



Statement

By

**Khabele MATLOSA,
Director for Political Affairs**

**At The Meeting of Member States Experts on the Guidelines for the
Design, Production and Issuance of the African Passport**

Nairobi, Kenya

9– 11 July 2018

**Representative of the Government of Kenya;
Chairperson of the STC on Migration, Refugees and IDPs;
Director of the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO);
Representative of the International Organisation for Migration;
Experts from AU Member States;
Colleagues from the AUC;
Ladies and Gentlemen;
All Protocols duly observed.**

It is my pleasure to welcome all of you to this important meeting of experts on the African Passport. From the onset, let me outline the three expected outputs of our meeting namely:

- a) The proceedings report;
- b) The computer-generated passport design; and
- c) The updated Guidelines on the design, production and issuance of the African Passport.

I am pleased that you have managed to set aside your national responsibilities to attend this experts meeting. This meeting is meant to fine-tune the draft Guidelines for the Design, Production and Issuance of the African Passport. During the first meeting of the Chiefs of Immigration held in Seychelles in May 2018 to consider the first draft of the Guidelines, an ad-hoc expert committee was established. It was tasked to convene a meeting to discuss the technical specifications and security features of the African Passport as well as the implications for its production and issuance by AU Member States.

The Chiefs of Immigration also specifically requested the African Union Commission to facilitate the experts meeting with technical support from International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). We meet here today in fulfilment of the decisions of the Chiefs of Immigration taken in May 2018 in Seychelles. I am happy that ICAO has accepted our invitation to be here with us to provide the necessary technical advice. I am also gratified that the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) have joined us in this meeting. We have been with the RECs since the very beginning of this journey.

As we embark on this important process of crafting technical modalities of the Africa Passport, we should appreciate the strategic significance of this

process beyond the travel document. We are here to advance the AU's agenda for free movement of persons. Free movement of persons forms a critical pillar of Africa's integration project as articulated in article 43 of the 1991 Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community-Abuja Treaty and article 2.1.2 sub-sections 93 and 94 of the 2009 Minimum Integration Programme (MIP). Free movement of persons is equally a human rights issue as clearly demonstrated by the provisions of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights particularly article 12. The strategic essence of free movement of persons is that it advances Africa's continental integration. It also advances the continental agenda for the promotion and protection of human and peoples' rights. So, what we will be doing here in Nairobi this whole week is far bigger than just a travel document.

Both continental integration and promotion of human and peoples' rights are key components of Agenda 2063-The Africa We Want. We are, therefore, contributing to the realisation of Agenda 2063 and its First Ten-Year Implementation Plan, 2014-2023. We are making a modest effort towards the realisation of the AU's vision of "an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, **driven by its own citizens**, representing a dynamic force in the international arena".

It is not surprising, therefore, that African leaders adopted the free movement of persons and the African passport as one of the thirteen (13) flagship projects of Agenda 2063. We are, in essence, popularising the Protocol to the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community Relating to Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Rights of Establishment and its Implementation Roadmap adopted by the AU Heads of State and Government on 29 January 2018. This Protocol has been signed by about 33 Member States since the Extra-Ordinary Summit of the AU held in Kigali, Rwanda in March 2018. The not-so-good news is that during the recent Ordinary Summit of the AU held in June-July 2018 in Nouakchott, Mauritania, no single Member State signed the Protocol.

Thus far, only one AU Member State, the Republic of Rwanda, the Chair of the STC on Migration, Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons, has ratified the Protocol, leading by example. We salute Rwanda for its exemplary leadership on free movement of persons in East Africa specifically and in Africa as whole. We should also salute our host, Kenya, for relaxing its visa regime recently. On 28 November 2017, President Uhuru Kenyatta announced that all Africans visiting Kenya will be issued

with visas upon arrival at all ports of entry in order to promote free movement of persons and free trade. The President also announced that all East African Community nationals are free to work and do business in Kenya without work permits so long as they have their national IDs. Following the announcement by the President, the Kenyan parliament is currently working on the legal and regulatory framework to facilitate issuance of visa upon arrival for all Africans.

Article 10 of the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons calls for the adoption, production and issuance of the African Passport. The implementation roadmap provides the necessary action and time-frames for the adoption, production and issuance of the Passport, including convening of meetings of African Chiefs of Immigration to guide this process. Let me make it abundantly clear that the African Passport will be meaningless without the full and effective implementation of the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons. Conversely, the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons will be incomplete without the African Passport. Like twins, the Protocol and the African Passport are inextricably interlinked. Towards the effective implementation of the Protocol and the issuance of the African Passport, Africa needs to take the first step. That first step is the abolition of visas to facilitate the right of entry. The right of entry will then be followed by the right of residence. Entry and residence will ultimately facilitate the right of establishment. These are three main phases of the implementation of the Protocol on free movement of persons: entry, residence and establishment.

Finally, I urge us to use these three days productively working under the technical guidance of ICAO in fine-tuning the draft Guidelines on the Design, Production and Issuance of the African Passport. The revised Guidelines will be shared with Chiefs of Immigration on Thursday and Friday this week here in Nairobi.

The agreed Guidelines will then be adopted by the STC on Migration, Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons which is planned for October 2018 in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea. Ultimately, the Guidelines will be adopted by the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government in 2019. This will clear the way for AU Member States to begin the process of production and issuance of the African Passport in accordance with their own national laws and regulations.

Let me end with the words of President Uhuru Kenyatta last year when he announced a relaxed visa regime for Africans visiting Kenya: “The freer we are to travel and live with one another, the more integrated and appreciative of our diversity, we will become. The political balkanisation that risks our mutual security, the negative politics of identity, will recede as our brotherhood expands to embrace more Africans”.

I thank you for your attention.