

- ❖ Excellencies Ministers;
- ❖ Excellencies Heads of your respective delegations;
- ❖ Your Excellency Mrs. Amira Elfadhil Mohammed, Commissioner for Social Affairs, African Union Commission
- ❖ Excellencies Ambassadors, here present;
- ❖ Distinguished Experts;
- ❖ Representatives of international organizations accredited to the African Union;
- ❖ Ladies and Gentlemen;

Good Morning, Bonjour,

It is a great pleasure for me to be here with you at this 3rd Ordinary Session of the Specialized Technical Committee on Migration, Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons. It is always gratifying to pay a visit to the Headquarters of the African Union. It reminds us of the unity of purpose in our collective pursuit of Pan-Africanism towards the Africa We Want by 2063!

From the onset, allow me to extend my sincere gratitude to the Government and people of the Republic of Ethiopia for receiving us in this beautiful city of Addis Ababa and all the hospitality as usual that make us all feel at home. Especially, this is the 1st STC meeting since Ethiopia opened its borders to fellow Africans by providing visa on arrival; we are all enjoying it!

Let me also thank the African Union Commission for facilitating the organization of this 3rd ordinary session of the STC on Migration, Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons. The 3rd session takes place when the African Union theme of the year is “**The Year of Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons: Towards Durable Solutions to Forced Displacement in Africa.**” This theme presents an auspicious context for our deliberation over the next two days since we are the STC of the theme!

I take this opportunity to thank the Experts of all Member States here present for the job well done in the past three days. I was briefed that the deliberations went well. We look forward to receiving their report later today.

My deep gratitude also goes to all the delegations of respective AU Member States including my colleagues, Hon. Ministers, here present who will take part in this important session of the STC, despite busy schedules back home.

Excellencies Ministers

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

During our last ordinary session of this STC, the Protocol to the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community Relating to the Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment was negotiated and recommended for consideration and adoption by the Assembly. Since its adoption on the 29th January of 2018, the protocol has been **signed by 33 Member States** out of which, **only 04 have ratified and deposited their instruments of ratification**. These are **Mali, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe and Niger**.

You will recall that this Protocol requires 15 ratifications to enter into force. It is extremely important that Member States make an effort to expedite ratifications in order to accelerate mobility and integration in Africa. For without mobility and free movement, even the AfCFTA will stay challenged as we cannot achieve free trade properly without free movement.

The Republic Rwanda has been chairing this STC since our last ordinary session in 2017. Allow me to take stock, appreciate and highlight key achievements by the STC under the leadership of its outgoing bureau during the term of two years:

The following important document were negotiated and adopted by the Assembly:

- The Protocol on free movement of persons, the right of residence and the right of establishment in Africa and its roadmap for implementation;
- The Common African Position (CAP) on the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration was adopted;
- The Revised Migration Policy Framework and its Ten-Year Action Plan;
- The progress report on the African Union Horn of Africa Initiative against Trafficking in Human Beings and Smuggling of Migrants;
- The African Union Guidelines for the Design, Production, and Issuance of the African Passport and its annexures.

The important moment during the STC in Rwanda was undoubtedly the adoption of the draft Protocol on Free movement of persons in Africa, which was subsequently validated by the STC on Justice and Legal affairs as well as by the Assembly of Heads of State and Governments in January 2018.

Rwanda also hosted the Extraordinary Summit on the 21st of March 2018 which allowed for the signature of this Protocol by a large number of AU Member States.

The Bureau of the STC and the AU Commission has also sensitized Member States on the ratification of the protocol on Free Movement of persons. We hope that other Member States will follow soon to ratify the protocol in the months to come under the new leadership of this STC so that the protocol comes into force.

On this, I have been informed that the AU's Office of Legal Council is Open and ready to receive any Member State who may have come ready to sign or to deposit their instrument of ratification.

Excellencies Ministers

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

After Kigali, we worked to organize a special session of this STC to submit to the Member States the pending policy documents which could not be processed at the STC held in Kigali. The special session was held in Malabo in November 2018 and the following topics were discussed: -

- a) The Draft Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on Specific Aspects of the Right to Nationality and the Eradication of Statelessness in Africa;
- b) The African Humanitarian Agency;
- c) And the Khartoum Regional Operational Center.

It is to be recalled that the special session in Malabo considered and adopted the Protocol on Specific Aspects of the Right to Nationality and the Eradication of Statelessness in Africa. This policy document has been submitted to the STC on Justice and Legal Affairs. We hope that it will be adopted by the Executive Council and the Assembly during the February 2020 Summit meetings. The two other topics which could not receive consensus are being referred to the current STC meeting.

We also worked on holding this session of the STC which is of particular interest with regards to the importance of the subjects of its agenda.

The Bureau of the STC also worked closely with the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Social Affairs for the implementation of recommendations included in the Common African Position (CAP) on humanitarian effectiveness in Africa that was adopted by the 1st STC.

In addition, the Bureau of our STC also worked closely with the PRC Subcommittee on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons in organizing the activities of the 2019 theme year activities. A report on these activities was presented in the experts' meeting.

In the specific area of migration, the Bureau of our STC worked closely with the Department of Social Affairs in the coordination meeting under the AU-EU-UN framework called the Tripartite Task Force on Libya. In this regard an assessment mission to Niger was conducted to learn and share experiences on the emergency transit mechanism for refugees and asylum seekers. It based on the outcomes of this mission that an MoU was signed between the Government of Rwanda, the UNHCR and the African Union Commission for the establishment for the emergency transit mechanism for refugees and asylum seekers in Rwanda to provide protection to vulnerable migrants in Libya and to provide a safe environment that will enable fast-tracking durable solutions to those who are evacuated to Rwanda.

We are happy and proud to report that Rwanda has received so far 189 migrants and plans are underway to receive more. Those already evacuated to Rwanda are now safe and can sleep assured of the next day. This group was visited by representatives of Member States on the 23rd of October in the margins of the recently held Continental Consultative Meeting on forced displacement that convened in Kigali on the 24th-25th October 2019.

Excellency Ministers

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

During the two year journey from Kigali to Addis Ababa via Malabo, our STC has made a path that has allowed us to adopt important framework policies that have contributed to the advancement of our continental integration agenda and has made it possible to mark steps on the path of our common agenda for 2063.

Therefore, in passing on the Chairmanship of this STC to the next Chair, we have no shade of doubt that all our efforts will be made to advance our common agenda. I count on the commitment and sense of duty and responsibility of all of us to support this new leadership.

With those few remarks, I wish every success to this session and thank you for your kind attention!