

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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1st Regional Popularization Workshop of the New AU Policies on the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons (TIP) and Smuggling of Migrants (SOM) in Africa



The African Union Commission Department of Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development held the 1st Regional Popularization Workshop of the new AU Policies on the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons (TIP) and Prevention of Smuggling of Migrants (SOM) in Africa from 15 to 17 August 2023 in Port Luis, Mauritius.

The Commission recently adopted the new policies on the Prevention of TIP and SOM in Africa envisioning the harmonization of the policy framework at regional and national levels to support the effective prevention of this transnational crime. These policies provide proposals that will not only aim at building the capacity of national institutions to respond to the challenges associated with TIP and SOM, but also to build a framework for partnership and collaboration. In the context of taking this into action, the 3-day popularization workshop was organized.

In his remarks, Mr Niven Muneesamy, the representative of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Mauritius, expressed appreciation to the African Union for the development of the new policies, as well as the popularization workshop. He emphasized that the trafficking in person and smuggling of migrants are transnational organized crimes recognized as global and widespread crimes that are, by nature, interlinked with migration. With increased migration in recent years, the risks of migrants being subject to trafficking and smuggling have increased significantly, and a large proportion of the victims are women and children, he underscored.

Mr Sabelo Mbokazi, the AU Head of Labour Employment and Migration Division stated that the new TIP and SOM policies provide guidelines and offer principles for tackling these illicit activities. He stressed that “unless we jointly work together, the monumental task of combating TIP and SOM will remain a challenge.” He further stated that the vision of the African Union is to promote an integrated, prosperous, and peaceful continent, an aspiration that will not be realized unless Africa resolutely tackles illicit practices such as TIP and SOM through dismantling criminal networks perpetuating this phenomenon. Mr Mbokazi, called on AU member states and RECs to commit to domesticate and implement the new policies and work together to build the Africa We Want.

Mr. Maemo Machethe, the Director for AU Continental Operation Centre in Khartoum, Sudan, noted that the popularization workshop came at an opportune time when the African Union had just celebrated “the African Decentralization and Local Development Day (ADD)”, where the contribution of the African subnational and local governments in the making of the African Continental Free Trade Area to enhance national and continental development in AU member states was celebrated. “Unfortunately, as we

celebrate the minimal progress, Africa continues to endure serious violations of human rights where women and children amongst other vulnerable groups continue to be trafficked and smuggled, facing sexual exploitation, forced labour, forced marriages, and organ harvesting” the Director, added.

Mr. Devendre Gopaul, the Permanent Secretary of Defence and Home Affairs at the Office of Prime Minister, Republic of Mauritius expressed the government's honour to host the 1st regional workshop of the new AU Policies on TIP and SOM. He affirmed that the event is a right step forward towards addressing this catastrophic issue. Along the same line, Mr. Gopaul reiterated that “ it is imperative that we combine our efforts to eliminate trafficking in persons and the issue of /and smuggling of migrants diligently”. He also emphasized the need to build networks among different member states as well as with international organizations so as to share and disseminate relevant information in a coordinated and timely manner.

The three-day popularization workshop focused on setting an awareness-raising atmosphere on the policies, ranging from going through each section of the two policy documents to providing the opportunity to dynamically share national perspectives, questions, and experiences on TIP and SOM related matters. The first two days of the meeting were marked with group discussions, plenary interventions, sharing of best practices amongst member states present, active chairing, and productive interventions from participants.

During the third and last day of the workshop, an overview of the Continental Operational Centre was presented including its mandate and role in the implementation of the TIP and SOM policies. The workshop welcomed the idea of establishing a regional network of law enforcement agencies for future follow-up and review on the implementation of the policies that were considered.

The 1st regional popularization workshop was attended by senior officials from law enforcement agencies, relevant officers from Ministries/Departments in charge of combating irregular migration, especially TIP and SOM, from the Northern and Eastern regions of AU member states; relevant international partners; representatives from IOM, the Commission and the AU migration centers.

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