2025, 52.8% of Saudi citizens were employed in the private sector, marking a structural shift in employment patterns. Most net job creation over the decade was driven by private sector firms, supported by increased labor mobility and declining market frictions. Employment in micro-enterprises expanded from 6% to 26%, while education-to-job matching improved from 41% in 2015 to 62% in 2025, reducing skills-related barriers to employment.

THIRD, DEEP SHIFTS IN SOCIAL VALUES AND ATTITUDES TOWARD WORK.

The share of individuals unwilling to work declined from 49% to 12%, while preferences for public-sector-only employment narrowed sharply. Among men, this preference fell from 60% to 10%, and among women from 48% to 22%. Acceptance of women working in mixed-gender environments increased, supporting higher female participation in private sector employment and broader labor market integration.

Employment ratios increased as inactive individuals moved into jobs, driving a notable drop in Saudi unemployment and expanding the productive workforce. The knowledge attained from Saudi Arabia's transformation model can be transferred to other countries.

Dr. Cristóbal Ridao-Cano

Practice Manager for Social Protection and Labor in the Middle East and North Africa, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, the World Bank



HOW IT INFORMS LABOR POLICY

A Decade of Progress positions Saudi Arabia's experience as an analytical benchmark rather than a prescriptive model. It demonstrates how coordinated reform, institutional modernization, and data-driven policy design can activate labor supply, strengthen private sector participation, and realign social norms with labor market needs. By documenting outcomes over time, A Decade of Progress serves as a practical reference for policymakers seeking to assess reform impact, refine labor strategies, and inform future policy choices in an environment shaped by demographic change, skills transitions, and evolving work preferences.



Labor Market Activation & Inclusion

67.1%

Labor Force Participation
in Q2 2025

2.8%

Unemployment Rate Mid-2025

11% → 32%

Female Employment
(2015 to 2025)



Private Sector Dynamism

52.8%

Saudis Employed in Private
Sector by Q2 2025

6% → 26%

Micro-Enterprise Employment
2015 to 2025

41% → 62%

Education to Job Matching for
Men (2015 to 2025)

04

GLMC 2026 THEMES:
THE PILLARS GUIDING GLOBAL DIALOGUE

THE 6 PILLARS OF PROGRESS

GLMC 3rd Edition was structured around 6 thematic pillars that reflect the most pressing questions facing labor markets today.

Together, these pillars framed the conversations, sessions, and collaborations that unfolded across the conference, offering a structured way to examine how global shifts in trade, technology, skills, and social norms are translating into real-world labor outcomes.



**TRADE SHIFTS, LABOR MOVES:
WHERE DOES WORK GO FROM HERE?**



THE NEW SKILLS ORDER



**STILL LEARNING:
WHAT WE GOT RIGHT ABOUT AI AND WHAT WE DIDN'T**



**OFF THE RECORD:
SHADOW ECONOMIES, REAL WORKERS**



**CRISIS-PROOFING THE WORKFORCE:
GROWTH MEETS RESILIENCE**



ALIGNING LABOR WITH HUMAN PROGRESS



TRADE SHIFTS, LABOR MOVES: WHERE DOES WORK GO FROM HERE?

Global trade no longer moves in straight lines. It fragments, reconfigures, and realigns, carrying jobs, skills, and livelihoods with it. As supply chains shift and protectionist pressures rise, labor markets are increasingly shaped by forces beyond national borders.

This pillar examined how trade realignments are influencing productivity, employment patterns, wages, and skills, with sessions exploring sector exposure, policy responses, and how countries can adapt labor strategies to a more uncertain global trading environment.



OFF THE RECORD: SHADOW ECONOMIES, REAL WORKERS

Much of the world's work happens outside formal systems — not by accident, but by necessity. Informality reflects structural realities, lived choices, and gaps between policy design and economic life.

This pillar focused on the realities of informal work, questioned whether full formalization is always feasible, and explored policy approaches that extend protection, productivity, and dignity to workers operating outside traditional labor frameworks.



THE NEW SKILLS ORDER

Skills shortages and surplus talent now coexist. While some economies struggle to fill critical roles, others face underutilization and misalignment — revealing a growing disconnect between education systems and labor market demand.

This pillar examined how skills are developed, recognized, and deployed, with sessions that examined alternative pathways to workforce preparedness, the limits of traditional job structures, and new approaches to matching talent with opportunity.



STILL LEARNING: WHAT WE GOT RIGHT ABOUT AI AND WHAT WE DIDN'T

AI entered the labor conversation with certainty. It stayed with questions. Its impact is unfolding unevenly, reimagining tasks, redefining roles, and challenging assumptions about productivity, quality, and human judgment.

This pillar examined how AI is influencing job design and labor demand, with discussions addressing augmentation versus displacement, emerging skill divides, and how policy and institutions can respond as evidence continues to evolve.

CRISIS-PROOFING THE WORKFORCE: GROWTH MEETS RESILIENCE

Crises expose what labor systems are built to withstand, and what they are not. Shocks test mobility, protection, and the ability to redeploy talent when stability disappears.

This pillar focused on workforce resilience, exploring policy tools that support rapid transitions, portable protections, retraining models, and labor market flexibility in the face of economic, environmental, and geopolitical disruption.



ALIGNING LABOR WITH HUMAN PROGRESS

Jobs are more than outputs. Their quality shapes productivity, trust, and long-term economic performance. Labor markets succeed not only when they grow, but when work sustains people and institutions alike.

This pillar explored how labor policies can balance economic performance with job quality, examining wages, working conditions, and well-being, and how labor systems can support durable, inclusive, and socially grounded growth.

NEW FORMATS THAT DROVE ACTION IN 2026

GLMC 2026 marked a shift in how labor market challenges were tackled on the conference floor. New formats were introduced to accelerate learning, broaden participation, and move ideas closer to application. Rather than extending discussion, these formats were designed to test thinking, surface trade-offs, and yield actionable insights within the conference's lifespan.

01

POLICY IN A FLASH

When time is limited, clarity becomes the currency.

Policy in a Flash sessions challenged speakers to distill their most pressing workforce issues and the policy experiment they are actively pursuing to address them. The format rewarded precision over exposition, enabling side-by-side comparison across countries and exposing both the promise and the limits of different approaches in real time.

02

POLICY HACKATHON

Some problems only move forward when the room starts working.

The Policy Hackathon created a closed, intensive environment in which youth, policymakers, business leaders, and academics collaborated for 6 hours to address shared labor market challenges. The focus was not consensus-building but solution-building, culminating in a single joint output presented to the wider conference.

03

PASSING THE TORCH

Progress depends on who is allowed into the conversation next.

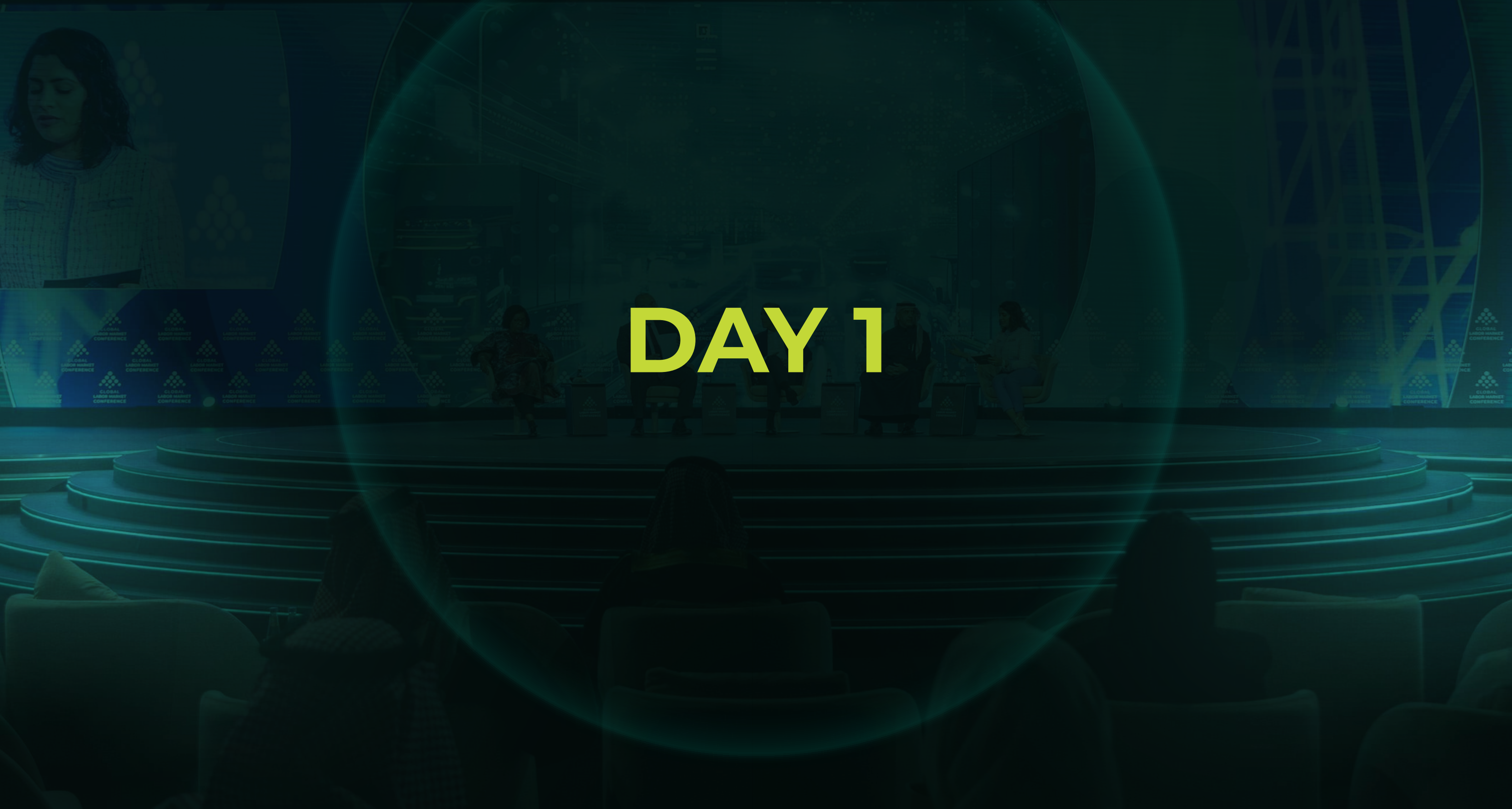
Passing the Torch opened the floor to emerging scholars from diverse institutions and regions, invited by senior academics to present new research and policy ideas. These contributions were then tested through direct feedback, critique, and debate, strengthening the link between established expertise and the next generation of labor market thinkers.

05

THEMATIC OUTCOMES DIGEST

The Thematic Outcomes Digest distills the intellectual capital generated across 2 days of intensive global deliberation into a structured analysis of the forces redefining global labor markets. This synthesis integrates the policy tensions, structural risks, and strategic opportunities identified throughout the 2026 convening into a unified outlook. By uniting government leaders, multilateral institutions, and private sector executives, GLMC functions as an accelerant where diverse perspectives are tested, refined, and converted into actionable policy. The themes captured herein reflect an emerging international consensus on the institutional reforms, governance models, and investment priorities essential to architecting resilient and adaptive labor systems.

DAY 1



MINISTERIAL PANEL: HIGH-IMPACT SECTORS AS DRIVERS OF JOB CREATION

- **Speaker:** H.E. Ahmed Al-Khateeb
Minister of Tourism, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
- **Speaker:** H.E. Bandar Al-Khorayef
Minister of Industry and Mineral Resources,
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
- **Speaker:** H.E. Prof. Dr. Vedat Işıkhan
Minister of Labour and Social Security, Republic
of Türkiye
- **Speaker:** H.E. Hind Aboud Kabawat
Minister of Social Affairs and Labor, Syrian Arab
Republic
- **Speaker:** H.E. Dr. Muhammad Sulaiman Al Jasser
Chairman, Islamic Development Bank Group
(IsDB Group)
- **Moderator:** Tumi Makgabo
Founder and Director, AfricaWorldwide Media



H.E. Hind Aboud Kabawat
Minister of Social Affairs and Labor, Syrian Arab Republic



Syria is undergoing a transitional period, with a major informal economy. It will take significant time to legalize everything. Our labor laws date back to 1958. We are trying to review laws to update them and allow for a full restructuring.

H.E. Hind Aboud Kabawat
Minister of Social Affairs and Labor, Syrian Arab Republic

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Tourism demonstrated large-scale job creation capacity, with Saudi Arabia's tourism workforce growing from 750,000 in 2019 to over 1 million jobs, while women account for **45% of sector employment** and youth represent a dominant share of the workforce, highlighting the sector's accessibility.
2. Industrial and manufacturing job creation was linked to technology readiness, with initiatives such as the **King Salman Automotive Complex targeting 300,000 vehicles annually by 2030**, supported by structured factory training and international talent partnerships.
3. Infrastructure investment emerged as a high-multiplier employment driver, with evidence indicating that **each USD 1 million invested can generate between 13 and 30 permanent jobs**, alongside wider productivity gains across logistics and supply chains.
4. Demographic shifts were identified as future labor demand drivers, particularly in healthcare and caregiving, where **global shortages of 9 million nurses and midwives and 18 million healthcare workers by 2030** position care-related sectors as long-term employment engines.
5. Labor formalization and absorption were highlighted as stabilizing priorities in transitional economies, with access to employment identified as a critical factor for social integration amid return migration, displacement, and large informal sectors.

This ministerial panel examined how high-impact sectors can generate sustained employment at scale, with a focus on tourism, industry, manufacturing, infrastructure, and social services. Ministers reflected on the conditions required for job creation to remain durable rather than cyclical, emphasizing skills alignment, sector-specific workforce planning, and the role of government in enabling private sector expansion. The discussion highlighted how sectoral strategies, when paired with targeted skilling and infrastructure investment, can reduce unemployment while supporting long-term economic diversification.



Every USD 1 million of public spending in infrastructure produces between 13 and 30 jobs permanently. This multiplier effect is most important, particularly as it enhances the productivity of society as a whole.

H.E. Dr. Muhammad Sulaiman Al Jasser
Chairman, Islamic Development Bank Group (IsDB Group)



Tourism represents around 10% of global jobs and global GDP. The tourism sector generates more jobs than any other sector, as per the United Nations World Tourism Organization. 45% of jobs are occupied by women and 80% of the 357 million employed in the sector are youth.

H.E. Ahmed Al-Khateeb
Minister of Tourism, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia



H.E. Ahmed Al-Khateeb
Minister of Tourism, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia



H.E. Dr. Muhammad Sulaiman Al Jasser
Chairman, Islamic Development Bank Group (IsDB Group)

MINISTERIAL PANEL: HIGH-IMPACT SECTORS AS DRIVERS OF JOB CREATION



H.E. Bandar Al-Khorayef
Minister of Industry and Mineral Resources,
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia



Governments are becoming essential in setting the tone with regards to attitudes towards new jobs and adapting tech. They create the right ecosystem, allowing the private and public sectors and workforce to function and understand what jobs are needed.

H.E. Bandar Al-Khorayef
Minister of Industry and Mineral Resources,
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia



H.E. Prof. Dr. Vedat Işıkhan
Minister of Labour and Social Security,
Republic of Türkiye



Over 10% of the population in Turkey is aging, and fertility rates are decreasing. This is happening worldwide as women enter the workforce and a balance between work and family life needs maintaining. Women should not have to make this decision.

H.E. Prof. Dr. Vedat Işıkhan
Minister of Labour and Social Security, Republic of Türkiye

FROM SKILLS TO JOBS: UNLOCKING HUMAN CAPITAL IN A CHANGING WORLD

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Speaker: Dr. Mamta Murthi**
Vice President for the People Vice Presidency,
the World Bank

In this keynote, Dr. Mamta Murthi examined the growing disconnect between skills development and job creation amid rapid technological, demographic, and climate-driven change. She emphasized that unlocking human capital now requires a fundamental shift in how countries design, finance, and deliver learning, moving away from fragmented training efforts toward employer-driven, system-wide approaches. Drawing on global evidence, the address highlighted the urgency of aligning skills strategies with real labor market demand, particularly as workforce pressures diverge sharply across regions.

1. Global labor markets face contrasting pressures, with youth surges in emerging economies and aging populations limiting supply elsewhere, demanding coordinated policy action.
2. Skills systems must move beyond education expansion and link learning directly to job outcomes to close growing training mismatches.
3. Employer-led workforce development plays a key role in priority sectors by defining skill needs, co-financing training, and opening job pathways.
4. Sector-based initiatives and stronger labor analytics support system reform and help align workforce planning with economic priorities.



1.2 billion youth in emerging economies will enter the workforce in the next decade. Whether they can drive growth and thrive depends on equipping them with the skills needed in economies reshaped by tech, AI, and the green transition.

Dr. Mamta Murthi
Vice President for the People Vice Presidency, the World Bank



Dr. Mamta Murthi
Vice President for the People Vice Presidency, the World Bank



“
The earliest impacts of trade policy changes appear within firms in sourcing decisions, investment patterns, production processes, and adopting new technologies. These changes then become visible in employment levels, skill requirements, and wages. During this, uncertainty and risk of misinterpretation are greatest.

H.E. Azar Bayramov, Director General
 Labour Centre of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation

TRADE CHOICES, WORK CONSEQUENCES: THE NET IMPACT ON LABOR

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Job churn is rising due to trade-driven restructuring; firms are cutting outdated roles while struggling to fill new skill gaps.
2. NUPCO ensures workforce resilience in healthcare by maintaining access to 1,200+ suppliers and achieving ~97% geographic coverage across Saudi Arabia.
3. Regional labor competition is intensifying, with Bayt.com reporting 60M professionals, 50M job applications in a year, and an 83% YoY increase in applicants per role.
4. Effective labor adjustment needs integrated policy design—flexible permits, skills mobility, and cross-border frameworks are key enablers.



Training systems must be built knowing we operate in global markets. You are no longer looking at specific countries. We compete inside and outside borders. Skills are portable. When you are skilled, your mobility increases. This is important for both employees and employers.

Othman Belbeisi

Regional Director Middle East and North Africa, The International Organization for Migration (United Nations for Migration)



A first key role of employers is aligning investment and policy with the needs of the labour market. They have a responsibility to clarify how skill demands are evolving. Systems can fail because training content does not keep pace with changing jobs.

Jacqueline Mugo

Executive Director & CEO, Federation of Kenya Employers; President, IOE

- **Speaker: Fahad Al Shebel**
CEO, National Unified Procurement Company (NUPCO)
- **Speaker: Rabea Ataya**
Founder & CEO, Bayt.com
- **Speaker: Othman Belbeisi**
Regional Director Middle East and North Africa, The International Organization for Migration (United Nations for Migration)
- **Speaker: Jacqueline Mugo**
Executive Director & CEO, Federation of Kenya Employers; President, IOE
- **Moderator: Resham Kotecha**
Global Head of Policy, Open Data Institute (ODI)

This panel examined how trade decisions shape labor market outcomes beyond binary choices between protection and liberalization. Speakers explored how shifting value chains, localization strategies, and technology adoption alter job composition, skills demand, and workforce mobility. The discussion emphasized that trade choices affect labor not only through where production occurs, but through how work is reorganized, skills are redeployed, and transitions are managed across firms, sectors, and borders.



WHEN TRADE SHIFTS: CATCHING THE SIGNS BEFORE THE MARKET SETTLES

- **Speaker: H.E. Azar Bayramov**
Director General, Labour Centre of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation
- **Speaker: Michael Lawrence OBE**
CEO, Asia House
- **Speaker: Denis Machuel**
Group CEO, The Adecco Group
- **Moderator: Tumi Makgabo**
Founder and Director, AfricaWorldwide Media

This session examined how shifts in trade policy and market access translate into labor market outcomes with delay and uneven impact. Speakers emphasized that by the time changes appear in employment and wage data, labor market structures may already have adjusted. The discussion focused on identifying earlier, firm-level and sector-level signals that can inform workforce planning, skills investment, and policy coordination before disruptions become embedded.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Trade and policy shifts impact labor markets gradually, with early signs appearing in firm behavior like sourcing, investment, technology adoption, and hiring before showing in employment data.
2. Traditional labor indicators often miss hidden changes, as shifts in tasks and skills can occur under stable job titles and employment levels.
3. Detecting structural change requires combined signals such as job postings, emerging skills, training participation, firm investment, and supply chain activity.
4. Workforce resilience depends on coordination across policy, corporate planning, education, and social protection, supported by continuous reskilling and transferable skills.

LAUNCH: WHAT WORKS FOR WORK – RELEASE OF THE GLOBAL GUIDEBOOK

- **Introductory Keynote:** Jamele Rigolini
Senior Advisor Social Protection and Labor,
the World Bank
- **Speaker:** H.E. Dr. Alfred. N. Mutua
EGH, Minister of Labour And Social Protection,
Republic of Kenya
- **Speaker:** Sven Littorin
Former Minister for Employment, Sweden
- **Speaker:** Dr. Iffath Sharif
Director of Social Policy, the World Bank
- **Moderator:** Anne-Marie Dias Borges
Award-Winning Journalist



Dr. Iffath Sharif
Director of Social Policy, the World Bank



The private sector has a critical role to play in connecting the dots between labor demand with supply and incentives, as well as investments so workers are connected to jobs. Job placement is critical, with private sector companies playing a big role.

Dr. Iffath Sharif
Director of Social Policy, the World Bank

This session examined evidence-based employment programs that deliver measurable labor market outcomes today, drawing on findings from What Works for Work, a new World Bank–GLMC guidebook analyzing 103 proven and promising interventions. The keynote by Jamele Rigolini outlined why labor markets remain resistant to change despite economic growth and education gains, while the panel discussion explored how successful programs achieve scale, durability, and impact by integrating employment support with skills systems, social protection, and private sector participation.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Employment programs today deliver significantly stronger results than in past decades, with some achieving up to five times the average impact according to the World Bank and ILO data.
2. Well-designed interventions produce long-term gains, lasting 3 to 10 years and often yielding returns beyond their initial costs.
3. Linking employment support to social protection systems enables scale, as seen in Kenya's NYOTA program and Brazil's 2025 integration plan.
4. Tailored, comprehensive designs and private sector involvement in placement and training consistently improve outcomes over generic models.



In Kenya, we partner with the private sector in skill development. We want these youth to plug and play. They acquire the skills and the government certifies them. It's a win-win. It exemplifies the shared responsibility of the government and private sector.

H.E. Dr. Alfred. N. Mutua
EGH, Minister of Labour and Social Protection, Republic of Kenya



H.E. Dr. Alfred. N. Mutua
EGH, Minister of Labour and Social Protection,
Republic of Kenya



Hope is a keyword. We see the incoming labor shortage. We need to give our citizens hope that there will be opportunities for them in the labor market, that they'll be contributors to society and wage earners for their families.

Sven Littorin
Former Minister for Employment, Sweden



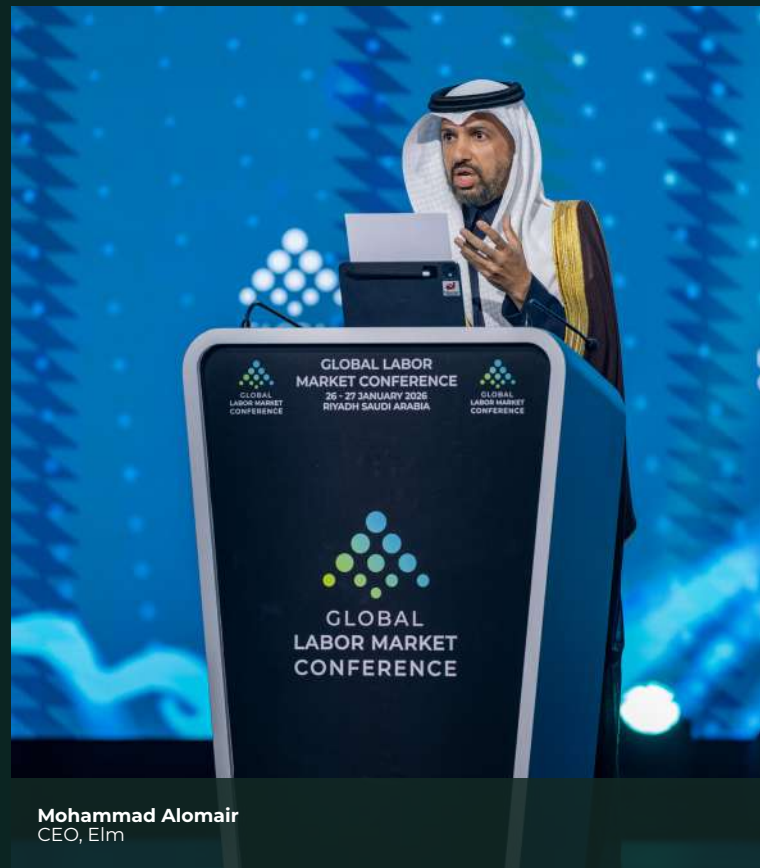
Sven Littorin
Former Minister for Employment, Sweden

TECHNOLOGY AND THE FUTURE OF THE LABOR MARKET

● **Speaker:** Mohammad Alomair
CEO, Elm

In this keynote, Mohammad Alomair described the relationship between technology and the labor market as a continuous dual-impact loop in which each influences the other. He structured his remarks around 3 dimensions: human resources, employment opportunities, and legislation. He argued that AI should be delegated repetitive and rule-based tasks, while humans retain responsibility for judgment, empathy, and complex decision-making. Jobs, he noted, should no longer be treated as fixed categories but as combinations of competencies, with individuals building renewable skill portfolios rather than relying solely on static job descriptions.

Alomair also emphasized the need for process reengineering within organizations to enable hybrid human-machine teams and highlighted the importance of governance frameworks that clarify accountability, strengthen data protection, and define responsibility in AI-supported systems. He pointed to regulatory sandboxes and continuously updated labor-market intelligence tools as practical mechanisms to manage technological acceleration while maintaining trust and oversight.



Mohammad Alomair
CEO, Elm



Human resources are not fully human in the age of AI. Human employees must accept digital partners and, while not relying on them heavily, must delegate them to simple tasks and focus themselves on tasks requiring empathy and other human skills.

Mohammad Alomair
CEO, Elm

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Technology and labor markets influence each other continuously, requiring policy approaches that account for both innovation and workforce adaptation simultaneously.
2. Jobs are increasingly understood as collections of tasks, with AI delegated repetitive components and humans retaining complex, contextual, and empathetic functions.
3. Individuals must build renewable skill portfolios rather than rely solely on static job titles, while organizations redesign processes to integrate hybrid human-machine teams.
4. Clear accountability frameworks and strong data protection measures are necessary to define responsibility boundaries in AI-supported systems.
5. Regulatory sandboxes and real-time labor intelligence tools can support supervised experimentation and more responsive workforce planning.

HOW PRODUCTIVITY EVOLVES AND HOW TO PREVENT ITS DECLINE

● **Speaker:** H.E. Robert Holzmann
Professor of Economics, Austrian Academy of Sciences

As global populations age and fertility declines, long-held assumptions about productivity are being tested. H.E. Robert Holzmann examined whether aging societies inevitably face productivity decline and argued that the relationship is more nuanced. While demographic shifts reduce the share of working-age populations in major economies, including Europe, the United States, and China, productivity at later stages of working life does not automatically collapse. Experience, judgment, and stability often offset reductions in speed or physical capacity. However, without deliberate institutional adjustments — particularly the development of a structured “senior labor market” — demographic pressures will strain fiscal systems, pension sustainability, and long-term growth.

Holzmann also addressed expectations surrounding artificial intelligence as the next major productivity wave. While AI is widely viewed as a transformative force, projected gains vary significantly, and adoption will require time, investment, and workforce adaptation. Productivity growth will not materialize automatically through casual AI use; it depends on how technology is integrated into labor systems, skills development, and firm-level practices.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Aging populations create productivity pressures, but older workers can sustain output when labor markets retain and deploy their skills effectively.
2. Building a senior labor market is key to long-term sustainability and offers a more practical solution than raising retirement ages.
3. AI's productivity impact is uncertain, with estimates ranging from 1.3 to 3 percent annually, and depends on gradual adoption and investment.
4. Sustained productivity requires more than technology, including skills development, institutional reform, and policies aligned with demographic shifts.



H.E. Robert Holzmann
Professor of Economics, Austrian Academy of Sciences



Productivity is a key driver of economic well being. It is the force which allows you to have higher income without consuming more capital and labor. We would be much more miserable without productivity.

H.E. Robert Holzmann
Professor of Economics, Austrian Academy of Sciences



THE END OF THE JOB DESCRIPTION? RETHINKING THE UNIT OF WORK

- **Speaker: Dr. Ibrahim Almojel**
Founding Partner, Khwarizmi Holding
- **Speaker: Prof. Peter Elias**
Institute for Employment Research, University of Warwick
- **Speaker: Dr. Johannes Kopf**
Chairman of the Board, Public Employment Service Austria
- **Speaker: Prof. Léon Laulusa**
Executive President & Dean, ESCP Business School
- **Speaker: Bettina Schaller**
President, World Employment Confederation (WEC)
- **Moderator: Tumi Makgabo**
Founder & Director, AfricaWorldwide Media

The discussion highlighted both opportunity and risk. Skills-based approaches can expand mobility, improve matching, and allow portable recognition of capabilities. However, without common taxonomies, clear verification systems, and updated social protections, fragmentation could increase insecurity rather than opportunity. The panel underscored the role of governments, public employment services, and private intermediaries in building shared skills languages, portable benefits, and systems that balance flexibility with fairness.

This panel examined whether traditional job descriptions remain fit for purpose in a labor market increasingly organized around skills, projects, and measurable outcomes. Across sectors, work is being broken down into deliverables and competencies rather than fixed roles. While some organizations are moving toward outcome-based and skills-based deployment of talent, others continue to rely on job titles and formal credentials, creating a hybrid reality rather than a full replacement of the traditional model.



Prof. Léon Laulusa
Executive President & Dean, ESCP Business School



The most important focus is how we serve society. We need to consider how to strengthen companies' strategy, mission, and objectives. When it comes to employees, it's not just about skills and competencies, but also attitude, and how we measure them.

Prof. Léon Laulusa
Executive President & Dean, ESCP Business School



Bettina Schaller
President, World Employment Confederation (WEC)

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Job descriptions are evolving toward deliverables in some sectors, though traditional structures still matter in manufacturing and regulated fields.
2. Shared skills taxonomies are key to aligning employers, jobseekers, and policymakers, with public institutions playing a central role in building them.
3. Portability of pensions, benefits, and verified skills supports labor mobility and protects workers in flexible job markets.
4. Young people and migrants face recognition barriers, highlighting the need for systems that value competencies beyond formal credentials.
5. As work becomes more modular, the social contract must adapt to protect workers through training, lifelong learning, and fair labor standards.



We are at a transition point in the labor market. Clearly defined job roles are giving way to more fluid, skills-based work. While roles may become less rigid, data and clear insight into labour supply and demand are getting more important

Bettina Schaller
President, World Employment Confederation (WEC)



Public authorities should develop skills, taxonomies, and common standards to help individuals clearly articulate their capabilities and enable companies to define and advertise roles more effectively.

Dr. Johannes Kopf
Chairman of the Board, Public Employment Service Austria

NEW SKILLS FOR A CHANGING WORLD

- **Speaker: Carmen-Maja Rex**
Chief HR Officer, Airbus

Carmen-Maja Rex addressed the workforce implications of what she described as a “golden age of aerospace,” set against the backdrop of Saudi Arabia’s Vision 2030 and rapid sectoral expansion across civil aviation, defense, and space. With the Middle East projected to require 265,000 additional skilled aviation professionals over the next 2 decades, including pilots and maintenance engineers, she positioned human capital development as the defining factor in sustaining industry growth and technological advancement.

Drawing on Airbus’ global experience, she outlined a structured approach to workforce development anchored in long-term capability building, knowledge transfer from senior experts, and deliberate investment in future-facing skills. The keynote emphasized that large-scale industrial transformation — including sustainable aviation fuel, hydrogen-powered aircraft, and next-generation manufacturing — depends not only on innovation, but on systematic, industrialized learning systems capable of producing and renewing critical skills at scale.

“**With industrial presence in Saudi Arabia, we would be able to expand our investment in high-value skills here, contributing further to the country’s GDP. Indeed, Saudi Arabia has the potential to become a global center of global aerospace innovation and technology.**”

Carmen-Maja Rex
Chief HR Officer, Airbus

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. The Middle East needs 265,000 new aviation professionals over 20 years, requiring long-term workforce planning to support aerospace growth.
2. Knowledge transfer is vital, with Airbus relying on 2,000 senior experts to mentor younger engineers and retain critical know-how.
3. Structured, industrial-scale learning is replacing ad hoc training, as seen in Airbus’s training of 7,000 young operators annually and dedicated schools in key fields.
4. Upskilling in areas like sustainable fuel and hydrogen propulsion ensures engineers stay current with evolving technologies.
5. Localizing aerospace capacity in Saudi Arabia depends on scaled training investment, leadership development, and scholarship programs tied to national goals.



Carmen-Maja Rex
Chief HR Officer, Airbus



When we talk about new industries and new technology, performance matters. New technology creates new skill needs, but soft skills are a constant: learning agility, curiosity, project management, leadership, and business acumen. These help people develop and sustain performance.

Sébastien Froidefond
Chief People Officer, Ubisoft



We’re moving from lifelong employment to lifelong employability. Industries change, and as an organisation we need to continuously link opportunity and capability, based on evidence. Partnerships between policy, the private sector, and education are crucial to identifying agile talent.

H.E. Maha Mofeez
CEO, Tamkeen

EMERGING WORK, EMERGING TALENT: BUILDING CAPABILITIES FOR NEW INDUSTRIES

- **Speaker: H.E. Maha Mofeez**
CEO, Tamkeen
- **Speaker: Muneerah Aldakhaeel**
Acting Chief Human Resources Officer, Alat
- **Speaker: Sébastien Froidefond**
Chief People Officer, Ubisoft
- **Speaker: Rajit Nanda**
CEO, DataVolt
- **Moderator: Eng. David Woessner**
Managing Partner, FutureOf

As new industries take form across advanced manufacturing, digital infrastructure, gaming, and AI-enabled sectors, the panel examined how organizations build talent systems before a stable labor market ecosystem exists. Speakers addressed the practical challenges of identifying priority skills, structuring roles without legacy templates, and aligning with education and training systems that are evolving in parallel with industry demand.

Drawing on examples from Tamkeen, Alat, Ubisoft, and DataVolt, the discussion emphasized data-led workforce planning, industry integration in training, hybrid hiring models that combine internal capability development with adjacent-sector talent, and partnerships with universities and public authorities. The session underscored that emerging industries cannot rely solely on external recruitment; they must actively construct the talent pipelines that will sustain them.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Data-driven planning in initiatives like Tamkeen’s Skills Bahrain helps direct training investments early through labor observatories and sector forecasts.
2. Addressing a projected 3.5 million global data center talent gap, companies like DataVolt are prioritizing internal capability building for long-term sustainability.
3. Industry-integrated models such as Alat’s manufacturing programs and DataVolt’s academy fast-track talent development through real-world, embedded training.
4. Career models like Ubisoft’s blend structure with flexibility, offering clear pathways while supporting role mobility and personal growth.
5. Public-private-academic collaboration is essential to scaling new sectors by aligning education with real labor market needs.

CLICK, DON'T THINK: THE DEMISE OF EXPERTISE

- **Speaker: H.E. Macky Sall**
Former President, Senegal (2012–2024)
- **Speaker: Girish Ganesan**
Executive Vice President & Chief People Officer, S&P Global
- **Speaker: Dr. Kai Roemmelt**
CEO, Udacity; SMD, Accenture
- **Speaker: Anthony Salcito**
General Manager of Enterprise, Coursera
- **Moderator: Dr. Leila Hoteit**
Managing Director & Senior Partner; Global Leader, Education, Employment, and Welfare, The Boston Consulting Group

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. AI is redefining entry pathways by automating routine cognitive tasks while expanding access to learning through faster experimentation and multilingual tools.
2. Entry-level roles should be redesigned to build judgment, accountability, and progression rather than being reduced to low-value work.
3. Lifelong learning must be embedded across careers, combining technical expertise with leadership, resilience, and critical thinking.
4. Verified micro credentials and skill-based hiring are becoming more central as modular learning strengthens workforce readiness.
5. Human judgment remains essential in AI-enabled systems, as accountability and ethical decision-making cannot be automated.

The panel examined whether artificial intelligence is accelerating access to knowledge or eroding the foundations of professional expertise. As AI systems assume routine cognitive tasks, traditional entry-level roles that historically served as apprenticeship pathways are narrowing, raising concerns about how early-career professionals build judgment, experience, and accountability. At the same time, AI is lowering barriers to learning, enabling faster skill acquisition and broader access to education at scale.

Speakers emphasized that the debate is not binary. AI presents both risk and opportunity, and the decisive factor lies in how education systems, employers, and policymakers redesign learning pathways, job architectures, and credential models. The discussion highlighted the need to redefine entry-level roles, strengthen leadership and human capabilities alongside technical skills, expand verified micro-credentials, and ensure that responsibility and judgment remain human-owned even in AI-enabled environments.

“
We have a contrast between what AI brings, which is quick access and knowledge, and the fact that it is access that limits the beginner’s learning. We should try to find a balance between both.

H.E. Macky Sall
Former President, Senegal (2012–2024)



H.E. Macky Sall
Former President, Senegal (2012–2024)



Anthony Salcito
General Manager of Enterprise, Coursera

“
With revolutionary technologies such as AI, short-term effects are always overestimated, long-term effects underestimated. Things that are not going to change are how productive you are, the quality of that productivity, and the impact you’re ultimately driving with your work.

Dr. Kai Roemmelt
CEO, Udacity; SMD, Accenture



Dr. Kai Roemmelt
CEO, Udacity; SMD, Accenture

“
We have to redefine entry level jobs. We have to stop equating them to low value low judgment jobs. As traditional career ladders go away, they become about giving people skill-based experiences. As one job becomes redundant, they can be moved and reskill.”

Girish Ganesan
Executive Vice President & Chief People Officer, S&P Global



Girish Ganesan
Executive Vice President & Chief People Officer, S&P Global

PROOF OF WORK: LESSONS FROM AN AI-DRIVEN WORKFORCE SHIFT

- **Speaker: Joanne Wright**
Senior Vice President, Transformation & Operations, IBM
- **Moderator: Resham Kotecha**
Global Head of Policy, Open Data Institute (ODI)

Drawing on IBM's experience as "client zero" of its own AI transformation, this fireside chat explored what happens when a company applies AI to its own workflows before offering it to clients. Joanne Wright described how IBM used AI not only to drive efficiency but to fundamentally elevate roles across the enterprise. Rather than treating AI as a narrow automation tool, the company approached it as a horizontal capability embedded across HR, IT, procurement, client support, and operations.

The transformation focused on cost efficiency as a catalyst for reinvestment, enabling innovation, skill development, and growth. Early successes, such as the AI-powered AskHR platform, now handling 94 percent of HR queries and significantly improving employee satisfaction—were replicated across other domains. The session emphasized 3 foundational enablers: strong data infrastructure, redesigning work around end-to-end processes rather than silos, and cultivating a growth mindset that repositions employees from transactional operators to growth enablers.

“Lean in on giving people exciting ways to learn, providing them with tools that allow them to be productive, and offering them opportunities to scale that. That is a game changer.”

Joanne Wright
Senior Vice President, Transformation & Operations, IBM



KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. AI adoption must be enterprise-wide and process-driven, as IBM redesigned end-to-end workflows such as Procure-to-Pay (P2P) and HR service delivery to unlock broader value.
2. Efficiency gains should power a reinvestment cycle, redirecting savings into skills, innovation, and strategic growth rather than treating cost reduction as the final goal.
3. Strong data foundations are essential, with integrated structured and unstructured data, shared standards, and enterprise-wide accessibility enabling effective deployment.
4. Scaling proven AI use cases quickly generates more value than over-optimizing them, while redesigning roles enables employees to move from transactional tasks to higher-value strategic work.
5. Long-term impact depends on cultural alignment and innovation focus, combining leadership mandate, workforce upskilling, and a shift from productivity gains toward AI-driven innovation.

AUTOMATION BY DEFAULT, AUGMENTATION BY DESIGN

- **Speaker: Varun Kohli**
Senior Vice President, Teradata

This keynote examined the direction AI innovation is currently taking and the choices that will determine its long-term labor market impact. While automation remains the dominant commercial driver of AI deployment, the session emphasized that technology outcomes are not predetermined. The way systems are designed, and the degree to which humans remain central to decision-making, will shape whether AI expands productivity inclusively or concentrates value narrowly. Drawing on cross-sector examples from banking, automotive manufacturing, and maritime operations, the speech illustrated how organizations are using AI to process complex data at scale while maintaining human oversight in areas requiring judgment, accountability, and contextual understanding. The session reinforced a central distinction: automation may be the operational default, but augmentation requires deliberate design.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Automation is accelerating across sectors, but its impact depends on system design, with AI embedded in workflows while human judgment remains essential in high-stakes decisions.
2. The strongest productivity gains occur when AI manages large-scale complexity and humans interpret insights, as seen in banking, automotive engineering, and maritime monitoring.
3. Effective deployment requires integrated data environments, since fragmented systems limit impact while unified data unlocks meaningful efficiency gains.
4. Human-in-the-loop models strengthen both performance and accountability, ensuring expert validation of AI-generated analysis before action.
5. Leadership intent determines outcomes, as deliberate design can elevate human contribution, while a narrow focus on cost reduction risks displacement.



Varun Kohli
Senior Vice President, Teradata

“Real breakthroughs happen when data, AI and humans operate in a single unified unit. That is the future of organizations: automation by default and augmentation by design.”

Varun Kohli
Senior Vice President, Teradata

AI AT WORK: THE RISES AND FALLS OF LABOR DEMAND

- **Speaker: Dr. Yaser Alonaizan**
Deputy CEO & President of Data & AI Models, HUMAIN
- **Speaker: Cenly Chen**
Chief Growth Officer, Supermicro
- **Speaker: Dr. Julien Malaurent**
Dean of Post Experience Programs & Executive Vice President, ESSEC Business School
- **Speaker: Stefano Scarpetta**
Director for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs, OECD
- **Speaker: Venkataramani Suresh**
Co-founder & Global CEO, VeriKlick
- **Moderator: Dr. Leila Hoteit**
Managing Director & Senior Partner; Global Leader, Education, Employment, and Welfare, The Boston Consulting Group

This panel examined whether AI's impact on labor demand represents a temporary adjustment or a structural shift in how economies generate employment. Stefano Scarpetta characterized AI as a general-purpose technology, affecting nearly all sectors and occupations with unprecedented speed. While aggregate employment remains strong, the transformation of tasks is profound, with nearly 30 percent of jobs in advanced economies expected to undergo significant change as AI performs large portions of their task content. The key risk is not immediate mass unemployment, but whether workers are adequately prepared to adapt.

Speakers from industry reinforced that this wave differs from prior technological disruptions. AI is no longer limited to automating routine processes; it is redesigning workflows, accelerating development cycles, and lowering barriers to building digital solutions. However, the gains risk concentrating among those who can effectively use AI, raising concerns about exclusion rather than polarization. The discussion concluded that expanding access to AI skills, redesigning education around orchestration and accountability, and scaling lifelong learning are essential to prevent a more exclusive labor market.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. AI represents a structural transformation defined by its speed, scale, and cross-sector reach.
2. Employment remains high, but task composition is changing significantly, with up to 30 percent of jobs in advanced economies likely to see more than half of their tasks altered.
3. The central risk is exclusion rather than mass unemployment, as workers who can use AI gain advantage while others risk being left behind.
4. Entry-level pathways and traditional skill-building routes are under pressure, requiring new models for early-career development and clearer human roles centered on judgment, supervision, and accountability.
5. Training, education, and policy must align to embed lifelong learning, expand access to practical AI skills, and ensure productivity gains translate into broad opportunity.

You can use AI to be ten times more productive, or to be left behind and face serious challenges from tech. To address these types of things, it is important to think about education, reskilling, and upskilling.

Dr. Yaser Alonaizan
Deputy CEO & President of Data & AI Models, HUMAIN



Stefano Scarpetta
Director for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs, OECD

The real concern is exclusion. This is because AI gives people power, capacity they never had. People who have access and manage AI gain tremendous advantage. Those who aren't trained to use AI will be at a severe disadvantage.

Cenly Chen
Chief Growth Officer, Supermicro



Dr. Leila Hoteit
Managing Director & Senior Partner; Global Leader, Education, Employment, and Welfare, The Boston Consulting Group

Lifelong learning now needs to be put in practice. Everyone needs to learn digital skills complementary to what AI can do. Some are human skills, like critical thinking.

Stefano Scarpetta
Director for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs, OECD



Cenly Chen
Chief Growth Officer, Supermicro

AI's productivity gains don't automatically translate into shared opportunities. If we want a labor market that stays open and not go more exclusive, we need to pair innovation with protection.

Dr. Leila Hoteit
Managing Director & Senior Partner; Global Leader, Education, Employment, and Welfare, The Boston Consulting Group

THE NEXT LABOR CONTRACT: PROTECTING WORKERS IN THE AGE OF AI

- **Speaker:** Sallyann Della Casa
CEO, Gleac
- **Speaker:** Prof. Aleksandra Przegalińska
Vice-President, Kozminski University; Senior Research Associate, Harvard University
- **Speaker:** Matthias Thorns
Vice-President, International Organisation of Employers (IOE); Vice-Chair, ILO Governing Body
- **Moderator:** Nima Abu Wardeh
Author, The BRILLIANT Communicator

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. AI is widening performance differentiation within organizations, amplifying the advantage of adaptive and creative workers while exposing skill stagnation.
2. Adoption patterns are complex, as resistance often reflects legitimate concerns about privacy, surveillance, and ethics rather than lack of technical ability.
3. Early-career pathways are under strain, with fewer traditional entry roles in some sectors and growing uncertainty about how experience and progression are built.
4. Access divides extend beyond skills to digital infrastructure and AI availability, risking wider inequality across firms, sectors, and regions.
5. Worker protection frameworks must evolve through coordinated company dialogue, national regulation, and international labor standards to address privacy, transitions, and skill development.

Discussions focused on how labor institutions, employers, and workers are adapting to AI's expanding role in creative, professional, and white-collar work. Rather than widespread immediate displacement, participants emphasized uneven adoption, shifting performance expectations, and emerging tensions around privacy, consent, accountability, and early-career progression.

Creative industries provided a concrete case, particularly in relation to digital likeness and hybrid human-machine collaboration. The conversation extended to broader structural issues, including responsibility for upskilling, the adequacy of collective bargaining mechanisms, and how labor protections should evolve when AI transforms tasks rather than entire occupations.

Although AI-related provisions are increasingly appearing in collective agreements, regulatory and institutional clarity remains limited. Data gaps, uneven digital access, and concerns among early-career workers indicate that labor governance frameworks are still adjusting to rapid technological change.



Matthias Thorns
Vice-President, International Organisation of Employers (IOE);
Vice-Chair, ILO Governing Body



With AI, the so-called laggards were not uninformed. They understood the technology but had serious concerns around privacy, the workplace, and how work would change. What they needed was dialogue, not rejection, especially as concerns around AI, including deepfakes, continue to grow.

Prof. Aleksandra Przegalińska

Vice-President, Kozminski University; Senior Research Associate, Harvard University



Prof. Aleksandra Przegalińska
Vice-President, Kozminski University; Senior Research Associate,
Harvard University

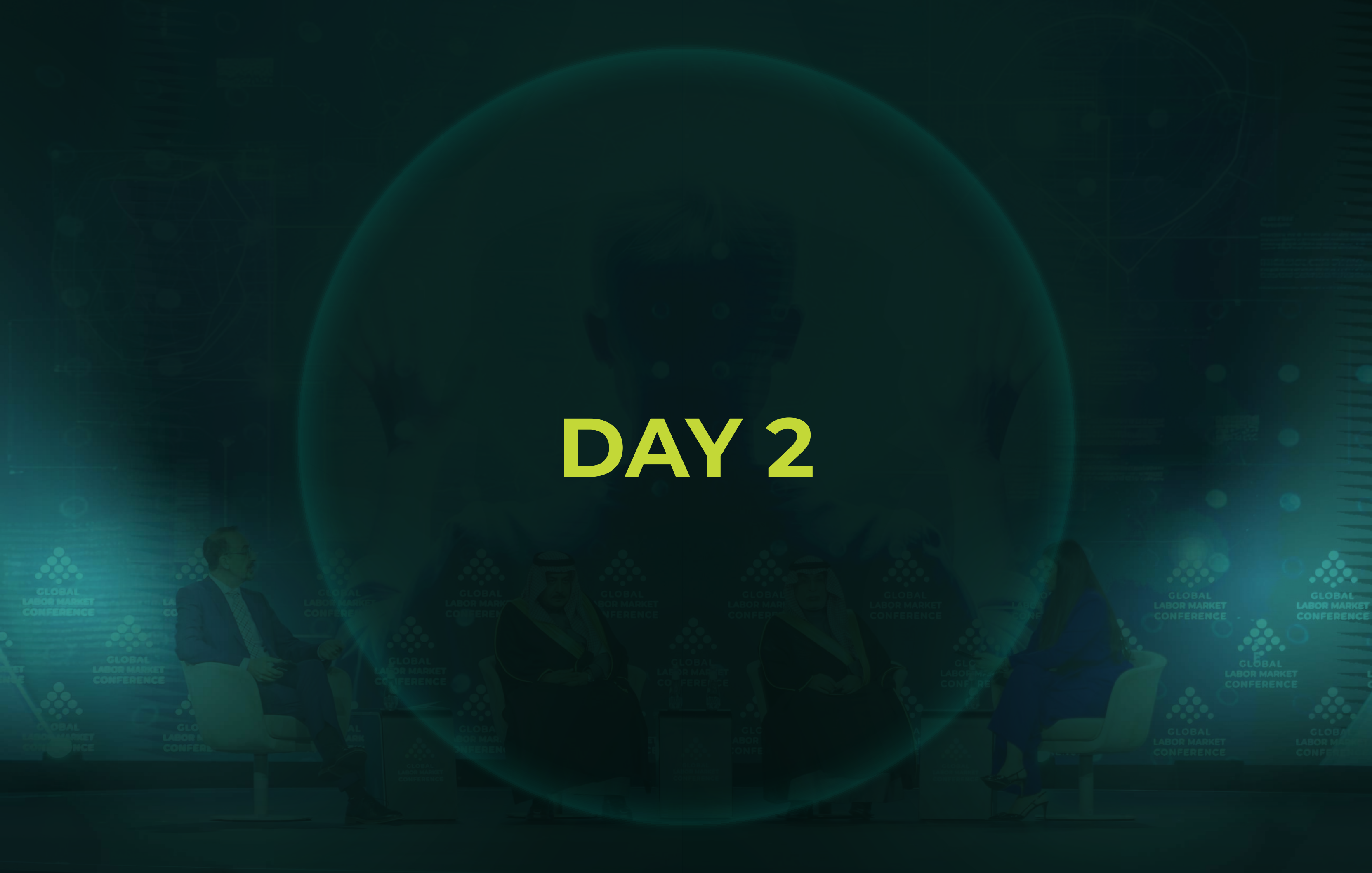


The huge divide is not about who's intelligent. It's seeing a divide growing between people who have access to technology and digital infrastructure and those who don't. The winners and losers for tomorrow. There are huge concerns that it's not under control.

Matthias Thorns

Vice-President, International Organisation of Employers (IOE); Vice-Chair, ILO Governing Body

DAY 2



GOVERNING THE AI TRANSITION IN THE WORLD OF WORK

- **Speaker:** H.E. Gilbert F. Hougbo
Director-General, International Labour Organization (ILO)
- **Moderator:** Marianna Evenstein
Broadcast Journalist, Deutsche Welle

As the first session following the opening speech, Day 2 of GLMC began with a focused fireside conversation on how to govern AI's impact on labor markets to promote decent work rather than deepen inequality.

H.E. Gilbert F. Hougbo stressed that AI is reshaping tasks more than eliminating jobs, with augmentation likely to outweigh automation. Updated ILO data shows that while 25% of jobs are exposed to AI, only 3.3% face extreme exposure. Still, averages mask disparities. Women, particularly in administrative roles, face higher risks, and in the Arab world are 3 times more exposed than men. The discussion ultimately underscored that governance, social dialogue, and targeted investment will determine whether AI drives inclusion or exclusion.



H.E. Gilbert F. Hougbo
Director-General, International Labour Organization (ILO)

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Augmentation is likely to exceed automation, but exposure is uneven, with white-collar and administrative roles facing significant task-level transformation even if few jobs are fully automated.
2. The digital divide is deepening and risks becoming structural, as AI investment concentrates in a limited number of countries and regions and widens disparities within nations.
3. Gender exposure demands urgent focus, as women are overrepresented in routine administrative roles, with exposure in the Arab region estimated at 3 times that of men.
4. Skills strategies must extend beyond technical AI training to include digital literacy alongside transferable capabilities such as problem-solving, adaptability, and interpersonal skills.
5. A human-centered AI transition requires coordinated social dialogue and sustained investment in digital infrastructure and inclusive skilling systems to ensure SMEs, youth, and vulnerable groups benefit from productivity gains.



We have an increasing tech divide. It's not just in trade between wealthier and poorer countries, but between poor regions and other regions within them. This is a point of concern.

H.E. Gilbert F. Hougbo
Director-General, International Labour Organization (ILO)

RULES TO RECRUITMENT – HOW GOVERNMENT, REGULATORS, AND BUSINESS WORK TOGETHER

- **Speaker:** H.E. Dr. Ahmed Ibn Salem Al-Ameri
President, Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University (IMSIU)
- **Speaker:** H.E. Dr. Bandar Alkaway
CEO, Ministry of National Guard Health Affairs (MNGHA)
- **Speaker:** Dr. Luis Benveniste
Global Director of Education, the World Bank
- **Moderator:** Paula Naoufal
Senior Reporter, CNN Business Arabic

This session explored how employment outcomes are shaped by the alignment of government policy, regulatory design, education systems, and business decision-making. Rules alone do not create jobs; hiring happens when frameworks and employer realities align.

In highly regulated sectors like healthcare, workforce expansion must balance speed, safety, and qualification standards. Strict certification and graded responsibility systems protect quality but can slow hiring amid rising demand and technological change, underscoring the need for regulatory agility without lowering standards.

Across the labor market, structural skills mismatches remain a key barrier. Foundational learning gaps, weak curriculum-employer alignment, and limited flexible skilling pathways reduce efficiency. Participants stressed early investment in foundational skills, expanded workplace-based learning, and stronger employer-education feedback loops.

The session concluded that durable job creation requires coordination: governments set direction, regulators enable responsiveness, education embeds transferable skills, and businesses engage in policy design. Alignment determines whether policy translates into hiring at scale.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Job creation requires alignment across government direction, regulatory frameworks, and business decision-making, as sustainable hiring depends on coordination rather than policy alone.
2. Foundational capabilities developed early, including literacy, numeracy, and socio-emotional skills, underpin long-term employability and adaptability in a digital economy.
3. Skills mismatches remain structural, with employers struggling to find relevant talent, underscoring the need for deeper collaboration between education systems and industry.
4. Regulatory agility is critical in fast-evolving sectors such as healthcare, where safety standards must be preserved while workforce capacity adapts to technological change.
5. Workplace learning and strong partnerships close the transition gap, combining university-based competencies with apprenticeships, microcredentials, and employer-led training.



Dr. Luis Benveniste
Global Director of Education, the World Bank



Early childhood education is not available for everyone. It is necessary, though. It is the foundation to get skilled. These children are disadvantaged at school. About 70% of children in the developing world cannot read a simple story by age ten

Dr. Luis Benveniste
Global Director of Education, the World Bank



H.E. Dr. Bandar Alkaway
CEO, Ministry of National Guard Health Affairs (MNGHA)



Healthcare will see labor shortages. The population is growing. There is a requirement to produce highly regulated and very skilled professionals, which takes time. There will always be a negative balance in the healthcare sector.

H.E. Dr. Bandar Alkaway
CEO, Ministry of National Guard Health Affairs (MNGHA)

REPORT LAUNCH: A DECADE OF PROGRESS – SAUDI ARABIA’S LABOR MARKET TRANSFORMATION

- **Presenter:** Dr. Ahmed Alzahrani
Deputy Minister for Skills, Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development (MHRSD)
- **Presenter:** Nayib Rivera
Economist, the World Bank
- **Presenter:** Dr. Carole Chartouni
Senior Economist, the World Bank
- **Speaker:** Bader N. Al-Otaibi
Chief Human Resources Officer, Arab National Bank
- **Speaker:** Dr. Ahmed Alzahrani
Deputy Minister for Skills, MHRSD
- **Speaker:** Dr. Johannes Koettl
Senior Economist, the World Bank
- **Moderator:** Paula Naoufal
Senior Reporter, CNN Business Arabic



Dr. Ahmed Alzahrani
Deputy Minister for Skills, MHRSD



Our aspiration was never just creating jobs, but fostering a competitive ecosystem responsive to change. We aim to attract global talent while providing high-quality jobs for citizens, building a diversified economy and a labor market resilient to future global challenges.

Dr. Ahmed Alzahrani
Deputy Minister for Skills, MHRSD

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Sustained reform depends on strong institutional ownership, with political leadership, cross-ministerial coordination, private sector engagement, and rigorous monitoring translating strategy into measurable results.
2. Inclusion efforts have expanded participation, particularly among women and youth, with notable gains for single mothers and declining reliance on public-sector employment.
3. The private sector, especially SMEs, has become the main engine of job creation, reflecting a structural shift toward diversification and knowledge-driven growth.
4. Improved skills alignment and greater labor mobility are strengthening productivity, as more workers move into roles that match their education and transition more fluidly across jobs.
5. The next phase centers on productivity and skills-based employment, prioritizing job quality, SME training capacity, AI integration, lifelong learning, and a shift from qualification-based to competency-based systems

This session presented the findings of the joint MHRSD–World Bank report documenting a decade of labor market transformation under Vision 2030. Framed around a ten-year horizon, the discussion emphasized that structural reform requires sustained commitment, data-driven policymaking, and whole-of-government coordination.

The data presented highlighted a significant shift since 2015: rising female and youth participation, stronger private sector absorption of new entrants, improved job matching aligned with education levels, and greater labor mobility among both Saudis and expatriates. The private sector has emerged as the primary engine of job creation, particularly in knowledge-intensive sectors such as finance, ICT, and professional services.

Panelists reflected on the institutional architecture behind this progress, including the Labor Market Strategy, sector skills councils, digital platforms for real-time labor data, and structured monitoring and evaluation. Looking ahead, the conversation turned to the next phase of reform: moving from activation and inclusion toward productivity, skills-based employment systems, SME capacity building, and preparing the labor market for rapid technological shifts, including AI adoption.



Dr. Johannes Koettl
Senior Economist, the World Bank



Saudi Arabia is addressing major barriers; female labor participation is a clear example. Barriers, from segregated workplaces to transportation, were removed. These big reforms yielded big outcomes. No other country in recent history that doubled female labor in such a short time.

Dr. Johannes Koettl
Senior Economist, the World Bank



Bader N. Al-Otaibi
Chief Human Resources Officer, Arab National Bank



It is time to move from qualification-based to skill-based assessment. Organizations are forecasting future skills, and policy must be agile and responsive. Moving toward skill-based approaches benefits employees at all levels.

Bader N. Al-Otaibi
Chief Human Resources Officer, Arab National Bank



Dr. Khaled Khalifa
Senior Advisor & Representative to the GCC, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)



Refugees and forcibly displaced persons may be doctors or engineers with valuable skills to offer where informality isn't a choice. We have examples from Germany, Canada, and the US where refugees managed to make fiscal net contributions to the economy.

Dr. Khaled Khalifa
Senior Advisor & Representative to the GCC, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

WHY INFORMALITY EXISTS, AND WHY IT PERSISTS

- **Speaker: Prof. Joseph Akinkugbe Adelegan**
Executive Director & CEO, Partners in Population and Development (PPD)
- **Speaker: Dr. Khaled Khalifa**
Senior Advisor & Representative to the GCC, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
- **Speaker: Denis Pennel**
CEO, Work That Works
- **Moderator: Alasdair Ross**
Consultant

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Informality is structural rather than marginal, reflecting systemic labor market mismatches and institutional gaps rather than isolated non-compliance.
2. Its drivers vary by context, including weak enforcement, regulatory complexity, demographic shifts, migration flows, and limited labor market intermediation.
3. The distinction between choice and constraint is critical, as while some entrepreneurs operate informally by preference, most workers lack viable pathways into formal employment.
4. The economic and fiscal costs are substantial, reducing tax revenues, weakening social protection systems, and limiting governments' ability to capture demographic dividends.
5. Effective formalization requires context-specific policy design, integrating regulatory reform, migration management, skills development, and institutional strengthening.

This session examined informality as a structural feature of the global labor market, not a marginal deviation. With about 60% of the global workforce in informal employment, it was framed as the dominant reality across much of the world. Participants explored how informality stems from regulatory complexity, labor market mismatches, demographic pressure, migration flows, and weak institutional capacity.

Regional disparities were stark. Informality exceeds 80% of employment in parts of Africa and remains above 67% in Asia, the Pacific, and the Arab States, while significantly lower in Europe and Central Asia. It takes many forms: survival strategies for displaced populations, outcomes of low productivity sectors, entrepreneurial avoidance of regulation, and exclusion linked to documentation or legal status barriers.

The panel also addressed the costs. For workers, informality limits access to social protection, representation, and upward mobility. For employers, it leaves a large pool of talent untapped amid hiring shortages. For governments, it reduces fiscal revenue and weakens the ability to capture demographic dividends. Participants emphasized that policy responses must be context specific, grounded in demographic transitions, migration dynamics, and institutional realities. Formalization was positioned not only as social protection, but as an economic strategy to strengthen competitiveness and inclusive growth.

WHY INTERVENE, AND HOW?

- **Speaker: Niklas Beckman**
Senior Legal Advisor, Confederation of Swedish Enterprise
- **Speaker: Roberto Suárez Santos**
Secretary General, International Organisation of Employers (IOE)
- **Moderator: Alasdair Ross**
Consultant

Building on the structural realities of informality explored in the previous session, this conversation focused on the rationale and design of intervention. Speakers examined what policymakers are ultimately trying to achieve when addressing informal economies: extending social protection, strengthening fair competition, increasing tax revenues, improving productivity, or facilitating transitions into formal work.

A central challenge highlighted was measurement. Even in largely formal economies, estimating the size and scope of informal activity remains difficult. Informality often overlaps with formal employment, creating blurred boundaries that complicate policy design. Without reliable data, interventions risk being misdirected or disproportionately burdening compliant firms.

The session emphasized that successful approaches require targeted, incentive-based measures rather than blanket regulation. Experiences from countries that have reduced informality point to multi-dimensional strategies combining social protection, access to finance, regulatory reform, institutional strengthening, and shifts in compliance culture. Participants underscored that the objective is not immediate eradication of informality, which could destabilize economies, but structured transitions that promote inclusion, fairness, and productivity while minimizing unintended consequences.



Niklas Beckman
Senior Legal Advisor, Confederation of Swedish Enterprise



It is important to get a grip on the informal sector. From the workers' perspective, it's about pension, social security, and the risk of being exploited. For employers, it's about fair competition, given the cost of complying with administrative requirements and taxes.

Niklas Beckman
Senior Legal Advisor, Confederation of Swedish Enterprise

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Effective intervention requires clarity of objective, whether the priority is revenue generation, worker protection, productivity improvement, or structured transitions into formal employment.
2. Measurement remains a persistent constraint, as overlapping employment arrangements and incomplete data complicate accurate quantification and evidence-based policy design.
3. Targeted incentives often outperform blanket regulation, with measures such as tax deductibility and simplified compliance proving more effective than additional administrative burdens.
4. Formalization should be approached as a transition rather than eradication, since abrupt elimination of informal work risks economic disruption.
5. Sustainable progress depends on multi-dimensional strategies that combine social protection, access to finance, regulatory reform, institutional strengthening, and cultural shifts toward compliance.

BEYOND JOBS: USING CATALYTIC CAPITAL TO BUILD RESILIENT LABOR MARKETS

- **Speaker: Pradeep Kurukulasuriya**
Executive Secretary, United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF)

This keynote reframed labor market resilience as a systems challenge rooted in finance, risk, and market structure rather than employment numbers alone. Amid trade shifts, climate shocks, technological disruption, and conflict, job creation was presented as the result of functioning economic systems, not a standalone policy goal. A core focus was the financing gap facing small and medium sized enterprises, especially in least developed countries, small island states, and fragile contexts. SMEs generate most jobs yet fall into the missing middle of finance, too large for microfinance, too risky for banks, and too early for traditional development finance. The result is persistent informality, low productivity, and heightened vulnerability to shocks. The keynote emphasized catalytic capital deployed early, concessional, and risk sharing to crowd in private investment and help SMEs scale. Tools such as guarantees, blended finance, and digital financial solutions can stabilize incomes and shift survival activity into productive employment. Resilient labor markets, the message concluded, require coordinated public and private financing that reduces risk and unlocks long term growth.



Pradeep Kurukulasuriya
Executive Secretary, United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF)

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Employment is the outcome of economic systems rather than isolated interventions, requiring resilient markets supported by accessible and appropriately structured capital.
2. The “missing middle” limits job creation, as SMEs lack suitable financing to scale and absorb labor, especially in fragile and low-income contexts.
3. Informality is closely tied to financial exclusion, with informal systems becoming the default when formal finance fails to reach entrepreneurs and small firms.
4. Catalytic capital plays a critical role in absorbing early risk, using concessional finance, guarantees, and blended instruments to crowd in private investment.
5. Building resilience requires deliberate sequencing, stabilizing incomes, expanding SME finance, and strengthening financial infrastructure to move from survival activity to productive employment.



Repeated financing gaps keep emerging and constraining job creation in small island states and countries in debt distress. This is the issue of the missing middle of finance and, when that gap persists, labor markets become fragile. Shocks translate into long-term scarring.

Pradeep Kurukulasuriya
Executive Secretary, United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF)

INCLUSIVE BY DESIGN: EMBEDDING EQUITY INTO ECONOMIC GROWTH

- **Speaker: Dr. Othman Al-Kassabi**
CEO, Tawuniya
- **Speaker: Pascal Bijleveld**
CEO ATscale
- **Speaker: Dr. Margaret Jones Williams**
Deputy Resident Representative, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
- **Moderator: Tumi Makgabo**
Founder & Director, AfricaWorldwide Media

This panel challenged the assumption that growth automatically delivers inclusion. Speakers argued that equity must be deliberately embedded into economic systems, from financial and insurance design to education pathways, disability access, and youth employment strategies.

Small and medium enterprises were positioned at the center of inclusive growth but in need of risk sharing mechanisms, insurance innovation, and supportive policy frameworks to scale sustainably. Inclusion was framed not as compliance but as a productivity strategy. Evidence cited showed that exclusion, particularly of youth and persons with disabilities, carries measurable macroeconomic costs, including GDP losses and weaker labor market efficiency.

Panelists pointed to universal design, workforce participation incentives, large scale apprenticeships, and portable benefits as structural levers to make inclusion systemic rather than reactive. Inclusive growth, they stressed, is not charity but a strategic investment in competitiveness, resilience, and long term economic stability.



Dr. Margaret Jones Williams
Deputy Resident Representative, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Inclusion must be embedded in growth strategies from the outset, with economic policy, industrial planning, and workforce systems integrating equity rather than addressing inequality after disruption.
2. Disability inclusion delivers measurable economic returns, as investments in assistive technology and accessibility increase productivity, labor force participation, and GDP performance.
3. Youth exclusion poses a structural risk, with unemployment rates far exceeding those of adults globally, requiring scalable apprenticeships, internships, and mentorship pathways.
4. Insurance and risk-sharing mechanisms can enable inclusion, as health coverage design and employer-supported benefits reduce risk aversion and expand access to diverse talent.
5. Lasting inclusion depends on coordinated partnerships among governments, private sector actors, multilateral institutions, and education systems, aligning incentives with long-term economic value.



We have to address inequality by addressing inclusion. Women make up 50% of the population but only 42% of the workforce. People with disabilities are 16% of the population. Excluding them means losing 16% of workforce potential, which is why inclusivity matters.

Dr. Margaret Jones Williams
Deputy Resident Representative, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

THE INVISIBLE WORKFORCE: THE CASE FOR VALUING CARE

- **Speaker: Dr. José Luis Cobos Serrano**
President, International Council of Nurses

In this keynote, Dr. José Luis Cobos Serrano argued that the global nursing shortage reflects a structural labor market failure, particularly the gender based undervaluation of care work.

Representing more than 30 million nurses, he cited a global shortfall of 5.8 to 6 million. The problem, he stressed, is not talent scarcity but underinvestment, low pay, weak workforce planning, and limited career pathways.

Citing data from the International Council of Nurses and WHO, he highlighted the economic stakes. Every dollar invested in health systems can generate up to a fourfold return, and closing global health workforce gaps could add USD 1.13 trillion to the global economy while reducing 7 percent of the global disease burden.

He called for sustained investment in nursing education, leadership, and retention, positioning nursing as a strategic economic investment central to productivity and social stability.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. The global nursing shortage stands at roughly 5.8 to 6 million, with 80 percent of nurses concentrated in countries representing only half of the world's population.
2. Nurses are paid below comparable high-skill professions, earning less than the average high-skill worker in 34 of 49 countries studied, reflecting structural labor market failures in pay, planning, career pathways, and working conditions.
3. Investment in health systems delivers strong economic returns, with every USD 1 invested generating up to fourfold gains, and eliminating workforce shortages potentially adding USD 1.13 trillion to global GDP while reducing 7 percent of the global disease burden.
4. Nursing remains a gendered labor market issue, with women comprising approximately 85 percent of the workforce and care work systematically undervalued.
5. Sustainable health system resilience requires long-term investment in education, prevention, leadership development, and workforce retention rather than short-term reactive measures.



Failures in how labor markets recognize and reward nursing care are driving shortages of 5.8 million nurses worldwide. We must reverse this by making the value of nursing visible and investing in the workforce to build resilient societies and thriving economies.

Dr. José Luis Cobos Serrano
President, International Council of Nurses



- **Speaker: H.E. Dr. Khaled Al Sabti**
Advisor, Secretariat of the Council of Ministers, Chairman of the Board of Directors, Education & Training Evaluation Commission (ETEC)

In this keynote, H.E. Dr. Khaled Al Sabti argued that the core challenge for education systems is no longer access, but alignment and speed. As technology, demographic shifts, and economic restructuring accelerate labor market change, education systems remain slowed by gradual reform cycles and fragmented adjustments. He described the skills mismatch as a structural economic constraint that affects competitiveness and productivity. Quality, he noted, can no longer be measured by credentials alone, but by employability, adaptability, and career progression. Under Vision 2030, Saudi Arabia has placed human capability development at the center of national transformation. Through the Education and Training Evaluation Commission, the Kingdom has introduced a unified national evaluation system spanning K to 12, higher education, and vocational training. Its defining feature is the use of real time data and advanced analytics to shorten reform cycles and link evidence directly to policy, funding, and program design. By embedding labor market outcomes into system wide evaluation frameworks and partnering with employers to define standards, Saudi Arabia aims to ensure education keeps pace with the economy.

QUALITY EDUCATION THAT DRIVES GROWTH

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. The central challenge is speed and alignment, as education expansion is no longer the main constraint; reducing the lag between labor market demand and education reform cycles is now critical.
2. Skills mismatches have become a structural economic constraint, affecting productivity, competitiveness, and long-term growth.
3. Education quality is defined by employability and adaptability, with graduate labor market outcomes serving as the primary measure of system performance.
4. Saudi Arabia has established a unified national evaluation system through ETEC, overseeing tens of thousands of institutions and linking evidence directly to policy, funding, and reform priorities.
5. The model integrates employer partnerships, learner tracking from early education to employment, and advanced analytics to enable rapid intervention, earning recognition from international organizations including the OECD.



Education fulfills its promise only when systems can respond quickly to emerging employer needs. Saudi Arabia has made a deliberate and strategic choice. Under Vision 2030, the Kingdom has placed human capability at the heart of national transformation.

H.E. Dr. Khaled Al Sabti
Advisor, Secretariat of the Council of Ministers, Chairman of the Board of Directors, Education & Training Evaluation Commission (ETEC)



Dr. Herwig Immervoll
Head of Social Benefits and Green Transition, OECD

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Green labor reallocation is uneven and slow, as skills gaps, geographic immobility, and job quality differences prevent automatic transitions from carbon-intensive industries.
2. Energy-producing economies face structural risk, requiring deliberate industrial development strategies to replace entire value chains linked to coal and oil.
3. Labor shortages are already emerging in green sectors, while displaced workers risk wage losses, highlighting the need for proactive retraining before layoffs occur.
4. Regulatory design and market structure are decisive, as harmonized frameworks attract investment and job creation, while informality and fragmentation hinder transition.
5. Fairness and policy credibility are essential, with targeted compensation, stable climate signals, and continuous evaluation needed to sustain public support and long-term workforce planning.

CARBON CAREERS AND THE GREEN DIVIDE: WHEN CLIMATE GOALS COLLIDE WITH WORK

- **Speaker: Frank Bozich**
President & CEO, Trinseo
- **Speaker: Prof. Reza Daniels**
Dean, Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences, Stellenbosch University
- **Speaker: Dr. Herwig Immervoll**
Head of Social Benefits and Green Transition, OECD
- **Moderator: Marianna Evenstein**
Broadcast Journalist, Deutsche Welle

This panel examined the labor market implications of decarbonization, shifting the focus from whether the green transition will happen to how unevenly its effects will be felt. As carbon intensive industries contract and green sectors expand, workers are not automatically moving between them.

Speakers noted that risks vary by region. In advanced economies, green industries already face labor shortages. In major energy producing economies, the stakes are broader, as moving away from coal or oil can dismantle value chains built over decades. Across contexts, the transition will require large scale labor reallocation, with wage pressures and potential social disruption.



Global energy sector employment growth is at twice the speed of general employment. Employment in the power sector now, for the first time, is the biggest part of employment in energy, overtaking fossil fuels.

Dr. Herwig Immervoll
Head of Social Benefits and Green Transition, OECD

HUMAN PROGRESS AND THE FUTURE OF WORK

- **Speaker: H.E. Dr. Hisham Aljadhey**
Deputy Chairman of the Board of Directors & CEO, Saudi Food and Drug Authority
- **Moderator: Marianna Evenstein**
Broadcast Journalist, Deutsche Welle

This fireside chat explored how AI is being integrated into regulatory systems where public trust, safety, and risk management are critical.

Drawing on the experience of the Saudi Food and Drug Authority (SFDA), the discussion focused on how AI can improve efficiency while preserving rigorous oversight.

At the SFDA, AI supports faster drug review processes, simulates elements of clinical trials, strengthens inspections, and applies predictive risk models to food imports. Yet the session made clear that AI serves as decision support, not a substitute for human judgment. Human review, structured risk controls, and phased implementation remain essential to credibility and safety.

The conversation concluded that responsible AI adoption in regulatory settings depends not only on technology, but also on leadership, institutional culture, workforce readiness, and strong data governance.



H.E. Dr. Hisham Aljadhey
Deputy Chairman of the Board of Directors & CEO, Saudi Food and Drug Authority

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. AI is being integrated into core regulatory functions, with the SFDA establishing a dedicated AI Lab and developing an AI-enabled digital twin regulator to test automated processes against traditional workflows.
2. AI is being explored to accelerate drug discovery and approval, including simulation of elements of clinical trials to reduce timelines and costs while bringing treatments to patients faster.
3. Predictive risk models enhance inspection efficiency, analyzing food imports from more than 150 countries to target high-risk shipments rather than relying on blanket testing.
4. Human oversight remains central, with AI outputs reviewed through structured checkpoints to ensure decisions are not made end-to-end by automated systems.
5. Workforce development emphasizes foundational AI literacy, data quality, and critical thinking, supported by leadership commitment, cultural readiness, and phased implementation to expand institutional capacity while maintaining public trust and international collaboration.



Adopting AI as a regulator starts with leadership. Without a culture that adapts to AI, you go in circles. Leaders must manage risks and apply checks and balances. Data accuracy and cleaning, continuous improvement, and validation are essential before full implementation.

H.E. Dr. Hisham Aljadhey
Deputy Chairman of the Board of Directors & CEO, Saudi Food and Drug Authority

NOT ALL JOBS IN ONE BASKET: BUILDING RESILIENT ECONOMIES THROUGH DIVERSIFICATION

- **Speaker: Nahar Aljahani**
VP, Talent Acquisition & Business Partnership,
Riyadh Air
- **Speaker: Jamal Al Kishi**
CEO, Middle East & Africa; Vice Chairman,
Investment Bank Origination & Advisory,
Deutsche Bank AG
- **Speaker: Yazeed Alrashed**
Head of Planning and Partnership, Public
Investment Fund (PIF)

This panel interrogated whether economic resilience rests on sectoral diversification or on the development of transferable human capabilities that allow workers to move across sectors. While diversification is often presented as protection against vulnerability, speakers argued that resilience depends less on adding industries and more on closing skills gaps, strengthening workforce pipelines, and sustaining employment as sectors evolve. They noted that misalignment between education outputs and market demand can weaken resilience regardless of sector mix. Public private partnerships, global knowledge transfer, structured workforce development, and long term policy direction were identified as intentional levers for building competitive capacity. The discussion made clear that specialization and diversification are not opposing strategies. Economies can build advantage vertically within existing sectors or horizontally across new ones. The decisive factor is whether they are investing in the human capability required to sustain both.

“
In Saudi Arabia, there's no issue about sectors. But there's sometimes a skilling mismatch. For example, 60% of individuals with higher education are enrolled in disciplines not relevant in the market. This is what reduces resilience.

Yazeed Alrashed
Head of Planning and Partnership,
Public Investment Fund (PIF)

- **Speaker: Mary Thornton**
HR Advisor, CEER National Automotive Company
- **Moderator: Resham Kotecha**
Global Head of Policy, Open Data Institute



Yazeed Alrashed
Head of Planning and Partnership, Public
Investment Fund (PIF)

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Diversification was framed as a human capability strategy, with Vision 2030 using deliberate public investment to build adaptable national talent rather than relying on organic market shifts.
2. Skills mismatch remains a structural constraint, as 60 percent of higher education enrollment is misaligned with market demand and only 18 percent of graduates specialize in STEM.
3. PIF is using sector entry to build cross-cutting workforce capabilities, combining technology transfer, local capacity development, and long-term employment sustainability across priority industries.
4. The Azm workforce development program and global partnerships through CEER and Riyadh Air are accelerating technical pipeline development and knowledge transfer through structured training, overseas placements, and co-designed curricula.
5. Localization and digital transformation are being embedded as qualitative and strategic priorities, with AI integration, structured talent development, and alignment between diversification and competitive advantage positioned as mutually reinforcing.

BEYOND OCCUPATIONS: MEASURING TASKS AND SKILLS IN MODERN LABOR MARKETS

- **Speaker: Dr. Piotr Lewandowski**
CEO & Economist, Institute for Structural
Research (IBS)

This keynote challenged one of the core assumptions underpinning labor market analysis: that occupations are the correct unit for measuring technological change. Dr. Piotr Lewandowski argued that debates around AI exposure, automation, remote work, green jobs, and demographic shifts are frequently built on occupation-level indicators that mask critical differences in what people actually do on the job.

Most global estimates of automation or AI exposure rely on U.S.-based occupational data, implicitly assuming that the same occupation entails identical tasks across countries. New cross-country evidence presented during the session shows that this assumption leads to distorted conclusions, particularly in low- and middle-income economies. Workers holding the same occupational title often perform very different tasks depending on technology adoption, human capital, and institutional context. The keynote called for a shift from occupation-based to task- and skill-based labor market measurement and introduced new survey tools designed to modernize labor statistics in a cost-efficient way.



Dr. Piotr Lewandowski
CEO & Economist, Institute for Structural Research (IBS)

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Occupations are an incomplete lens for policy analysis, as most AI exposure and automation estimates rely on U.S.-based O*NET data and assume jobs are structured identically across countries.
2. In reality, jobs with the same title differ substantially across countries, with task composition shaped by national technology adoption, ICT intensity, and skill levels.
3. Task composition, not occupational category, determines AI exposure, with managers in low-income countries less exposed than those in high-income countries due to lower digital intensity.
4. Differences in ICT infrastructure and human capital explain much of the global variation in AI exposure, while occupational structure accounts for only a small share.
5. Labor market policy must shift from asking who workers are to understanding what they do, modernizing data systems through task-based surveys such as the Job and Skill Survey adopted in countries including Bhutan, Georgia, and the Philippines.

“
Measurements from high-income countries like the US or Great Britain work for OECD countries. But about 80% of the world does not live in OECD economies. They live in low and middle-income and emerging economies, where jobs are different.

Dr. Piotr Lewandowski
CEO & Economist, Institute for
Structural Research (IBS)

FROM MOVEMENT TO MOMENTUM: GLOBAL MOBILITY AS AN ECONOMIC FORCE

- **Speaker: Lillian Lin Ueng**
Executive Vice President, DHL Group
- **Speaker: Elizabeth Warn**
Head of Labour Mobility, International Organization for Migration (IOM)
- **Moderator: Tumi Makgabo**
Founder & Director, AfricaWorldwide Media

This conversation reframed migration as a structural component of modern labor markets rather than a temporary disruption. Drawing on corporate and multilateral perspectives, it examined how mobility shapes supply chains, talent competition, remittance flows, and long term economic planning.

From DHL's operational standpoint, migration is embedded in global business models. Nearly half of its 600,000 employees work outside their country of nationality, underscoring the reliance of multinational firms on cross border labor to maintain flexibility and respond to demand shifts. At the policy level, origin countries are no longer passive labor suppliers but strategic actors competing in a global race for talent.

The discussion underscored that migration governance cannot be siloed. It intersects with housing, healthcare, education, rural development, remittances, demographic change, and climate pressures. As mobility patterns evolve and policy regimes grow more complex, integrated whole of government approaches and cross border cooperation are essential to ensure migration strengthens both origin and host economies.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Migration is structurally embedded in global business models, with approximately 50% of DHL employees working outside their country of nationality, underscoring reliance on migrant labor.
2. Migration governance is becoming more fragmented, with increasingly restrictive and varied immigration regimes, while origin countries seek structured mobility pathways but often lack labor market intelligence and coordination mechanisms.
3. Corporate migration management requires complex integration systems, including leadership training, inclusion strategies, cross-border support, and flexible policies to meet workforce needs across jurisdictions.
4. Remittances are private transfers with significant public impact, influencing household welfare and national economies, while peak labor demand and seasonal surges depend on scalable migrant labor access.
5. Migration patterns are rebalancing as former labor-exporting countries become importers, climate pressures are likely to intensify internal displacement, and automation is reshaping labor demand across sectors.



With migrant workforces, an integrative policy approach is necessary. You cannot deal with migration outside of housing, education, and health. They're a continuum. Even where you put financial incentives for migrants in rural areas, without those support structures, incentives may not work.

Elizabeth Warn

Head of Labour Mobility, International Organization for Migration (IOM)



Lillian Lin Ueng
Executive Vice President, DHL Group



The typical migration and mobility patterns of the past are changing, where there are typical countries that export migrants and others that receive. Now with all the development in technology, and economies developing further, they become exporters of migrants.

Lillian Lin Ueng

Executive Vice President, DHL Group



Elizabeth Warn
Head of Labour Mobility, International Organization for Migration (IOM)

06

INNOVATION LABS & APPLIED
POLICY PROGRAMMING

FROM DIALOGUE TO DESIGN: POLICY FORGE OUTPUTS



Alongside the main stage discussions, GLMC 2026 created space for structured, solution-oriented working formats under the Policy Forge track. These sessions were designed not only to debate ideas, but to stress-test practical mechanisms and explore how policy could respond to urgent labor market pressures.

Across workshops, panels, and co-creation formats, several priority areas emerged.

Adapting social protection to extreme heat focused on how existing systems such as partial unemployment benefits, sickness benefits, work injury compensation, and healthcare access could be strengthened to respond to heat stress.

Discussions highlighted uneven exposure across worker groups, including migrant workers, and underscored the need to integrate climate-related contingencies into social protection frameworks, particularly in GCC contexts.

Advancing inclusion in the workforce examined practical levers for increasing female labor force participation. Rather than abstract commitments, the conversation centered on enabling frameworks, leadership accountability, institutional collaboration, and workplace design choices that support women's entry, retention, and progression. The economic and social case for participation was reinforced as a matter of competitiveness, not only equity.

Gig work: the good, the bad, and the scalable separated rhetoric from implementation. The discussion distinguished between genuine gains in flexibility and access, recurring protection gaps that leave workers exposed, and reforms that could realistically be implemented at scale without pushing work into informality. The emphasis was on enforcement feasibility and policy sequencing.

The First Job Guarantee session, conducted in a co-creation format, tackled youth transitions directly. Framed around the long-term scarring effects of delayed labor market entry, the discussion explored access mechanisms, quality standards, incentive structures, cost models, and implementation pathways. The output was a structured framework outlining actionable mechanisms to support early labor market entry through coordinated efforts between youth, policymakers, employers, and academic institutions.

Taken together, Policy Forge demonstrated a deliberate shift in the conference architecture: from high-level dialogue to practical design thinking. While not all mechanisms are finalized policies, the sessions clarified where institutional reform is most urgent and where collaboration between governments, employers, and multilateral partners can move from intent to implementation.



REDEFINING THE SOCIAL CONTRACT AT WORK: TERMS OF LABOR OUTPUTS

While the main stage examined systemic transitions across economies, the Terms of Labor stage focused on the architecture of work itself: voice, rights, incentives, expectations, protections, and the lived quality of employment. The conversations were less about how many jobs economies generate and more about the conditions under which those jobs function, evolve, and endure.

A central thread was worker voice. The roundtable on dialogue and participation revisited established consultation mechanisms and newer participatory models, drawing on research linking meaningful voice to higher productivity and lower separation rates. Outcomes, however, depend on context. Legal frameworks, trust between management and workers, and institutional maturity shape whether dialogue produces measurable gains. Voice was framed not as a symbolic gesture, but as an institutional design choice with long-term economic implications.

Labor competitiveness and mobility frameworks were examined as part of the broader social contract. The keynote on enabling talent attraction positioned residency systems as strategic economic instruments. In an environment where countries compete for skills and entrepreneurship, flexible and stable mobility pathways were presented as integral to diversification and long-term value creation. Labor governance intersected directly with national competitiveness.

Youth transitions featured prominently. The panel on youth resilience in the twin green and digital transitions acknowledged projected job creation and displacement, while focusing on structural vulnerabilities: informal and precarious employment, persistent unemployment, exclusion from education and training, and job polarization. Policy proposals centered on competency-based recognition, coordinated youth governance, targeted funding aligned with green investment, and inclusive measures such as remote work access and mentoring networks. The emphasis was clear: resilience requires institutional reform.

Technological change was addressed through macro and firm-level lenses. Discussions on AI, skills, and competitiveness explored where AI complements work, where it substitutes tasks, and how national strategies can manage workforce risk while capturing productivity gains. The session on automation inside firms examined how occupational change unfolds in practice, through external turnover or internal task reallocation. Across these exchanges, technological disruption was shown to be mediated by policy design, institutional agility, and workforce strategy.



REDEFINING THE SOCIAL CONTRACT AT WORK: TERMS OF LABOR OUTPUTS

Structural blind spots in labor systems were also confronted. Policy labs on extending social protection to informal workers explored mechanisms for broadening coverage, including technological solutions and tailored frameworks. A parallel lab on strengthening the care economy positioned care as both a source of employment and a response to demographic change, emphasizing skills development and cross-country learning. Inclusion was treated as an economic necessity.

Human capital adaptation to megatrends formed another pillar. Discussions on demographic ageing, climate pressures, and technological progress highlighted the need for reforms across health, education, and social protection systems. The policy lab on skills development underscored employer-driven, competency-based programs and public-private partnerships to reduce skills mismatches and anchor training in market demand.

The stage also interrogated job quality and expectations. The roundtable on job quality questioned whether economic success automatically translates into good work, emphasizing mobility pathways within low-wage or routine roles. A discussion on youth and employers examined tensions between purpose-driven expectations and workplace realities, warning of frustration and disengagement if adaptation does not occur on both sides. The keynote on time poverty reframed productivity through time equity, linking subjective time scarcity to diminished well-being and output.

Entrepreneurship narratives were broadened through a fireside conversation challenging the assumption that innovation belongs primarily to the young. Evidence from capital-intensive sectors showed successful founders often emerge later in life, where industry knowledge, networks, and credibility are decisive assets.

Across these discussions, the Terms of Labor stage underscored a common insight: labor market resilience depends not only on macroeconomic growth strategies but on the everyday terms under which work is organized, protected, negotiated, and improved. The future of work will be shaped as much by dialogue mechanisms, social protection design, skills systems, and job quality standards as by technological or sectoral change.



RETHINKING RISK, VALUE, AND VOICE: ASSEMBLY STAGE OUTPUTS

If the Terms of Labor stage focused on institutional design, the Assembly stage examined lived realities; the tensions defining modern labor markets. It surfaced sharper questions about risk, inequality, mobility, longevity, and the meaning of work.

Entrepreneurship emerged less as aspiration than necessity. With formal job creation lagging behind youth population growth, self-employment was framed as structural response, not lifestyle choice. Moving from informal hustle to sustainable livelihood requires finance, networks, and skills. The discussion on failure extended this logic: if youth are positioned to take risks, systems must prevent early setbacks from becoming permanent penalties. Risk is an asset — but only when buffers exist.

Generational change challenged assumptions about declining job loyalty. Younger workers may not be less committed; they may be navigating more precarious systems with weaker pensions and contracts. Loyalty, in this view, reflects institutional design as much as values. Without adjustment from both employers and youth, mismatch risks deepening disengagement.

Longevity revealed both opportunity and inequality. Research questioned whether age-friendly jobs truly extend older working lives, while the “Two-Tier Silver Economy” highlighted divergence within older cohorts — some thriving in flexible advisory roles, others remaining in low-wage, physically demanding work. Retirement was reframed as a question of workforce relevance, not age. System design and technology can extend productivity, particularly in strained sectors like healthcare.



Inequality surfaced in unconventional ways. Sports economics illustrated reward concentration at the top with limited mobility below. AI debates questioned whether faster output improves quality. Technological progress may increase quantity — but labor systems still determine how quality is defined and rewarded.

Climate disruption and informality exposed structural vulnerability. Heat stress, displacement, and environmental degradation threaten entire livelihoods, demanding reskilling and adaptive social protection. Informality was debated as both shock absorber and trap. Crisis-proofing requires systems able to respond simultaneously to health, economic, and environmental shocks.

Demographic decline and migration policy revealed labor market paradoxes. Evidence of shortages coexists with restrictive mobility frameworks. Seasonal labor discussions explored how temporary work can transition into sustainable livelihoods through reskilling and cross-sector mobility. Rural tourism demonstrated how sector strategy can drive inclusive growth when aligned with broader labor planning.

Education and status hierarchies were also challenged. Skilled trades face shortages amid continued prioritization of white-collar pathways. Digital skills passports suggested a shift from degree-based identity toward verified competencies and lifelong learning.

Leadership emerged as a cross-cutting theme: human-centered management remains essential in technologically intensive systems.

Across sessions, a consistent pattern appeared. Modern labor markets are shaped less by fixed occupations and more by negotiated expectations — between risk and protection, youth and employers, longevity and fairness, productivity and quality. Resilience requires not only growth, but systems that distribute opportunity, manage volatility, and continually redefine value.

07

THE BIG PICTURE:
5 CROSS-CUTTING INSIGHTS FROM GLMC 2026

GLMC 2026 brought together policymakers, regulators, employers, multilateral institutions, and researchers at a moment when labor markets are undergoing simultaneous technological, demographic, and structural shifts.

Across sessions, a consistent conclusion emerged: the pace and complexity of labor market transformation are increasing, while governance systems remain uneven in their ability to respond. 5 cross-cutting insights stood out.

01

LABOR MARKET TRANSITIONS ARE ACCELERATING BEYOND THE SPEED OF INSTITUTIONAL ADAPTATION

Technological change is altering tasks within occupations faster than formal education systems, labor statistics, and regulatory frameworks can adjust. Discussions highlighted that education systems still operate within multi-year reform cycles, while market demand evolves continuously. Similarly, labor market analysis often relies on occupational classifications that assume uniformity across countries, despite significant variation in task composition, technology adoption, and skill use.

This misalignment has policy consequences. If exposure to automation, AI, remote work, or green transition is measured through outdated or imported occupational proxies, governments risk misdiagnosing vulnerability and misdirecting resources.

The conference underscored the need to modernize labor market information systems, integrate task-based data into national surveys, and shorten feedback loops between labor demand and institutional reform.

02

DIGITAL CAPABILITY IS NOW AN ECONOMIC DETERMINANT

Across sectors, digital technologies are no longer peripheral enhancements. They are restructuring production processes, regulatory functions, and service delivery models.

In highly regulated industries, AI is being deployed to accelerate approvals, improve risk targeting, and enhance institutional efficiency while maintaining human oversight. In aviation, finance, and manufacturing, organizations are embedding digital tools into core operations rather than treating them as separate initiatives. At the labor level, task-based evidence presented during the conference demonstrated that exposure to AI varies significantly across countries, even within the same occupation, due to differences in technology stocks, data use, and skill intensity.

The implication for policymakers is clear: digital inclusion must move beyond access. It requires institutional capacity, workforce literacy, reliable data infrastructure, and regulatory frameworks that balance innovation with public trust. Without these elements, productivity gains will remain uneven and cross-country gaps may widen.

03 MOBILITY IS A STRUCTURAL FEATURE OF THE GLOBAL ECONOMY

Migration discussions moved beyond narratives of crisis or exception. Global mobility was presented as embedded within supply chains, service sectors, and demographic adjustment strategies.

Corporate data shared during the conference demonstrated the scale at which multinational firms rely on cross-border labor. At the same time, origin countries are increasingly active in defining outbound mobility strategies, seeking to align migration with domestic labor market constraints and development goals.

Sessions emphasized that migration governance intersects with housing, education, health systems, remittances, and workforce planning. Fragmented policy approaches create contradictions, particularly as immigration regimes become more restrictive and differentiated across jurisdictions.

The conference reinforced that effective mobility governance requires integrated “whole-of-government” and cross-border coordination. Migration cannot be addressed as a standalone policy domain; it must be embedded within broader economic and social systems.

04 SKILLS ALIGNMENT REQUIRES INSTITUTIONAL COORDINATION, NOT INCREMENTAL ADJUSTMENT

Persistent skills mismatches were a recurring theme. Evidence highlighted structural imbalances in graduate specialization relative to market demand, as well as underinvestment in technical and vocational pathways.

Diversification strategies presented during the conference demonstrated that sectoral expansion alone does not guarantee resilience. Underlying human capability determines whether economies can scale new industries sustainably.

Several approaches discussed during the sessions emphasized structured partnerships between employers, sovereign investors, ministries, and educational institutions. These models aim to shorten alignment cycles by linking training pipelines directly to sectoral demand and embedding employers into curriculum design.

The underlying policy insight is that skills alignment cannot rely on passive market evolution. It requires coordinated institutional design, data sharing, and long-term workforce planning mechanisms that connect investment strategy with human capital development.

05

RESILIENCE IS SHIFTING FROM RECOVERY TO PREPAREDNESS

The concept of resilience was treated not as a reactive capacity, but as an operating principle. Labor markets concentrated in narrow sectors were shown to be more vulnerable to shocks, while diversification combined with capability development supports adaptability.

Resilience also emerged in discussions on AI governance, where regulators emphasized staged adoption, human oversight, and risk-based safeguards. In migration governance, resilience was framed as the ability to manage flows without generating systemic strain on services or labor markets. In education, it was associated with graduates' employability and adaptability rather than credentials alone.

Across sessions, resilience was linked to 3 structural components: adaptable skills, integrated policy design, and responsive institutions. Countries that invest in these foundations are better positioned to absorb technological, demographic, and economic disruptions.

A SYSTEMIC INFLECTION POINT

GLMC 2026 highlighted that labor markets are no longer shaped by a single driver. Technological change, demographic shifts, climate pressures, and capital mobility are interacting simultaneously.

The central challenge identified across discussions is not whether change is occurring, but whether governance systems can operate at the speed and scale required.

Modernizing labor statistics, embedding digital capability, coordinating migration governance, aligning skills with investment strategy, and institutionalizing resilience are no longer optional reforms. They are foundational to competitiveness and inclusive growth.

The conference made clear that policy fragmentation is now a measurable economic risk. Institutional coherence, by contrast, is becoming a competitive advantage.

08

**THE FORWARD PROTOCOL:
GLMC 4TH EDITION AND BEYOND**

GLMC 3RD EDITION CLOSING REMARKS



I want to emphasize that GLMC is a year-round platform for collaboration. The conversation we had here formed only one part of the continuous cycle of learning.

H.E. Dr. Abdullah Abuthnain

Vice Minister of Human Resources and Social Development for Labor Kingdom of Saudi Arabia



In his closing address, H.E. Dr. Abdullah Abuthnain, Vice Minister of Human Resources and Social Development for Labor in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, reflected on the scale and substance of the gathering. GLMC 2026 convened more than 10,000 participants from over 100 countries, bringing together governments, private sector leaders, international organizations, and academia. Across more than 200 speakers and 50 sessions, discussions examined some of the most pressing labor market challenges, from responsive training models and job matching mechanisms to institutional agility and cross-border collaboration.

The Vice Minister emphasized that while policy contexts differ across countries, a shared priority has emerged: building institutions that are adaptive, inclusive, and capable of supporting workers and employers through periods of transition. Insights from research contributions, including the GLMC 365 Youth Perspectives and Future of Work publication, reinforced that inclusion is not simply a social aspiration, but a prerequisite for labor market resilience.

Several milestones were marked during the conference. A joint report by the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development, A Decade of Progress, presented lessons from labor market reforms implemented over the past ten years. The conference also commemorated ten years of the Kingdom's domestic labor platform, highlighting its role in regulatory modernization and digital transformation. In parallel, 90 agreements were signed between government entities and national and international private sector institutions, benefiting more than 6 million participants across the Kingdom's labor market.

A defining moment came with the graduation of the inaugural cohort of the Global Labor Market Academy, a collaboration between GLMC and the World Bank. Positioned as a practical engine for reform and community building, the Academy equips youth leaders and specialists with tools to design and implement labor market solutions. During the ministerial roundtable, labor ministers from more than 40 countries outlined shared strategies and identified 6 concrete actions to translate policy commitments into measurable impact.

Finally, the Vice Minister underscored that GLMC is not a 2-day event, but a year-round platform. The partnerships formed, the research advanced, and the institutional collaborations initiated are designed to continue beyond the conference. As the wrap-up video played and acknowledgments were extended to ministers, partners, and the organizing team, the conference concluded with a reaffirmed commitment: while labor market challenges are complex, coordinated action and sustained collaboration can convert dialogue into durable progress.

CALLS TO ACTION: A SHARED AGENDA FOR 2026–2027

GLMC 2026 confirmed that labor markets are undergoing structural change at a pace that challenges traditional policy cycles. Ministers and senior leaders converged around a practical agenda for the period ahead. The emphasis is no longer on identifying pressures, but on institutional response.

5 priorities emerged as shared imperatives for 2026–2027:

Modernize Labor Market Measurement

Occupation-based indicators are no longer sufficient to guide policy. Governments must strengthen task- and skills-based labor market intelligence and embed these tools within national statistical systems. More precise measurement is essential to assess exposure to AI, green transition risk, and productivity gaps. Without better data, policy design will lag economic reality.

Integrate Workforce Planning with Economic Strategy

Diversification and sectoral development require structured human capability pipelines. Investment decisions, industrial strategies, and sovereign programs must be linked to early skills forecasting, employer engagement, and sustained reskilling pathways. Labor market resilience depends on alignment between capital allocation and talent development.

Institutionalize Responsible AI Governance

AI adoption is accelerating across regulatory bodies, logistics networks, financial services, aviation, and manufacturing. The shared direction is clear: scale digital capability while maintaining human oversight, risk-based safeguards, and public trust. Governments must establish governance frameworks that enable innovation without compromising accountability.

Embed Mobility in Economic Planning

Migration is a structural feature of modern labor markets. Ministers emphasized the need for integrated approaches that connect labor policy with housing, health, education, and investment frameworks. Cross-border cooperation between origin and destination countries will be central to managing demographic shifts and sustaining competitiveness.

Protect Workers Through Structural Transitions

Green transition and technological adoption will create uneven impacts across sectors and regions. Governments must combine forward-looking reskilling systems with targeted social protection and transition support. Fairness and predictability are essential to maintaining social cohesion and political legitimacy during periods of transformation.

WORKSTREAMS FOR GLMC 4TH EDITION

GLMC 2026 made one point unmistakably clear: labor market transformation is now continuous, not cyclical. The 4th Edition will therefore deepen implementation, strengthen institutional alignment, and accelerate practical collaboration across governments, multilaterals, and industry.

WHAT EVOLVES

While these pillars remain, the emphasis shifts from dialogue to architecture.

GLMC 4th edition will move beyond identifying gaps to examining how institutions operationalize reform. This includes embedding reskilling mechanisms before displacement occurs, designing predictable and fair transition policies, strengthening coordination across ministries, and building financing models that crowd in investment where labor markets are most fragile.

Greater attention will also be placed on institutional readiness: how governments integrate real-time data into policymaking, shorten reform cycles, and align incentives between public and private actors. The question is no longer whether change is happening, but whether systems are prepared to manage it at scale.

WHAT STAKEHOLDERS SHOULD EXPECT

Stakeholders can expect tighter integration between ministerial dialogue and technical execution. High-level commitments will be more directly linked to measurable progress, peer learning mechanisms, and structured follow-up. Collaboration between governments, multilateral institutions, employers, and regulators will be reinforced to ensure continuity beyond the conference cycle.

GLMC 4th edition will not introduce a new agenda. It will consolidate momentum, sharpen implementation, and strengthen accountability across shared priorities.

As labor markets evolve, GLMC will evolve with them. The 4th edition will serve as a platform to assess progress, identify implementation bottlenecks, and reinforce the shared responsibility required to manage structural transformation.

WHAT CONTINUES

Several core workstreams will advance with greater depth and technical rigor:

01

MODERNIZING LABOR MARKET INTELLIGENCE.

The shift from occupation-based metrics to task- and skills-based analysis will remain central. As technological change affects tasks rather than job titles, statistical systems must evolve to capture how work is actually performed and how exposure differs across countries and sectors.

03

RESPONSIBLE AI GOVERNANCE.

The balance between speed, safety, and public trust will remain a priority. Institutions must continue building safeguards, risk frameworks, and workforce readiness strategies that support adoption without undermining confidence.

05

MANAGING GREEN AND TECHNOLOGICAL TRANSITIONS.

The focus will remain on ensuring that decarbonization and automation strategies are accompanied by proactive reskilling pipelines and adequate social protection.

02

LINKING HUMAN CAPABILITY TO COMPETITIVENESS.

Workforce planning will continue to be treated as an economic strategy, not a social add-on. Education systems, industrial policy, sovereign investment strategies, and sectoral development agendas must operate in alignment.

04

MOBILITY AS STRUCTURAL POLICY.

Migration and internal mobility will be addressed as permanent features of global competitiveness, requiring coordinated approaches across labor, education, housing, and social protection systems.



GLOBAL
LABOR MARKET
CONFERENCE

THANK YOU

January 26-27, 2026

King Abdulaziz International Conference Center
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

#GLMC2026

GLOBAL LABOR MARKET CONFERENCE © 2026