



International
Labour
Organization

6TH PAN AFRICAN FORUM ON MIGRATION (PAFOM) IN DAKAR, SENEGAL FROM 11-12 SEPTEMBER 2021

Opening Remarks

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Salutations

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, Esteemed partners, it is a great honour and pleasure to participate in the annual meeting of the Pan African Forum on Migration. This Forum helps us to network, share information, experiences and good practices on migration and mobility governance issues in the continent.

The ILO welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this dialogue and expresses its appreciation to **the AUC** for the continued very good collaboration between our institutions. We thank the **Government of Senegal** for its leadership in organising this event. The ILO team is fully committed to the organisation of this forum; particularly facilitating side events; including one on the Labour Migration Advisory Committee as well as providing technical inputs to key thematic areas such as skills development and labour migration statistics.

I use this opportunity to reiterate the ILO's commitment to decent work and social justice for all workers, including migrant workers. The **2019 Abidjan Declaration on Shaping the Future of Work in Africa** reaffirms this, along with the **ILO's Strategy on Labour Migration in the Africa**, a long-term vision for achieving a brighter future for African migrant workers.

Distinguished participants and partners, on the occasion of this 6th meeting of the Pan African Forum on Migration, it is crucial to focus

on how to strengthen Labour Migration Governance in Africa, especially within the context of the COVID 19 pandemic.

COVID-19 has devastated the world of work. Not only did it bring new challenges, it has exacerbated longstanding issues like inequality and poverty. Most countries continue to reel from the pandemic's impact. COVID-19 has had a severe, often devastating and traumatic impact on migrant workers; inducing widespread employment loss, the non-payment of salaries/wages and causing the return and repatriation of huge numbers of African migrants.

The impact of the pandemic calls for a review of all aspects of labour governance including labour migration policies and systems. The pandemic revealed the vulnerability, even weakness of national and regional frameworks to protect migrant workers' rights and extend services to that category of workers. Thereby calling on us to build back better to reduce vulnerability and increase resilience to future shocks.

While rethinking labour migration governance in Africa today, I anticipate constructive exchanges and experience sharing on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on labour migration governance, recruitment practices and migrant workers themselves in the region, as well as collective thinking and agreements on the way forward.

Policy coherence and institutional partnerships and coordination between stakeholders with a mandate on migration, labour migration and employment policies will be of utmost importance to ensure coherence, and results on the ground.

Africa has demonstrated its commitment to effective labour migration government through different continental platforms and instruments. The **AU Declaration and Plan of Action on Employment, Poverty Eradication and Inclusive Development**, places labour migration and regional economic integration as one of its six key priority policy areas.

The **Revised Migration Policy Framework for Africa (2018-2030)**, also targets labour migration governance mentioned as one of the key pillars.

The **AU-ILO-IOM-ECA Joint Programme on Labour Migration Governance for Development and Integration in Africa (JLMP)** aims to improve labour migration governance to achieve safe, orderly and regular migration in the region;

The **AU Labour Migration Advisory Committee (AU-LMAC)**, a tripartite forum for result oriented dialogue aims at providing advice to governments on labour migration governance and the protection of the rights of migrant workers and their families. As we celebrate the third year of the LMAC, we congratulate the Committee for the tangible outcomes in terms of improved dialogue, identification of opportunities for cooperation and strengthened linkages among several actors in the world of work.

At the global level, strengthening labour migration governance to achieve decent work for migrant workers and their family members is a key priority of the UN Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

While the commitment at international, continental and national levels to foster the development potential of labour migration in Africa is high, a forum like this one should also trigger reflections on how to transform policies into tangible results and ensure a *fair, orderly and regular migration and decent work* for a majority of African migrant workers.

Developmental potential of Labour migration

For the ILO, ¹“A well-governed labour migration can contribute to sustainable development for countries of origin, transit and destination, and can provide benefits and opportunities for migrant workers and their families. It can balance labour supply and demand, help develop and transfer skills at all levels, contribute to social protection systems, foster innovation and enrich communities both culturally, economically and socially.” Yet, the migration process implies complex challenges in terms of governance, migrant workers' protection, migration and development linkages, and international cooperation.

What does effective governance of labour migration mean?

It means establishing an effective labour migration policy framework

- Need to formulate and implement **rights-based and Gender responsive national and regional level labour migration policy, ensuring** their coherence with employment policies and developed in **consultation** with the social partners.
- The lack of effective labour migration policy formulation in Africa was an important concern identified during the recent African review of the GCM. Stakeholders have called for improved Member States' political will and commitment to develop, implement and monitor labour migration frameworks that effectively include all labour market aspects.

It means having effective labour market information systems and labour migration statistics

Labour migration policies will be effective, only if they are based on strong statistical evidence. Recognizing the importance of timely, reliable and comparable data and the need for international standards

¹. ILO : International Labour Conference, *Conclusions and Resolution on Fair and Effective Labour Migration Governance*, June 2017, Geneva.

on labour migration data, the ILO has developed Guidelines Concerning Statistics of International Labour Migration that were adopted by the 20th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) in 2018.

While progress has been made on the harmonization of labour migration statistics over the last five years in the region, gaps remain. This sixth Pan African forum on migration provides us with the opportunity to openly discuss issues, collectively identify strategies and mutually agree on a harmonized approach for addressing labour migration data gaps in different countries of Africa.

It means an improved ratification and implementation of International Standards

The ILO has adopted **two international labour Conventions** (Convention No 97 and Convention No 143) on migrant workers that provide protection framework for migrant workers; ensuring that labour migration governance is fair and effective. Both Conventions bring benefits to migrant workers and the private employers or businesses that employ them.

Unfortunately, only **14 African countries** have ratified Convention No. 97² (in force in 3 countries by 2022) and Convention No. 143³ has been ratified by merely **12 African countries** (in force in 3 countries by 2022). Allow me to invite African member States to speed up their ratification of international instruments and in particular - labour and employment related ILO conventions⁴. We also call on our member States to domesticate such instruments by reviewing and adjusting

² Migration for Employment Convention (Revised), 1949 (No. 97)

³ Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, 1975 (No. 143)

⁴ ILO Migration for Employment Convention (Revised), 1949 (No. 97); „ ILO Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, 1975 (No. 143); „ ILO Private Employment Agencies Convention, 1997 (No. 181); and „ International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families, 1990.

national legal frameworks to extend protection to Migrants workers. The ILO stands ready to support that process.

It also means Effective Bilateral Labour agreements (BLAs)

Bilateral Labour Agreements (BLAs), when well formulated and implemented through social dialogue, are a critical tool to support labour migration governance and policy coherence. The effective implementation and monitoring of BLAs adopted by MS, remain however a challenge - to ensure protection by *law* and *in practice* considering the bargaining power of most African countries while negotiating BLAs. The AU Model BLA developed with the support of ILO and partners under the JLMP, gives guidance to Member States on how to improve the impact of BLAs to expand opportunities to African Migrants workers within and beyond the region; including with GCC Countries.

It means establishing a fair recruitment process within/outside Africa.

Fair recruitment is another key tool towards ensuring decent work for migrant workers. Please recall that the **Fair Recruitment Initiative (FRI)** was launched in 2014 as part of the ILO Director General's call for a Fair Migration Agenda. We have just launched the **phase II 2021-25 Fair Recruitment Initiative**⁵ which aims to ensure that recruitment practices nationally and across borders are grounded in labour standards, developed through social dialogue, and ensure gender equality.⁶

⁵ Vision statement of FRI II: Recruitment practices nationally and across borders are grounded in labour standards, are developed through social dialogue, and ensure gender equality. Specifically, they : 1. Are transparent and effectively regulated, monitored, and enforced ; 2. Protect all workers' rights, including fundamental principles and rights at work, and prevent human trafficking and forced labour; 3. Efficiently inform and respond to employment policies and labour market needs, including for recovery and resilience

⁶ Fair Recruitment Initiative's centrepiece is the [General Principles and Operational Guidelines for Fair Recruitment \(GPOG\)](#), adopted in 2016, complemented by the [Definition of Recruitment Fees and Related Costs](#), adopted in 2018 to be read jointly

Increased capacity by all actors in member States, the involvement of social partners to improve the regulation of Private Employment Agencies should be areas for further focus and concrete results.

It means the accelerated extension of Social protection to migrant workers

The pandemic has exposed inequalities and significant gaps in social protection coverage as well as its comprehensiveness and adequacy across all countries. Pervasive challenges such as high levels of economic insecurity, persistent poverty, rising inequality, extensive informality and a fragile social contract have been exacerbated by COVID-19.

The newly **released World Social Protection Report 2020-22** urge countries to close the coverage and adequacy gaps ; especially for women, workers in the informal economy and migrants, because *Investing in universal social protection is the ethical and rational choice for a better future*. This is consistent with the Global Call to Action outlining measures to create a human-centred recovery from the pandemic and avoid the long-term scarring of economies and societies, which was unanimously adopted by tripartite constituents from 181 member States in June 2021. Furthermore, the ILO Africa Strategy on Social Protection supports countries to double social protection coverage in Africa to 40% by 2025. Thereby improving migrant workers' access to social protection and portability of social protection benefits through for example, conclusion and enforcement of bilateral and multilateral social protection agreements; or inclusion of social security provisions in bilateral labour agreements (BLAs) or Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs).

Effective labour migration governance means promoting Skills development and recognition

Ensuring that migrant workers' skills are recognized, utilized and built upon is an important means of promoting decent work and

strengthening migrants' contributions to countries of origin and destination. Member States should invest in developing skills for migrant workers and facilitate their recognition through harmonized qualifications systems among countries of origin, and countries of destination - within and beyond Africa.

The ILO also promotes skills partnership by supporting countries like Nigeria, Ghana, and Togo in strengthening mutual recognition of each other's qualifications in the agriculture and construction sectors.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, Esteemed Partners,

To conclude, I would like to reiterate that effective labour migration governance provides livelihood opportunities and benefits for migrant workers, their communities and their families. For Africa to reap the benefits of labour migration through its increased contribution to the development of the continent, African member States and RECs should govern labour migration in an effective way, through the whole of society-and whole of government approaches.

I wish to call upon all participants to engage in an interactive and productive exchange of views and ideas on the best policies and initiatives to strengthen labour migration governance in Africa. This is not only important for the continent's accelerated socioeconomic development, but its regional integration and maximising the decent work opportunities of the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). This will also ensure that we build forward better and no one is left behind.

The ILO stands ready to provide its vast expertise and experience in the world of work to support the deliberations of this forum and we look forward to our continued strategic engagement with the AU, its member States and all our highly valued partners.

I thank you for your attention.