



Opening remarks

by

Mr. Sabelo Mbokazi,

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at the

**Regional launch of the Fair Recruitment Initiative
(Phase II, 2021-2025) - Africa Region,**

24 March 2022, Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire

Your Excellencies.

Distinguished Guests.

Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is the AU's distinct honor and privilege to jointly work with ILO to present this important event marking the Regional launch of the **Fair Recruitment Initiative** for Africa. This event is one of the joint

activities that the AU and the ILO are jointly implementing under the auspices of AU/ILO Joint Plan of Plan 2021- 2024.

In today's global economy, workers are increasingly in search of decent work and better livelihoods beyond their home countries including African workers. According to the 3rd edition of labour migration statistics report in Africa, , the number of international migrant workers in Africa amounted to **14.5 million** in 2019. Further, the data from 2019 indicated that **92.4 percent** of the international migrant workers are in Sub-Saharan Africa, with 1.2 million in North Africa.

The international law entitles all workers to protection from abuse and exploitation in all jurisdictions with no exception regardless of the type of the work they perform, whether it takes place in the formal or informal sectors of the economy, or whether the worker has an established right to work in the country concerned.

However, despite the existence of international and regional legal instruments, there are still gaps in protection of migrant workers at the national level as laws and standards relating to recruitment often fall short of protecting workers, especially migrant workers. Even when laws exist, implementation and enforcement are often weak. Recent reports show that the unprecedented conditions induced by Covid-19 exacerbated unfair practices in the world of

work. Therefore this joint ILO and AU initiative to deepen propagation of Fair Recruitment with the continental repertoire of labour and employment policy propositions would not have occurred at a timely period.

How do we define this phenomenon?

While there is no internationally agreed definition of the term 'fair recruitment,' it can generally be understood to mean recruitment carried out within the law, in line with international labour standards and with respect for human rights, without discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, national or legal status. It should be at no cost to workers and should protect them from exploitative situations.

Excellencies

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen

Over the last few decades, the system of recruitment for employment abroad within and from Africa has shifted from a primarily state-driven system to a market-driven system. While the private sector is better equipped to handle the recruitment of tens of thousands of workers, this shift to private, market-driven recruitment has given rise to many human and labour rights concerns. At the heart of the market-driven recruitment the ultimate purpose is profit-driven. . The recruitment landscape today in

Africa is increasingly becoming complex and involves a wide range of actors, both regulated and unregulated. This inevitably creates precarious conditions in the world of work which compromises adherence to consistent protection of workers.

While in many instances, recruitment is undertaken by public employment services and regulations. In many parts of the continent, however, recruitment through private employment agencies is on the rise. While private recruitment agencies can play a positive role in matching labour supply and demand, there is growing concern about exploitative recruitment practices and UNSCRUPULOUS EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES are on rampage., due to informal labour intermediaries and other actors operating outside of the legal framework. These perpetrators of unfair recruitment tend to primarily target low-skilled workers and often place them at risk of HUMAN TRAFFICKING and FORCED LABOUR.

Excellencies

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen

African migrant women, are at a disproportionate risk of facing abuses during recruitment and placement, in the countries of origin, transit, or destination. During preparation for departure,

women are sometimes detained by recruiting agents for training, after which they may be subjected to financial, physical, sexual or psychological abuse. Exploitative fees may be charged by recruiting agents, which sometimes cause women to suffer greater financial hardships and make them more dependent.

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Excellencies

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen

Excellences, distinguished ladies and gentlemen

Without a shadow of doubt this paints a bleak picture about the recruitment landscape, yet access to justice and complaints mechanisms may be restricted.

This means that African governments need to translate international standards into effective laws and regulations, and to implement and enforce them effectively. Segments of the population in particularly vulnerable situations, including women workers, migrant workers, domestic workers, workers in the informal economy and others, should be provided with additional protection against abuses.

In the spirit of the Agenda 2063, and geared towards the Africa We Want, the African Union Commission seizes this opportunity proclaim firm commitment to protecting the rights

of migrant workers during the migration process from recruitment, pre-departure, the journey, the immediate post-arrival period, throughout their stay, and during employment in countries of destination and upon return or onward movement and call on states and regional groupings outside the African continent to do the same.

I wish this meeting fruitful and productive deliberations