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***Statement on the Occasion of the Pan-African Forum on Migration
(PAFOM-8) Conference***

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

Royal Aria Convention Centre

Gaborone, Botswana

31st October – 2 November 2023

Distinguished Representative of the Republic of Botswana,

**Distinguished Representative of the Republic of Rwanda,
Chair of PAFOM-7,**

Distinguished Representative of SADC,

**Distinguished Chair of the STC on Social Development,
Labour & Employment,**

Excellency, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany,

Excellences, Ambassadors present,

Distinguished delegates, and esteemed guests,

All Protocol Observed,

I am honored to address this esteemed gathering of the 8th Pan-African Forum on Migration, in this beautiful country, Botswana.

Our gathering today is a testament to the commitment of African Union Member States to foster unity, cooperation, and prosperity on our Continent. The vision of the African Union as articulated in Agenda 2063, revolves around the principles of integration, free movement, and trade. These principles are the cornerstones of our development policy frameworks, and are more vital than ever before.

Distinguished delegates,

Today, as we explore the connections between migration, human mobility and trade, we must appreciate that Africa's diverse landscapes, cultures, and economies are intricately linked by the movement of people, goods, and services.

We must also consider how leveraging Intra-Africa mobility can unlock the immense potential of our people and our economies for socio-economic development and transformation.

The African Union's commitment to foster continental integration, economic growth, and human development has reached a pivotal moment with the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) that seeks to create the world's largest single market. This presents unprecedented opportunities for trade, investment, and prosperity for the African continent. However, the full potential of the AfCFTA can only be realized if we address its nexus with migration and human mobility.

Excellences,

The movement of people across borders is not only a fundamental human right, as enshrined in several of the AU and Regional Economic Communities' policy frameworks and instruments, but it also holds enormous economic promise. Labor migration, in particular, can be a powerful tool for economic development. By facilitating the movement of labor across borders, African Member States can meet labour market demands, bridge skills gaps, and enhance the productivity of their economies. Additionally, remittances sent by African migrants working abroad have the potential to boost household income, reduce poverty, and stimulate economic growth.

To harness these dividends, it is therefore imperative that we enhance labour mobility policies, harmonize qualifications and standards, and promote mutual recognition of skills and qualifications across the continent. By doing so, we can create a conducive environment for labour migration that benefits both the countries of origin and destination.

Furthermore, as we discuss the nexus between migration and trade, it is essential to consider how the movement of people contributes to the expansion of trade within the AfCFTA framework. When people move freely, ideas, cultures, and innovations move with them. This fosters greater economic exchange and cooperation, ultimately driving trade and economic growth.

Excellences,

We must therefore work together to break down barriers, both physical and regulatory, that hinder the movement of people and goods across borders.

The Intra-Africa mobility potential is vast. It not only facilitates the exchange of goods and services, but also creates opportunities for cultural exchange, technological transfer, and knowledge sharing.

We must prioritize the development of transport and communication infrastructure, as well as the implementation of simplified visa procedures to enhance mobility.

Excellences,

As I conclude, allow me to reiterate that as we deliberate on the migration/human mobility-trade nexus, we must keep in mind that Africa's journey towards sustainable development is inextricably linked to how effectively we leverage these interconnections. By embracing the principles of the AU Migration Policy Framework for Africa, the AU Free Movement Protocol, and fully exploiting the potential of the AfCFTA, we can create a continent where people, ideas, and commerce flow freely.

Together, we can achieve socio-economic development, reduce poverty, and build a more prosperous and united Africa. The time for action is now, and I look forward to the discussions and outcomes of this conference as we collectively chart a course for a brighter African future.

Excellences and distinguished delegates,

As I yield the floor, please join me in expressing our deepest gratitude to our host, the Republic of Botswana for accepting to hosting this meeting and courtesies afforded to all of us. We thank you, Botswana.

I wish all of us fruitful deliberations.

I thank you.