

**Opening Remarks by Ms. Mariama Cisse, Director, IOM Special Liaison
Office to the African Union Commission and UN Economic Commission for
Africa**

PAN AFRICAN FORUM ON MIGRATION (PAFoM)- 8:

**Conference on Bolstering Free Movement and Trade Nexus in AfCFTA:
Optimizing Benefits of Migration, Labour Migration for Development**

31st October - 2 November 2023

Royal Aria Convention Centre, Gaborone, Botswana

Excellency, Representative, Government of the Republic of Botswana

Representatives of AU Member States and RECs,

Representatives of the Diplomatic Corps,

Representatives of the African Union Commission,

Representatives of UN Agencies and International Organizations,

Ladies and gentlemen, esteemed colleagues, and distinguished guests,

It is a great pleasure to be here with you for the 8th Pan African Forum on Migration (PAFoM) Conference which is centered on distilling the importance of the migration, mobility and trade nexus within the context of the AfCFTA.

First and foremost, I would like to commend the Government of the Republic of Botswana and the African Union Commission for their concerted efforts and seamless organization of this meeting. PAFoM remains to be one of the most vibrant and focused migration dialogue processes in Africa. IOM is honored to have been part of this process since its inception and you can count on our support going forward.

Distinguished delegates,

It is imperative to note that migration is a positive phenomenon and should be harnessed for Africa's integration, unity, sustainable development, democratic governance, peace and security. **Hence, migration in Africa**

should be viewed as part of the broader agenda for economic integration and that of fostering intra-Africa trade and investment.

Issues of mobility and migration cut across different aspirations of the African Union Agenda 2063. More specifically, aspiration number (2) looks at the integration of the continent facilitated through the free movement of people, goods and services. Enhanced intra-Africa mobility for labour, business, tourism or education would benefit countries of destination as well as countries of origin who reap the benefits of increased remittances. **Experts highlight that the free movement of people is a quick win for the development of countries, regions and the continent as a whole.**

Allow me to applaud the progress made thus far by AU Member States in the implementation of the AfCFTA, which aims to eliminate trade barriers and boost intra-Africa trade.

With this though, it is important to stress that the full materialization of this objective can only be guaranteed by the complementary advancement in the liberalization of human mobility on the Continent. As such, within the broader African integration framework, the implementation of the Protocol to the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community Relating to the Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment (FMP) becomes urgent.

Allow me at this juncture to underscore 3 salient points for our deeper reflections:

1. Enhancing the Migration, Mobility and Trade Nexus

It is crucial to unpack the nexus between migration, mobility and trade. Migration and trade have long been treated independently as two separate policy areas. However, growing evidence is showing the well-established link between the two, confirming the positive effects of mobility along the trade continuum and its impacts on countries of origin and destination.

Bringing together and addressing the clustered “mobility and trade” areas of labour mobility, freedom of movement protocol, diaspora investment and trade, cross border traders and trade in services, in a coordinated, managed manner will help reap the benefits of the AfCFTA while simultaneously addressing national concerns related to mobility such as security, job creation for nationals amongst others.

2. Maximizing opportunities for regular pathways

Regular pathways can make migration safer and reduce unsafe and irregular migration, improve the capacity to identify who enters, transits through, and remains in a territory. They respond to labour market needs and provide access to decent work and life while also safeguarding against unethical and exploitative employment conditions and recruitment practices.

Enhancing regular pathways is a key priority for us at IOM and we are engaging with Member States and relevant stakeholders to harness the potential of migration and in order to tackle the irregular movement of people. **This is also in line with the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) which calls for enhancing the availability and flexibility of pathways for regular migration (Objective 5).**

3. Fostering results-based partnerships

The whole of government and whole of society approach to migration governance in Africa in general and to the migration-mobility-trade nexus in specific, cannot be over-emphasized. No one government can do this work alone – even as working across all relevant parts of government, and promoting synergies between different programmes and funding instruments is essential. **Hence, forward-looking and mutually beneficial partnerships is required to deliver on the promise of regular, safe and orderly migration.**

Conclusion

Excellencies, distinguished participants,

In closing, allow me to reiterate that mobility and migration contributes extensively to the prosperity, stability, and development of States. Furthermore, given the socio-economic and developmental effect of migration, mobility and trade on women and youth in Africa who are mostly

impacted, keeping them at the centre of policy decisions and programming is critical. **In light of this, leveraging these opportunities calls for a deliberate, strategic, collaborative and coordinated approach of all stakeholders.**

As IOM we have continued to advance the migration-mobility-trade nexus including through initiatives like the Joint Labour Migration Program (JLMP) which is jointly implemented by IOM, ILO and the AUC and has been designed to address the complex challenges and opportunities associated with labour migration in Africa. Furthermore we are collaborating with the AUC in accelerating its continental free movement of persons program.

Let me to reaffirm IOM's commitment and collaboration with the African Union Commission, RECs and AU Member States in meeting the required capacity and policy framework essential for freer movement of people, labour, goods and services and geared towards the attainment of Africa's integration.

I thank you very much for your kind attention and wish you a fruitful deliberation.