

- CONCEPT NOTE -

ROUNDTABLE ON INTRA-REGIONAL MIGRATION AND LABOUR MOBILITY WITHIN AFRICA

THEME: Enhancing capacities of RECs and Member States to facilitate Intra-regional Migration & Labour Mobility for Regional Integration and Economic Cooperation in Africa”

23 – 25 March, 2015; Kigali - Rwanda

Background:

Free movement of persons, goods and services has the potential to spark transformative development on the African continent yet faces several impediments despite the adoption of policies and decisions by the African Union (AU) to promote intra-regional migration and trade. The Roundtable on intra-regional migration and mobility within Africa aims to improve the awareness and understanding of the benefits that well managed migration and labour mobility, as powerful drivers of sustainable economic and social development, bring to countries of origin, transit and destination as well as to migrants themselves. It is expected that the knowledge shared and understanding gained at the roundtable will dispel myths about the negative impacts of free movement of persons and cross-border labour mobility in order to unlock opportunities for intra-regional cooperation for inclusive economic growth and sustainable development in Africa. It is envisaged that the outcomes of the Roundtable will stimulate and inspire African governments and AU member states who are yet to ratify the protocols on free movement of persons to consider setting time frames for their ratification.

A growing body of evidence suggests that the ratification of free movement protocols increases trade levels and boosts development. The experiences of the EAC and ECOWAS economic communities as well those of the European Union and the Union of South American States have shown that free movement of persons and goods has positive effects on economic development. However of the eight African Regional Economic Communities

(RECs), only 2 have fully ratified their protocols on free movement of persons. The African Union has adopted the Migration Policy Framework for Africa, to strengthen migration governance for regional economic integration and inclusive development. Furthermore, the AU has adopted an Action Plan to boost intra-African trade and a roadmap to fast-track the establishment of a continental free trade area (CfTA) by 2017, yet has witnessed only minimal progress on the ratification of free movement protocols by its member states.

Intra-regional migration and cross-border labour mobility still face several impediments, which has negatively impacted the level of trade in Africa. These include the lack of effective domestication and implementation of regional and international instruments, lack of mutual recognition of credentials and qualifications between and among countries, labor mobility is hampered by the absence of implementation of the protocol on free movement of persons and related mechanisms and the prevalence of rigid border formalities. Consequently, intra-African trade lags far behind other global regions. Over the past decade intra-African trade averaged 10 – 12%, whilst the average was 40% in North America, 40% in Asia and 63% in Western Europe. African countries therefore need to aggressively pursue comprehensive and harmonized regional trade policies as part of their collective development and transformation strategies in the context of regional integration.

Though expectations for the dismantling of restrictions of freedom of movement are high, it remains a contentious issue among many African governments due to security concerns and fear of being overwhelmed by the presence of irregular migrants and foreign workers. These concerns have led to restrictive immigration policies and tight border controls that have resulted in disastrous consequences including; exploitation and abuse of migrants rights, the perpetuation of human trafficking and smuggling by criminal networks, and the tragic loss of human lives as people undertake dangerous and illegal migration expeditions.

Building on the endorsement of the Special Session of the Labour and Social Affairs Commission in Windhoek (April 2014), the 24th Summit of the African Union held in January 2015, the AU adopted the AUC/ILO/IOM/ECA Joint Labour Migration Programme (JLMP) a strategic and flagship initiative in support of the implementation of the labour migration priority of the Ouaga + 10 process. While the region is now well equipped with a strategy (MPFA) and a politically validated programme of action (JLMP) spearheaded by the AUC with coordinated support from the ILO, IOM and UNECA, there is a renewed focus towards an operational roadmap.

Objectives:

The Roundtable on intra-regional migration and mobility within Africa aims to improve the awareness and understanding of the benefits that migration and labour mobility, as powerful drivers of sustainable economic and social development, bring to countries of origin, transit, and destination as well as to migrants themselves. The three-day roundtable will be held in Kigali, Rwanda from the 23 – 25 March, 2015; under the theme *"Enhancing capacities of RECs and Member States to facilitate Intra-regional Migration & Labour Mobility for Regional Integration and Economic Cooperation in Africa."* The main objective of this joint initiative is to encourage and facilitate free movement of persons within Africa with the potential to provide alternative legal channels of migration. The discussions are expected to result in policies and actions to unlock opportunities to deepen regional integration and economic cooperation for inclusive growth and sustainable development in Africa.

This Roundtable is a joint initiative of the African Union (AU) the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the Swiss government. It will bring together five senior officials and experts from each of the Secretariats and Member States of the eight Regional Economic

Communities (RECs) namely; The Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the East African Community (EAC), the Economic Community for Central African States (ECCAS), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) and the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA). The participants will be drawn from ministries and institutions responsible for Trade, Labour, Immigration, Regional Integration and National planning & development. The Roundtable will also invite experts and resource persons from key partners such as; AfDB, EU, ILO, IOM, UNCTAD, UNHCR, WEF, World Bank, WTO, UNECA as well as the academia, Civil Society, workers organization and the Private Sector.

The rationale for the roundtable is to provide a platform for a wide range of stakeholders to holistically evaluate the issue of intra-regional migration and mobility in Africa. It will also provide a forum for inter-state and intra-regional dialogue on migration and labour mobility and its implications for inclusive sustainable development in Africa. The incorporation of expertise and actors from a wide geographical, political and technical sphere will allow for a broader assessment of the challenges and opportunities of intra-regional migration and labour mobility in order to illuminate its potential to contribute to sustainable economic and social development whilst reducing the social and human impact of irregular migration including human trafficking and smuggling and tragic loss of human lives.

The Roundtable aims to share experiences, good practices and lessons, empirical data and evidence-based information on the benefits, opportunities and challenges of intra-regional migration and labour mobility from other regions including Western Europe and South America and its potential to boost intra-regional trade and investment. The consultations also aim to improve awareness and understanding that migration and mobility do not just benefit migrants alone but are powerful drivers of sustainable economic and social development including boosting intra-Africa trade in countries of origin, transit and destination. It also aims to enhance capacities for effective migration and border management, in order to encourage policies that facilitate free movement of persons at the regional level. The Roundtable will devote a special session for the awareness and sensitization of selected government officials towards an operational roadmap for the Joint Labour Migration Programme (JLMP) spearheaded by the AUC with the support of the ILO, IOM and UNECA.

Expected outcome(s):

It is expected that the knowledge shared and understanding gained at the roundtable will motivate and encourage African governments and AU member states to ratify the protocols on free movement of persons in order to unlock opportunities to deepen regional integration and economic cooperation for inclusive growth and sustainable development in Africa. It is also expected to dispel myths about the negative impacts of free movement of persons and cross-border labour mobility. It is envisaged that the Roundtable will empower decision and policy makers to adopt comprehensive approaches to migration management and to undertake necessary actions to facilitate intra-regional movement of people. As a result of the evidence-based information and lessons from the roundtable, governments will recognize the need to ratify the protocols on free movement of persons, and existing international conventions on the protection of migrant workers and a migration governance framework for better migration management. The outputs from the roundtable will be compiled into a report that outlines the different constraints to the ratification of the free movement protocol in the different countries and regions as well as recommendations and strategies on how they can be overcome. It is envisaged that the outcomes and recommendations of the Roundtable will feed into the report of the Special Technical Committee (STC) on Labour and Social Development in April, 2015 for consideration and endorsement by the Executive Council at the 27th Ordinary Session of the African Union.

Participants:

The Roundtable will take place in Kigali, Rwanda from the 23 – 25 March, 2015. About Sixty (60) Senior Officials and Experts from the AUC, RECs, AU member states, UN Agencies and International Organizations notably; AfDB, IOM, ILO, EU, World Bank, UNCTAD, UNHCR, WEF, UNECA, Swiss government, Development partners and other Co-sponsors. The Roundtable will also invite experts and resource persons from key partners, the academia, civil society, private sector and workers organisations.