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ROUNDTABLE ON INTRA-REGIONAL MIGRATION AND LABOUR MOBILITY WITHIN AFRICA

JOINT PRESS RELEASE

The Roundtable on intra-regional migration and labour mobility in Africa kicked off today urging member States to focus on migration for better integration and inclusive development of the continent



KIGALI, 23 March 2015- The Roundtable on intra-regional migration and labour mobility within Africa kicked off today, 23rd March 2015 in Kigali, Rwanda. This joint initiative is held under the theme “Enhancing capacities of RECs and member States to facilitate Intra-Regional Migration and Labour Mobility for Regional Integration and Economic Cooperation”. In her statement as Chair of the opening ceremony, Treasure Thembisile Maphanga, Director of Trade and Industry at the African Union

Commission (AUC), recalled the vision of the Abuja Treaty of an African Economic Community with free movement of persons, goods, services and capital. She highlighted a number of policy initiatives on Migration and Labour Mobility that have been adopted by the AUC, including the Migration Policy Framework for Africa; Minimum Integration Programme and Action Plan for Boosting intra African Trade (BIAT). The launching of the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) by June 2015 is a great opportunity for the continent in the sense of the revitalization of Labour mobility.

Speaking on behalf of the African Union Commission, Dr. Khabele Matlosa, AUC Director of Political Affairs underscored the fact that historically, Africa is a region of migrants. Indeed, “the development and regional integration story of Africa is essentially the story of internal (intra-state) and external (inter-state) migration patterns”, he said. However, for

migration to be a catalyst of regional integration and economic cooperation in Africa, “it is imperative that the African Union develops a Protocol on free Movement of persons, the Right of Residence and the Right of establishment as provided for in Article 43 of the 1991 Abuja Treaty”, he concluded.



H.E. Ambassador Sammie Pesky Eddico, Chairman of the International Organisation of Migration (IOM) Council and Ghana Permanent representative to the UN in Geneva pointed out that migration forms an integral part of the economic development process in Africa. The experiences of ECOWAS and EAC economic communities testify that free movement of persons and goods have positive effects on economic development, and called on Member States to ratify existing regional instruments on free movement. He underscored the need for the AU Assembly to encourage member states that are yet to ratify the existing protocols on free movement of persons to do within a specific timeline. He also proposed that the ratification of protocols on free movement of persons be considered with the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM).

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) Regional Director for Africa, represented by Mr. Alexio Musindo, ILO Director Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda focused on Labour Migration as a core component of the ILO’s mandate for social justice. Accordingly, this meeting provides an excellent opportunity for Africa to address key labour migration issues including promoting regional social dialogue on labour migration, strengthening institutional capacity to improve labour migration governance as well as the portability of social security benefits. He reiterated his commitment to continue to champion the exemplary AUC/ILO/IOM/ECA Joint Labour Migration Programme. He took also the opportunity to urge African states on Member states to ratify ILO conventions N^o 97 and 143 on the protection of migrant workers and the governance of labour migration.

In the same view, the Director General of IOM, Amb. William Lacy Swing, emphasised on the necessity for this roundtable to demystify the “myth” or “fear factor” about facilitating free movement of people within the continent. It is in that regard that he proposed the Paradigm of the 3Ps in order to protect, promote and prioritize migration and mobility as powerful drivers of sustainable development in Africa. “But above all, you have a fundamental role in promoting human rights of migrants and the fact that the respect of

rights needs to take a central stage, both as end and as condition, for harnessing the benefits of migration for the development of migrants and societies.”, he recalled to the participants.

The representative of the EU delegation to Rwanda, H.E Ambassador Michael Ryan, welcomed the adoption of the Joint Labour Migration Programme and underscored the willingness of EU to assist Africa for a better governance framework on migration.

Mr Silvio Fluckiger, Deputy regional Director of Swiss Cooperation declared that meeting should be a turning point in changing perceptions on migration issues. Indeed, “Migrants cannot simply be viewed as economic commodities to address labour market gaps or demographic needs. Migration is about both, economic and human development.”, He noticed.

Officially opening the ceremony, Hon Venantia Tugireyezu, Minister in the Office of the President of Rwanda, underlined the urgency to fast track different projects facilitating regional integration. The meeting represents therefore an opportunity to identify mechanisms in order to address different challenges in this regard.

The opening ceremony ended with a presentation of the Labour Migration Governance for Development and Integration in Africa Initiative (commonly referred to as the Joint Labour Migration Programme) by Mrs Cynthia Samuel-Olonjuwon, UN CO-Chair of the Employment and Labour Cluster. The Joint Labour Migration Programme aims to strengthen effective governance and regulation of labour migration and mobility in Africa under the rule of law with involvement of stakeholders; including the employers of labour, organisation of workers and migrants. She emphasised that the JLMP constitutes a major contribution to obtaining the development potential of labour and skills mobility in Africa for migrants as well as receiving and sending countries

It is worth recalling that this meeting is a joint initiative of the AUC/ILO/IOM/ECA. The main objective is to improve the awareness and understanding of the benefits that migration and labour mobility bring to countries of origin, transit and destination as well as migrants themselves.

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