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Directorate of Information and Communication

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THREE DAY YOUTHS, CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS AND STUDENTS OF HIGHER INSTITUTIONS POPULARIZATION MEETING ON THE PROMOTION OF THE PROTOCOL TO THE TREATY ESTABLISHING THE AFRICAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY RELATING TO FREE MOVEMENT OF PERSONS, RIGHT OF RESIDENCE AND RIGHT OF ESTABLISHMENT OPENS



LAGOS, August 15, 2019: A Three-day meeting of Youths, Civil Society Organizations and Students of Higher Institutions to popularize the Popularization the and promote the Protocol to the Treaty Establishing African Economic Community relating to the Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment in Africa has opened in Lagos, Nigeria.

Free Movement of Persons is an integral part of Agenda 2063 and the Abuja treaty of 1991 establishing the African Economic Community. Free Movement and African Passport is one of the 14 flagship projects of Agenda 2063. Executive Council

Decision of January 2016 in Mekele, further affirms the commitment to free movement of persons and goods. The decision also reinforces the Assembly Decision of June 2015.

Speaking on behalf of the Commissioner for Political Affairs, H.E. Minata Samate Cessouma, Ms Rita Amukhobu, Senior Political Officer, Department of Political Affairs, said the protocol was adopted by the Assembly of the African Union in Addis Ababa in 2018 along with its Implementation Roadmap.

She said that African leaders aspire for “a continent where free movement of people, capital, goods and services will result in significant increase in trade and investments among African countries Ms Amukhobu said the Protocol also calls for the development and issuance of the African passport as a catalyst for the realization of free movement of persons towards a visa-free Africa.

She highlights 12 flagship projects and programmes to be implemented within the First Ten-year Implementation Plan.

Ms Amukhobu said “two of these flagship projects are interlinked, namely the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) on one hand and the African Passport and Free Movement of Persons in Africa in the other hand”.

“This therefore tells us that we cannot remove the people from the center of business, trade and development in Africa. Goods and services cannot move on their own without human beings, without labour and without business people. We cannot have a free trade area that caters only for the free movement of goods and services and not that of people and expect successful continental integration”, she said.

Ms Amukhobu said the AfCFTA will have to go hand in glove with free movement of persons, right of residence and right of establishment. Impediments to mobility of business people across borders imposes real costs on economies including reduced imports and exports, reduced productivity, reduced competitiveness and translates into trade transaction costs for business. Therefore goods are accompanied by people because as it is people that trade with the goods, likewise, services are accompanied by people because it is the people that provide the skills and services.

She said the meeting is organised to provide an opportunity to the youths- led CSOs, students and other relevant stakeholders to discuss ways that will help in the speedy ratification, domestication and implementation of the Protocol by the Member States.



She highlighted that the Protocol and African Passport will benefit the African citizens and facilitate students and to apply and study beyond their borders. This will help build African capacity among the youth in different skills needed in the development of the continent.

Ms. Amukhobu concluded by stating that the benefits of free movement of persons in Africa far outway the challenges, hence the need for Member States to ratify the protocol and bring it to life in Africa.

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