

## INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

Press Release No:

Date: 28 March 2024

Venue: Brazzaville, Congo

### ECCAS Member States Lay Out Roadmap to Accelerate Extension of Social Protection to Migrant Workers in the Region



Social protection and labour migration experts from ECCAS Commission and their Member States have examined and reached a consensus on a draft roadmap to accelerate the extension of social protection to migrant workers in the region. This was during a three-day (26 – 28, March) workshop held in Brazzaville, Republic of Congo.

The roadmap is a recommendation of a study on extension of social protection to migrant workers in the region, carried out with the support from the AU-ILO-IOM Joint Labour Migration Programme (JLMP). It emphasizes formulation of inclusive social protection strategies with a particular focus on migrant workers' voices and participation as well as those in the informal economy. The study recommends some short-, medium- and long-term measures.

Short term recommendations include creating payment agreements between funds for returning migrant workers, exporting benefits to migrants' countries of residence, and prioritizing the ratification of relevant ILO conventions on labor migration and social protection and social security. In the medium term, the study recommends strengthening existing agreements & development of bilateral social security agreements between ECCAS member states as well and other organisations.

Looking towards the long term, the study proposes the development of a multilateral social security convention within ECCAS. This would ensure comprehensive social protection coverage for migrant workers across the region.

Hon. Firmin Ayessa, Republic of Congo's Minister of State for Civil Service, Labour, and Social Security, stressed that "Migrant workers deserve equal treatment and rights as nationals of countries they are working in," as he implored Member States to employ the spirit of Pan-Africanism in managing migration.

To fast-track recommendations provided by the study, the roadmap outlines strategies: conducting research and knowledge development to inform the strengthening of social security coordination mechanisms, capacity building of relevant actors in negotiation and implementation.

“Social protection and social security agenda are at the forefront of the AUC's priorities to build resilient and inclusive societies in Africa,” said Ms. Odette Bolly – the JLMP Coordinator, who represented Mr. Sabelo Mbokazi, the Head of Labour Employment and Migration (LEM) Division at AU. These efforts also speak to the AUC [Ouagadougou+10 Declaration and Plan of Action](#) on Employment, Poverty Eradication, and Inclusive Development (2015) which identifies social protection as one of its main priority areas of action, Ms. Odette added.

The roadmap also prioritizes monitoring of social security agreements; institutional capacity development through alignment of national legislation with international standards and holding high-level political conferences on social protection and social security; information dissemination and advocacy campaigns aimed at popularizing social security principles and ratification of relevant ILO conventions.

“Female migrant workers face significant challenges in terms of accessing social protection, often working in sectors with high levels of informality such as domestic work or agriculture,” notes Dr. Coffi Agossou, ILO Deputy Regional Director – Africa, further explaining that this is why the JLMP in 2021 supported the development of guides for policymakers and practitioners to extend social protection to migrant workers, refugees, and their families.

In expressing ECCAS’ readiness to expedite the implementation of the road map, Ms. Kapinga Yvette Ngandu, the Commissioner – Gender, Social and Human Development at ECCAS, said: “Article 88 of the Treaty establishing ECCAS, instructs the ECCAS Commission to spare no effort to develop policies and strategies that promote equal rights and dignity for migrants, including migrant workers, which explains ECCAS’ active participation in the JLMP programme, among others, as well as ensure its translation to concrete actions on the ground” .

ECCAS is home to 4.3 million international migrants (2.1 million female and 2.2 million male), of whom majority migrate for labour purposes, according to data from the [African Union third report on labour migration statistics in Africa](#). Some of these migrant report challenges, including difficulties in accessing healthcare, obtaining legal status and documentation, securing social security coverage, labour rights violations, discrimination, and social exclusion, are all addressed by the objectives outlined in this roadmap. Sectoral Ministers will meet later this year to validate the roadmap.

### **About the JLMP**

The Joint Labour Migration Programme (JLMP) is a collaborative initiative between the African Union Commission (AUC), International Labour Organization (ILO), International Organization for Migration (IOM). Adopted by the Assembly of Heads of State, the JLMP's strategy emphasizes intra-African labour migration and aligns with the First 2023 Ten Year Plan of the AU's Agenda 2063 and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is currently implementing projects to enhance rights-based governance for labour migration and mobility in Africa, ensuring gender-responsive regulations and protections for all migrant workers; increase availability and utilization of labour migration data & statistics by MSs and RECs for evidence-based policy-making; and support MS to establish systems that promote safe, secure, and equal working conditions for migrant workers in formal and informal sectors with access to social protection and skill recognition.

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