The African Union fully subscribes to the global mantra and aspiration to facilitate safe, orderly and regular migration. The global number of COVID-19 cases reported by the World Health Organization reached 1 476 819 cases of COVID-19 on 9th April 2020. Precisely, the COVID-19 is a global catastrophe with detrimental and adverse effects on all socio-economic fundamental pillars.

The African Union recognizes that Migration and Mobility is central in the strategy to subdue COVID-19 and that movements including international traveling have been restricted by many countries as the borders are closed in order to contain COVID-19.

The Africa CDC continues to conduct daily surveillance and produces real time reports on COVID-19. The data shows a deteriorating situation in Africa as countries are reporting increase on infection and mortality rates. Chief among the domains severely impacted is Migration and Mobility. Since Africa CDC and WHO started monitoring of COVID-19 related global mobility restrictions, it is observed that the total number of restrictions issued has increased.

The African Union commends AU countries’ sovereign COVID-19 restrictive measures to curb the spread of the virus by invoking extreme measures such as State of Emergency in order to bring to a grinding halt all forms mobility at a national level. While global consensus abounds that Migration and Mobility restrictive measures should be imposed in line with the strategy to contain the spreading of COVID-19 and having adopted progressive policy Migration frameworks, the African Union is concerned that vulnerable populations such as Migrants, Refugees and IDPs might not access concomitant Human Rights enshrined in the international law. These groups of people of concern might have been already in transit or destination countries when the COVID-19 outbreak occurred and thus are trapped in these areas where lockdown or State of Emergency have been declared.

Notably, African governments continue with commendable solidarity and patriotic gesture of repatriating their nationals stranded abroad. The African Union is alive to
the reality that enforcing the promotion, respect and protection of Human Rights approaches in jurisdictions which have declared instruments of extreme human mobility control such as national disaster or state of emergency leading to lockdown, might be extremely challenging. Be that as it may, the African Union calls for scrupulous adherence to international humanitarian law during lockdown as it applies to the persons of concern.

It is an appeal of the African Union that when adopting and implementing COVID-19 responses, governments should adhere to international law and the respect of the rights and humane dignity of Migrants. In this regards, unilateral mass deportations worsen the desperate situation of migrants and can pose immense challenges to countries of origin of the migrants who are making efforts to create safe and humane environment to receive their returning nationals by setting up acceptable centers allowing for medical check and confinement.

The African Union calls for enhanced cooperation between countries on repatriation of migrants in solidarity and mutual responsibility of governments.

The African Union underscores the inalienable rights of the Migrants, Refugees and IDPs which remain intact at this extraordinary moment of restrictive mobility. The African Union further accentuates, the importance acting within the ambit cardinal principles of humane and respect of lives which enforcing measures to avert catastrophe associated with the advent of COVID-19.

-oOo-