

## ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL COUNCIL

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### Southern and Eastern Africa CSOs urged to promote the AU's Free Movement Protocol



African Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in eastern and southern Africa have been prompted to support and promote the implementation of the African Union's Free Movement Protocol (FMP) and the Migration Policy Framework for Africa (MPFA).

The call to action to CSOs was made during the opening of the second Regional CSO Sensitization Forum on the Continental Free Movement Protocol organized by the AU Economic, Social, and Cultural Council (AU-ECOSOCC) with support from the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ).

The forum is being held to popularize the FMP and MPFA, and particularly to improve the understanding of African CSOs on the FMP and to provide them with tools to perform advocacy for implementation of the Protocol by AU member states. The first forum was held in May, 2022 for western and central African CSOs. Find the

communiqué here: <https://ecosocc.au.int/en/news/press-releases/2022-05-27/communique-regional-cso-sensitization-forum-fmp>

The FMP and the MPFA have been established by the AU as the primary policy frameworks to address, manage, and promote migration and mobility on the continent.

The FMP, in particular, aims to curb and eventually eliminate barriers to regional border migration (to work, visit, trade, live, etc.) within the continent. Eliminating these barriers translates to economic growth on the continent as well as improved migration procedures for African citizens.

Unfortunately, despite the existence of these migration policy frameworks, policy uptake among AU member states and their popularization within African civil society remains low and has not achieved the desired impact.

Officially opening the forum, through a key note address, Mozambique's Ambassador to the AU, H.E Alfredo Nuvunga, on behalf of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Mozambique, H.E Veronica Dlhovo, said despite a number of challenges characterized by the dynamics the world was currently experiencing, free movement of people was a fundamental element for the development and well-being of nations.

“These challenges should not intimidate us in opening our borders, on the contrary, they should encourage us in the coordinated search for collective measures both at regional and continental levels for the establishment of an increasingly integrated and prosperous continent,” he said.

Amb. Nuvunga explained that at the Southern African Development Community (SADC) level, Free Movement was the subject of consideration by the Ministerial Committee of the Organ (CMO) meeting in August 2016, in Maputo, having recommended a gradual approach, safeguarding the sovereignty of states, guaranteeing the existence of peace, security and stability on the continent and convergence between member states, in order to reduce economic imbalances.

He emphasized that the involvement of civil society would broaden the field of analysis in order to allow all social segments to review the implementation of the protocol.

Amb. Ruediger Zettel, German Deputy Ambassador to Mozambique, highlighted the critical importance of the forums noting that, “Free movement on the continent is key to ensuring development and better trade relations.”

He commended the African Union Commission for the collaborative work on the Free Movement initiative noting that it would ensure the inclusion of African citizens in the migration discourse.

African Union Commission Strategic Advisor to the Deputy Chairperson, Ambassador Amr Aljowaily, stressed the importance of the FMP and looked to CSOs to not only

engage and popularize it but also to give feedback garnered from the CSOs networks on the process.

Mr. Denise Kodhe, ECOSOCC Presiding Officer emphasized the role of the African CSO in holding governments accountable for their international commitments and reiterated ECOSOCC's commitment to ensuring that the collaborative partnership with the GIZ on the FMP initiative was a success.

“I would like to personally implore all members of civil society, to use your voices and platforms in domesticating, popularizing and promoting the implementation of these continental and regional migration policies on our continent,” said Mr William Carew, Head of the ECOSOCC Secretariat. “I appeal to you members of the civil society to take a leading role in pushing parent member states in prioritizing labour migration and free movement issues.”

He reiterated ECOSOCC's commitment in ensuring that the proposed solutions to all the standing issues and any new arising issues, would be handled by the African Union Commission and its partner GIZ expediently.

Amb. David Claude Pierre, Permanent Representative to AU Southern African Regional Office said the FMP is a tool which could be used to realize other developmental goals as well as facilitate the fulfilment of the objectives of the African Continental free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

“Success of the Free movement of persons equals success of the AfCFTA. The success of the AfCFTA will create many jobs for young Africans. The success of the AfCFTA would also lead to significant increase in trade and investment among African countries.”

He encouraged AU member states to not only sign, but also to ratify and domesticate it.

The CSOs convened at the forum represent a diverse range of technical experts in a range of thematic areas that intersect with the continent's free movement agenda. As a result, participant-led presentations are showcasing the expert-level discussions on cross-cutting and pressing issues within the FMP, such as social-economic rights, peace, security, human rights, women and youth, climate change, health security, and food security.

Most importantly, the forum will identify the tools and capacity-building requirements for civil society to participate in the protocol's implementation.

The forum's deliberations will be consolidated into a plan of action focusing on advocacy, promotion, ratification, domestication and implementation of the AU's FMP, and particularly in addressing areas where civil society's capacity and engagement require strengthening.

The next sensitisation forum will be for North African CSOs.

## About ECOSOCC

The Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC) was established in July 2004 as an Advisory Organ composed of different social and professional groups of AU Member States. The mandate of ECOSOCC is to contribute, through advice, to the effective translation of the objectives, principles and policies of the African Union into concrete programmes, as well as the evaluation of these programmes.

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For further information, please contact:

**Carol Jilombo, Senior Communications Officer | ECOSOCC Secretariat | African Union Commission**  
| E-mail: [Jilomboc@africa-union.org](mailto:Jilomboc@africa-union.org) | Lusaka, Zambia.