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United Nations
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for Africa

-Concept Note-

Joint Annual Forum for Intra-Regional Consultations of Africa Regional Frameworks on Migration: Migration Dialogues (MDs) and Regional Consultative Processes (RCPs)

***Theme: “Enhancing capacities of Africa Regional Frameworks on Migration to
Facilitate Intra-Regional Labour Mobility, Free Movement of Persons and
Integrated Border Management”.***

16 – 18 September, 2015; Accra - Ghana

1.0 Executive Summary:

African governments recognize the positive contribution of migrants for inclusive growth and sustainable development. They also recognize that international migration is a multi-dimensional reality of major relevance for the development of countries of origin, transit and destination, which requires coherent and comprehensive responses. It is therefore important to underline the need to cooperate internationally to ensure safe, orderly and regular migration involving full respect for human rights and the humane treatment of migrants regardless of migration status,. Such cooperation should also strengthen the resilience of communities hosting refugees, particularly in developing countries. It is imperative therefore to underline the right of migrants to return to their country of citizenship.

However, the emphasis on addressing irregular migration has focused on security issues and the importance of migration as part of the broader national development agenda of the African continent has been neglected. Furthermore, a lack of policy coordination amongst countries and regions exacerbates migratory challenges both for countries of origin and destination who would be best served combining efforts to better deal with problems caused by irregular migration. We can no longer think about our economies, societies or cultures without thinking about human mobility because migration is inevitable, necessary and desirable when well governed.

To place migration in the broader context of African development and promote inter-state dialogue and intra/inter regional cooperation on migration amongst African Regional Economic Communities, the *Joint Annual Forum for Intra-Regional Consultations of Africa*

Regional Frameworks on Migration; particularly the Migration Dialogues (MDs) and Regional Consultative Processes (RCPs) will bring together stakeholders from across countries, regions and sectors to share their experiences with and solutions to important migration concerns. The first Forum will be hosted by the Government of Ghana in Accra from the 16th to 18th of September under the theme “Enhancing capacities of Africa Regional Frameworks on Migration to Facilitate Intra-Regional Labour Mobility, Free Movement of Persons and Integrated Border Management”.

2.0 Background:

African governments are aware that conflicts, poverty, poor governance, under development, lack of opportunities and environmental factors are amongst the underlying causes and drivers of migration and that to effectively manage migration, the root causes need to be addressed. Governments also recognize the continuing growth threat of illegal or irregular migration, and acknowledge that these movements occur within and from the continent in a context still marked by the inadequacy of institutional capacities of AU Member States to address the challenges individually and collectively.

African governments and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) have stepped up efforts to provide a comprehensive and balanced approach to migration that takes into account the realities of migration and current trends as well as linkages between migration and other key economic, social, political, economic, environmental and humanitarian issues. However, the emphasis on addressing irregular migration has been mainly on security considerations and has neglected broader development considerations and the potential to mainstream migration in development strategies.

The African Union adopted the African Common Position on Migration and Development in Banjul, Gambia in 2006 (EX.CL/Dec.305 (IX)) as a broad African consensus on issues of migration and development. The African Common Position on Migration and Development (ACPMD) underscored that African inter-state cooperation and dialogue can strengthen the capacity of States in migration management including the development of common approaches towards harmonization of policies, laws and strategies on migration. Within the framework of its adoption, the Executive Council appealed to the International Community to continue to collaborate in the implementation of and provide support towards the attainment of the objectives contained in the African Common Position on Migration and Development.

3.0 Rationale:

The Joint Annual Forum for Intra-Regional Consultations of Africa Regional Frameworks on Migration; including the Migration Dialogues (MDs) and Regional Consultative Processes (RCPs) therefore aims to promote and foster inter-state dialogue and intra / inter-regional cooperation on migration among African Regional Economic Communities (RECs), AU member states and Partners. In this regard, the annual forum will provide a platform for an all-inclusive, open, balanced and comprehensive conversation on migration issues by government officials from ministries and institutions with migration related functions and responsibilities. This will enable common understanding and policy coherence at the national, regional and continental level in order to find common and durable solutions to migration challenges of particular importance and concern to African

governments and partners in an informal and non-binding setting. The annual forum will also provide a platform for cross-fertilization and to strengthen the capacities of the MDs and RCPs in Africa notably; MIDWA (ECOWAS) MIDSA (SADC), IGAD-RCP (IGAD), MIDCAS (ECCAS) and COMESA-RCP (COMESA) which are at different stages of development¹.

The Africa regional frameworks on migration are geographically-based and closely linked to the RECs in order to address migration issues with the objective of facilitating information exchange, dialogue and cooperation among States (sometimes involving regional and international organizations and civil society); to build capacity in migration management. In this regard, the annual intra-regional consultations on migration will provide migration data and evidence-based information to validate draft migration policies, African Common Positions on specific migration issues and to make recommendations for consideration at AU Summits, IOM Council Sessions, Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) and the UN High Level Dialogue (HLD) on International Migration and Development.

4.0 Partnerships:

The Joint Intra-Regional Consultations of Africa Regional Frameworks on Migration (MDs) and (RCPs) is a joint initiative of the African Union Commission (AUC), International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) in collaboration with the Swiss Government. Interested and willing sponsors will be co-opted as a Co-sponsor of the annual event or for specific events. The hosting of the annual consultations will be rotated based on current Presidencies of RECs, Headquarters of RECs or willing African governments. In this regard, a Technical Secretariat will initially be established within IOM to ensure effective coordination, continuity and sustainability of the annual consultations.

5.0 The Accra Intra-Regional Consultation:

The First of the Joint Annual Forum for Intra-Regional Consultations of Africa Regional Frameworks on Migration will be hosted by the Government of Ghana from the 16-18 September, 2015 in Accra, Ghana. The three-day Conference will be held under the theme "Enhancing capacities of Africa Regional Frameworks on Migration to Facilitate Intra-Regional Labour Mobility, Free Movement of Persons and Integrated Border Management". The main objective of the Forum is to enhance capacities of the Africa Regional Frameworks on Migration notably; MIDWA, MIDSA, IGAD-RCP, MIDCAS and COMESA-RCP as well as EAC, CEN-SAD and Arab Maghreb Union (AMU/UMA to facilitate Intra-Regional Labour Mobility, Free Movement of Persons and Integrated Border Management through sharing of knowledge, information, good practices, experiences and lessons learnt. In addition, in light of ongoing efforts to negotiate and implement freer trade regimes within and between the RECs including through the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) initiative, a consolidation of

¹ MIDWA – Migration Dialogue for West African States (ECOWAS), MIDSA - Migration Dialogue for Southern Africa (SADC); IGAD-RCP – Intergovernmental Authority on Development; MIDCAS – Migration Dialogue for Central African States (ECCAS); COMESA-RCP – Common Market for Eastern & Southern Africa.

common approaches will facilitate efforts to liberalize trade in services and movement of business persons.

Though expectations for the dismantling of restrictions on freedom of movement are high, it remains a contentious issue among many African governments. Security concerns, fear of being overwhelmed by irregular migrants and foreign workers, and tensions with nationals, especially in periods of significant unemployment and socio-economic instabilities.. Additionally, governments are apprehensive about the impact of migrants on the national identities and socio-cultural dynamics of host communities.

Whilst countries of origin, transit and destination strive to comprehensively address these challenges, countries of origin have had limited success so far in their various strategies to reduce the outflow of migrants. Transit and destination countries struggle in coping with the large number of arrivals which often result in security and public health concerns; resentment from local populations and extreme pressure on border management as well as asylum systems. These concerns have led to restrictive immigration policies and tighter border controls that have resulted in disastrous consequences for several African governments and migrants including; exploitation and abuse of migrants rights, undermining the potential to boost intra-Africa trade, investment and tourism as well as the deployment of expatriate personnel from within and outside of the continent including recruitment and engagement of Africans in the diaspora.

Furthermore, with limited opportunities for regular migration, several categories of migrants resort to the use of unregulated routes, often employing the services of smugglers and unscrupulous middle men. Consequently, the criminal networks and enterprise of smuggling has assumed an increasingly brutal character with migrants facing extortion, torture, robbery, sexual violence, trafficking for a range of purposes, and in extreme cases death! While this illegal activity generates lucrative profits for smuggling and trafficking networks, it is also sadly often seen as the only access to better lives by migrants themselves.

The Accra forum will provide a platform for African regional institutions and partners to share information on current migration trends, patterns and dynamics, newly emerging issues and reliable migration data at the national, regional and continental level with particular focus on the migration situation in the Gulf of Aden and Mediterranean Region. It will also inter-alia;

- a) assess the status of implementation of the Protocols on free movement of persons of the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and the visa issuance regimes of African countries in order to facilitate the implementation of continent-wide visa free regimes;
- b) validate a draft Common Position for Africa on the migration situation;
- c) review a set of draft Recommendations for Labour Mobility and Free Movement of People in Africa for consideration by the CFTA Task force and negotiators as an input to the CFTA negotiations;
- d) make policy recommendations towards enhancing capacities to manage migration flows within the continent.

5.1 Expected Outputs / Outcomes:

It is expected that the the Accra Conference will inter-alia;

- a) Contribute to the implementation of the AU Assembly Declaration on Migration adopted at its 25th Ordinary Session in Johannesburg in June, 2015;
- b) Provide inputs towards the preparation of the Africa-EU Summit on Migration in Valletta, Malta in November, 2015;
- c) Increase knowledge, better understanding and enhanced capacities for effective immigration and border management of migration flows within the continent;
- d) Encourage African governments and RECs to take the necessary steps to ratify protocols on free movement of persons and to facilitate the implementation of continent-wide visa free regimes;
- e) Inspire African governments to review their visa issuance policies and to remove barriers to human mobility, trade, investment, tourism and deployment of expatriates;
- f) Provide draft Recommendations for the Mobility and Free Movement of people in Africa for consideration by the CFTA Task force and negotiators as an input to the CFTA negotiations.
- g) Facilitate orderly, safe, regular migration and mobility of people including through the implementation of planned well-managed migration of policies;
- h) Provide draft Policy Recommendations for consideration and adoption at the 26th Ordinary Session of the African Union in January, 2016.

6.0 Participants:

The Accra Forum is the first Intra-Regional Consultation of Africa Regional Frameworks on Migration. It is a joint initiative of the Government of Ghana, African Union Commission (AUC), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) in collaboration with the Swiss Government. A total of about eighty (80) high-level officials are expected to participate. The Forum will bring together five senior officials and experts from each of the Secretariats and Member States of the eight Regional Economic Communities (RECs) namely; CEN-SAD, COMESA, EAC, ECCAS, ECOWAS, IGAD, SADC and UMA.

The five senior officials are expected to be drawn from ministries and institutions responsible for Immigration, Trade, Labour, Foreign Affairs & Regional Integration, National Planning & Development, Gender and Youth and Consular Affairs. 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, League of Arab States (LAS), Swiss government, Development partners and other Co-sponsors. It will also invite resource persons from key partners and migration processes such as the Tripoli and Rabat Processes, the academia, civil society, private sector, Consular Officers, Parliamentarians, Diaspora and Workers Organizations.

