CONCEPT NOTE

AFRICAN HUMANITARIAN AGENCY
(AfHA)

VALIDATION MEETING OF THE REPORT ON THE MODALITIES FOR THE OPERATIONALIZATION OF AN AFRICAN HUMANITARIAN AGENCY

20 – 21 May 2020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
1.0. BACKGROUND

It will be recalled that the Assembly of the African Union in its Decision Assembly/AU/Dec.604 (XXVI) of 30 January 2016, called for the establishment of an African Humanitarian Agency (AfHA), to spearhead Africa’s humanitarian action. In the same Decision, the Assembly called on the Commission to carry out a study on the modalities for the operationalization of the Agency, considering its structural and institutional requirements, financial and legal implications. Accordingly, the study was launched in October 2018.

The preliminary findings and study recommendations of the study were reviewed in a meeting of Member State and independent Experts that took place in Johannesburg on 15-17 April 2019. The report was subsequently submitted to the 3rd Session of STC on Migration, Refugees and IDPs that was held on 7 to 8 November 2019 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

In taking note of the report, the 3rd Session of the STC on Migration, Refugees and IDPs in its Decision approved the convening of an Extra-ordinary session of the STC on Migration, Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons in 2020, to validate and adopt the report before its submission to the Ordinary Summit.

The STC further directed the AU Commission to convene a validation meeting on the Consultant Report and to draft Statute for the AfHA and submit it to the Extra-Ordinary Session of the Specialized Technical Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs and 37th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council in June/July 2020; for final consideration and adoption, paving way for the launch of the Agency later this year. The validation meeting of Member State Experts is now planned to be held in March 2020.

In addition, the 36th Session of the Executive Council in its Decision EX.CL/Draft/Dec.2 (XXXVI) adopted on 5-6 February 2020 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, further called on the AU Commission to expedite the process for the operationalization of the AfHA to respond to the humanitarian challenges on the Continent, and REQUESTS the Commission to report about progress achieved to the upcoming 37th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council.

2.0. MANDATE FOR AN AFRICAN HUMANITARIAN AGENCY

The African Union and its predecessor have for a long-time sought way to effectively deal with humanitarian crises in the continent. The Constitutive Act of the AU takes cognizance of the fact that the scourge of conflicts in Africa constitutes a major impediment to the socio-economic development and transformation of the continent. It also recognizes the need to promote peace, security and stability as prerequisites for the implementation of Africa’s long-term development and integration agenda.

The rationale for the Agency is premised on the 2016 Common African Position on Humanitarian Effectiveness in Africa. In this document, the justification for an African Humanitarian Agency was much agreed upon by African leaders. The relevant portion reads as follows:

The Assembly noted the imperative need for an appropriate continental architecture to effectively respond and coordinate humanitarian crises on the continent, as a basis for the AU’s leadership role. We particularly note that a lack of such a continental humanitarian framework has hindered effective humanitarian action.

To achieve this goal, the Assembly endorsed the establishment of an African Humanitarian
Agency to advance the continental agenda on humanitarian action, with due consideration of its legal, structural and financial implications. That the Agency shall be Africa’s institutional pillar in dealing with forced displacement on the continent, giving effect to the objective of the centrality of the African States in humanitarian action on the continent.

While adopting the creation of an African Humanitarian Agency, the Assembly called for the new architecture to be anchored on principles of pan-Africanism and African shared values, and regional and national mechanisms, and be funded with Africa’s own resources.

The endorsement for the creation of an African Humanitarian Agency, the Assembly underscored the need for the new architecture to be “...anchored on regional and national mechanisms and funded with Africa’s own resources and founded on principles of Pan-Africanism and African Shared Values...” To achieve these objectives, the blueprint lays emphasis on the primary responsibility of States as main drivers of Africa’s humanitarian action. The goal is to achieve effective humanitarian action that is fit for purpose and addresses future challenges. The operationalizing the Agency is therefore conceived as a necessary step and in accordance with the 10-year roadmap intended as a transition period to achieve humanitarian effectiveness on the continent.

3.0. OBJECTIVES OF THE AFRICAN HUMANITARIAN AGENCY

The Agency is expected to deal with cross-cutting issues relating to Humanitarian Situation in Africa. The Agency will have the following (four) strategic Objectives:

a. To predict situations that can result to humanitarian crises through early warning systems
b. To prevent adverse effects of humanitarian crises through addressing root causes
c. To ensure timely and effective response through building and strengthening capacities of continental, regional and national mechanisms
d. To design strategies for building adaptation and resilience at national and local level for effective response to humanitarian crises

4.0. PURPOSE OF VALIDATION MEETING

The AU Commission will therefore convene a meeting of the Member State Experts with a background in legal and humanitarian issues to validate the report of the consultant on modalities for the Operationalizing of an African Humanitarian Agency.

The meeting of Member State Experts will serve to:-

- Validate the Report on modalities for operationalization of the Agency;
- Review and validate the structural and financial implication of the Agency;
- Review and validate the Draft Statute of the AfHA;
- Garner views from the Member States on institutional architecture (design), financing, legal enablers and functions of the AfHA;
- Recommend a roadmap for its immediate operationalization at continental, regional and national levels.

5.0. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

A Report validated by Member states relating to the: institutional architecture, legal,
functions, linkages and financing of the AfHA, and a roadmap with clear steps in the immediate operationalization of the Agency.

6.0. PARTICIPANTS

The meeting will draw Member State Expert from the AU Members States. Additional participants will include subject matter Experts from the AU Organs, AUC Departments of the AU, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), WFP, UN-OCHA and UNHCR, African Development Bank, World Bank, among others.

7.0. Further information: Please contact
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