

AFRICAN UNION
الاتحاد الأفريقي



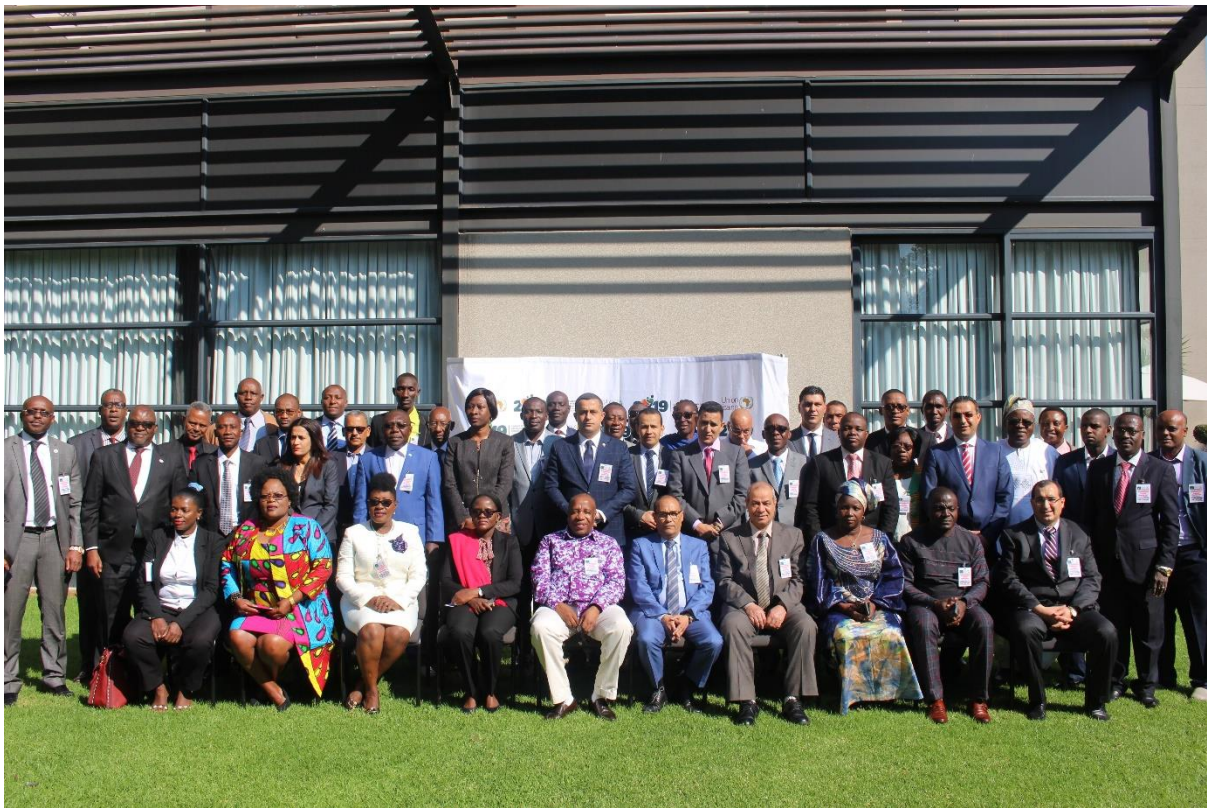
UNION AFRICAINE
UNIÃO AFRICANA

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. P. O. Box 3243 Telephone: 5517 700 Fax: 5511299
website: www.au.int

Directorate of Information and Communication

PRESS RELEASE No. 054/2019:

MEMBER STATES EXPERTS MEETING ON THE OPERATIONALISATION OF AFRICAN HUMANITARIAN AGENCY OPENS



Johannesburg, April 15, 2019: A Three-day Member States Experts meeting on the operationalization of an African Humanitarian Agency (AfHA) commenced in Johannesburg, South Africa, to review both the work of the Independent Experts and the study conducted by a consultant hired by the Department of Political Affairs.

The proposed AfHA was endorsed by the Assembly of African Union which also adopted the Common African Position in January 2016 which is aimed at achieving effective humanitarian action by 2025.

Speaking on behalf of the Commissioner for Political Affairs, H.E. Minata Samate Cessouma, the Director of Political Affairs, Dr Khabele Matlosa, said the magnitude of forced displacement is cause for concern. Globally, there are currently 68.5 million forcibly displaced persons. Of this, 40 million are internally displaced persons, 25.4 million are

refugees and 3.1 million are asylum seekers. Africa is home to more than one-third of global displacement. The continent hosts 14.5 million internally displaced persons and 6.3 million refugees. Another aspect of displacement which often gets forgotten relates to the phenomenon of statelessness. In Africa today, the number of stateless persons is estimated at 712 000. The social groups that tend to be the hardest hit by forced displacement include women, the youth, children and people with disability. Thus, particular attention needs to be paid to these groups during humanitarian response initiatives.

Dr Matlosa said the timing of the meeting was both auspicious and opportune as it was taking place in Southern Africa; the region that has been ravaged by cyclone Idai with devastating impact in Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. He alerted the experts of the AU efforts in mitigating the adverse effects of cyclone Idai working closely with the Southern African Development Community (SADC). He note that the operationalisation of AfHA will enhance effective AU response to humanitarian crises such cyclone Idai in future.

He noted that AfHA is part and parcel of the new humanitarian architecture adopted by the AU as enshrined in the Common African Position on Humanitarian Effectiveness. This new humanitarian architecture includes the establishment and operationalization of the AfHA. This is a continental institutional mechanism that will leverage regional and national arrangements in addressing structural and proximate causes of humanitarian crises. It will also play a strategic role in exploring durable solutions to forced displacement in Africa. The Agency will be funded primarily through Africa's own resources in the spirit of Pan-Africanism which encourages African solutions to African problems.

Dr Matlosa concluded that the Department of Political Affairs has commissioned a study to determine the structural, legal and financial implications of the AfHA since October 2018. The draft report of this study has been shared with all the experts attending this consultative meeting. This meeting is therefore expected to validate and provide inputs to the findings and recommendations of the study so that the consultant is able to fine-tune the report before it is submitted to the Policy Organs in July 2019.



Declaring the meeting open, Ambassador Lamine Baali Yayaoui, Rapporteur of the PRC subcommittee on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons as part of the commitment of African leaders, said the Assembly adopted Africa's first Humanitarian Policy Framework and at the same time endorsed the establishment of an African Humanitarian Agency, as a vehicle for Africa's humanitarian action.

Ambassador Yayaoui said to concretely achieve these objectives, the Assembly of Heads of States also declared 2019 as "*The Year of Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons: Towards Durable Solutions to Forced Displacement in Africa*".

Additionally, the year 2019 also marks the 50th Anniversary of the adoption of the 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, and the 10th Anniversary of the adoption of the 2009 AU Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention).

For further information please contact:

Mr. Yusuf Muhammed | Knowledge Management and Communications Officer
Department of Political Affairs | Mohammedy@africa-union.org | Tel: +2511155177 00

For further information contact

Directorate of Information and Communication | African Union Commission | E-mail: dic@africa-union.org | Web Site: www.au.int | Addis Ababa | Ethiopia

Follow us

Face book: <https://www.facebook.com/AfricanUnionCommission>
Twitter: <https://twitter.com/AfricanUnion>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/AUCommission>