

AFRICAN UNION

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DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

MEDIA ADVISORY

13th Session of the Committee of Directors General of National Statistics Offices (CoDGs)

INVITATION TO REPRESENTATIVES OF THE MEDIA

When: 19 – 21 November 2019

Where: Remada Plaza Hotel, Tunis, Republic of Tunisia

Theme: *"Project 2019: The year of refugees, returnees and internal displaced persons: Towards durable solutions to forced displacement in Africa"*

Who: Organized by the Department of Economic Affairs of the African Union Commission (AUC) in collaboration with the National Statistics Institute of Tunisia.

Objective: The meeting will provide among others, a forum to discuss and share views as well of best practices on efficient and innovative ways to collect useful data in Africa. It will also sensitize the stakeholders on the need to mobilise the necessary finances to be used in data collection. It will enhance the work of the African Statistics Institutes as well as give recommendation on the need for Member States to strengthen their capacity on statistics related areas and advise national statistics offices and all line ministries to encourage the deployment of adequate human capacity to ensure regular data collection and updates.

Why:

The new humanitarian architecture emphasizes on addressing root causes and achieving durable solutions, as well as bolstering the capacity of States and other stakeholders to tackle the challenges of forced displacement on the continent. For Agenda 2063 and SDGs to be achieved in Africa, there is the need to demand more on the State and institutions, including tackling the refugees, returnees and internal displaced persons issue which hinders the development of the continent.

The AU Member States and Regional Economic Communities have undertaken various commendable regulatory instruments and established different institutions to work on refugees, returnees and internal displaced persons in Africa; the challenge, however, remains the commitment to institutional approach to collect accurate data from AU member States.

Participants:

The meeting will be attended by an official government delegations led by the Directors General of the National Statistical Offices (NSO). It will also be attended by Regional Economic Communities (RECs), Statistics Training Centers, Regional and Pan African Organisations. Representatives of United Nations agencies, representatives of AfDB, regional, continental and international inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations, academic and research institutions, civil society organizations and private practitioners are also invited to participate and contribute to the debates.

Working languages

The meeting will be conducted in the working languages of the AU: English, Arabic, Portuguese and French and interpretation will be provided.

Background

In the framework of the long-term vision encapsulated in Agenda 2063 the African Union's (AU) Assembly of Heads of State and Government adopted a Common African Position on Humanitarian Effectiveness (CAP) and called for a ten-year period of transformation to strengthen humanitarian action on the continent (Decision 604 (XXVI)). The CAP defines Africa's new humanitarian architecture, which includes the creation of the African Humanitarian Agency as a vehicle for Africa's humanitarian action. The new humanitarian architecture also emphasizes on addressing root causes and achieving durable solutions,

as well as bolstering the capacity of States and other stakeholders to tackle the challenges of forced displacement on the continent.

In this context, the AU will mark the theme of the year focusing on refugees, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and returnees. It will also commemorate the 50th anniversary of the adoption of the 1969 Organization of African Unity Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa (OAU Refugee Convention) as well as the 10th anniversary of the adoption of the 2009 AU Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (the Kampala Convention) in 2019. At its 29th Assembly in July 2017, the AU's Executive Council called on the Union to declare 2019 the Year of Refugees, Returnees and IDPs, and called on the AU to work with the Office of the Secretary General of the United Nations, UNHCR and others to organize a series of commemorative events 'that will bring global visibility to forced displacements in Africa' (Decision 968 (XXXI)). In July 2018, at Nouakchott, Mauritania, AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union adopted Decision AU/Dec.707(XXXI) declared 2019 as "the Year of Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons: Towards Durable Solutions to Forced Displacement in Africa."

The AU's Executive Council has urged AU Member States and the AU Commission to work, in collaboration with UNHCR, in implementing the 2016 New York Declaration for Refugee and Migrants (New York Declaration), particularly with regard to the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), and to contribute to the development of the Global Compact for Refugees (Decision 990 (XXXII)). The commemorations provide a strong platform on which to launch the operationalization of the forthcoming Global Compact on Refugees.

There are estimated 68 million forcibly displaced persons in the world. Over a third of the world's forcibly displaced persons are in Africa, including 6.3 million refugees and asylum-seekers and 14.5 million internally displaced persons (IDPs).¹ The causes of forced displacement and humanitarian crisis are multiple and complex. They include conflicts, poor governance, human rights violations, environmental degradation, effects of climate change and natural disasters. Many of the displaced also find themselves in protracted displacement situations. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, there are 712, 000 stateless persons in the continent.

The vast majority of persons are displaced as a result of conflicts and violence. However natural disasters, large-scale development project and exploitation of natural resources, health emergencies such as Ebola outbreak, food insecurity, extreme poverty and other factors also underpin these challenges. In Africa, as in many other locations, far more people are displaced within the boundary of their countries. Politicization of immigration and xenophobia have exposed African refugees and migrants to various types of risks and violations. In some countries, large number of refugees and migrants remain in detention.

¹ Global Trends UNHCR, June 2018.

Despite significant resource constraints and limited capacities faced by many large-refugee population hosting countries in Africa, governments and local communities continue to shoulder responsibilities and showing solidarity by sheltering the displacement and facilitating their access to facilities.

Data on refugees, returnees and internal displaced persons are difficult to obtain, no measurement framework accurately accounts for actual levels of refugees, returnees and internal displaced persons in a country and even at the global level with precision. Specific perception-based measures of refugees, returnees and internal displaced persons are imperfect proxies to overall levels of refugees, returnees and internal displaced persons. Therefore, there is a need to enhance broader data quality.

A non-perception based refugees, returnees and internal displaced persons requires comprehensive data, which are not readily available for many African countries. In this context, Governments need to demonstrate financial commitment in data collection. Furthermore, national statistics offices and all line ministries should have adequate human capacity to ensure regular data collection and updates.

In order to achieve some of the objectives of the theme of the year, the AUC needs to quickly nominate the champion and strengthen the data collection process from AU Member States for the purpose and use the high-level advocacy and political mobilization including on ratification and domestication processes. The AUC needs to work aggressively on the dissemination of the procedure for signature as well as the model law including organizing treaty signing events.

The model law on Kampala convention is seen as an important tool supporting the domestication and implementation of the Convention. The humanitarian week and activities of the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union could help reinforce ratification and domestication. In order to ensure increased ownership of implementation of the OAU/Kampala Convention, all actors need to popularize the treaties through workshops, awareness raising initiatives and capacity building.

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