



DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

PRESS RELEASE N°12/27th AU SUMMIT**African Union (AU) Passport to spur Intra-Africa Trade - Mushikiwabo**

Kigali, Rwanda 14 July 2016 - The African Union Passport that is expected to be



officially launched during the 27th African Union Summit is considered a prodigious triumph for the continent and it will ease free movement of people, spur economic growth and development as well as promote Intra-African trade.

Regional trade integration has long been a strategic objective for Africa yet, despite some success in eliminating non-tariff barriers within regional communities, the African market remains highly

fragmented. A range of non-tariff and regulatory barriers still raise transaction costs and limit the movement of goods, services, people and capital across borders throughout Africa.

With the promotion of Intra-African trade, it will boost and ease doing business within African countries which later will reduce the trade deficit among African nations.

According to the Rwanda's Foreign Affairs Minister Louise Mushikiwabo, the issuance of African passport is among the African strategic initiative intended to come as a possible rescue to disband all the restrictions to move which will eventually create a conducive environment for Africans to trade with each other.

“Rwanda is ready for the AU Passport issuance. Other countries will also be working towards implementation of this decision. The free movement of people in Africa will spur our economic growth,” she said during a press conference today 14 July 2016 organised in the sidelines of the African Union Summit currently holding at the Kigali Convention Center (KCC), in Rwanda.



During the Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union that convenes on Sunday this week, African Heads of State will officially launch the passport paving the way for beginning of the process to commence issuance of this travel document.

Actually, the concept of unrestricted movement of persons, goods and services across regions and the continent is not new; it has been outlined in documents like the Lagos Plan of Action and the Abuja Treaty - an indication that the unhampered movement of citizens is critical for Africa's development.

“Passports will be delivered to Heads of State and other diplomats during the launch but the entire objective is for all African citizens to get this passport to facilitate their free movement. What we want is for African countries to fast-track this initiative,” said Minister Mushikiwabo, while responding to journalists questions about the project.

The Minister further mentioned that after the launch of the African Union Passport, every country will then proceed with the issuance of the passports in accordance with their national regulations and this will be done in collaboration with the African Union.

“Countries such as Seychelles, Mauritius, Rwanda, and Ghana have taken the lead in ensuring easier intra-Africa travel by relaxing visa restrictions and in some cases lifting visa requirements altogether. The scene seems to be set to realize the dream of visa-free travel for African citizens within their own continent by 2020”, noted the Minister. She added that, issuance of the AU Passport is expected to pave the way for the Member

States to adopt and ratify the necessary Protocols and Legislation with the view to begin issuing the much expected African Union Passport.

Insecurity won't discourage the AU Passport project

When asked about whether the use of single passport won't cause insecurity on the continent, the Rwandan Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation noted that the passport was a blessing, not a curse, however, adding that, African countries were inquisitive about this and were ready to deal with insecurity accordingly. "The fear for insecurity should not stop people from moving. It shouldn't be an impediment for free movement of our people, we must be prepared to deal with all sorts of insecurity. For us in East African community we have gone ahead to work together in intelligence and security to deal with all factors that can cause insecurity," Mushukiwabo further emphasized.

Free movement has shown up in continental development strategy documents since the 1980 Lagos Plan of Action and the 1991 Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community (AEC), commonly known as the Abuja Treaty.

The treaty committed African states to "adopt, individually, at bilateral or regional levels, the necessary measures in order to achieve progressively the free movement of persons, and to ensure the enjoyment of the right of residence and the right of establishment by their nationals within the community". Concluded the Minister.

Journalists wishing to interview the leadership of the AU Commission during the Summit should submit their requests to Mrs Esther Azaa Tankou, Ag. Director of Information and Communication of the AUC, via E-mail: YambouE@africa-union.org / esthertankou@yahoo.com;
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