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ROUNDTABLE ON INTRA-REGIONAL MIGRATION AND LABOUR MOBILITY WITHIN AFRICA

FINAL MEDIA RELEASE

RECs and African States agreed on the necessity to prioritize migration to unleash African development potential at the Roundtable on intra-regional migration and labour mobility within Africa



KIGALI, 25 March 2015- The Roundtable on intra-regional migration and labour mobility Africa in Kigali, Rwanda closed with a strong recommendation to prioritize migration issues in the Africa's development Agenda. During this three day meeting, about 90 participants from Regional Economic Communities, African States, International Organisations, Civil society and academia discussed on the different policy initiatives and mechanisms to establish in order to

unleash the potential of migration and labour mobility within Africa.

The prioritization of intra-regional migration forms part of the different recommendations arising from this historic roundtable and first of its kind on the continent. Indeed, for an inclusive development process, migrants should be at the centre of the discussions, particularly in a context where integration is a prerequisite for a stronger and better Africa. These recommendations also include the ratification and domestication of international and regional standards and frameworks on Free Movement by Governments; the elaboration of a roadmap the implementation of the Joint Labour Migration Programme (JLMP) which will contribute to dispel myths about negative impacts of free movement of persons and cross border mobility and building Capacities for effective migration and Border management;

the enhancement of capacity building of the labour institutions, social partners, civil society as well as other governmental stakeholders to govern and facilitate free movement, labour and mobility; sharing of data, research, knowledge and information among stakeholders or the general public more widely; the involvement of different stakeholders, especially labour institutions and labour society in law-making, policy formulation and administration of labour migration and mobility; mobilizing advocacy and political will as urgent need and essential task to make anything happen in law, policy and practical administration and raising public awareness, bringing the public along this process of prioritisation of migration and labour mobility. The recommendations of this meeting will be submitted for consideration at the African Union/ Specialised Technical Committee (AU/STC) Ministerial meeting on Social Development, Labour and Employment in April 2015.

The Director of political affairs of the African Union Commission (AUC), Dr. Matlosa Khabele declared on behalf of the African Union that the deliberations of this meeting will add a lot of value as the Union implements its vision of Agenda 2063 and the Common Position of Africa on the Post-2015 development agenda. He highlighted the necessity for the continent to consider the issue of female migrants, in line with the African Union Year of women empowerment and development towards Agenda 2063. The dedication of the year 2016 to human rights, with a special focus on women rights will aimed to emphasize on the importance of setting a development agenda in all sectors including migration and labour mobility through a gender approach. “If we sustain this momentum and we encourage all the RECs to develop and implement protocols and that the AU also develops a continental Protocol framework, we will be able to create an environment on our continent where Africans are able to move freely and in that regard it will contribute in that of reducing migrations outside the continent and we will contribute at reducing risks our people take trying to cross the Sahara desert, and the Mediterranean Sea.”, concluded Dr. Matlosa Khabele.

Chief of the ILO Regional Programme Unit for Africa, Ms Cynthia Samuel-Olonjuwon remarked that the exemplary participation of all the 8 RECs was a clear demonstration of the importance of labour mobility for regional integration and development and the contributions made revealed a clear determination to move from rhetoric to action. She lauded the actions taken by the Government of Rwanda for its exemplary policy orientation, practices and implementation arrangements anchored on the appreciation of migrants as potential development facilitators. Rwanda is a worthy champion that has moved from just ‘talking’ to concrete action to facilitate labour mobility; particularly for Africans. Ms Samuel-Olonjuwon also commended ECOWAS for the very significant achievements which demystify free movement by demonstrating its feasibility and developmental benefits.

The ILO Representative noted that the issues raised during the Roundtable reinforce the relevance of the AUC/ILO/IOM/ECA Joint Labour Migration Programme to address the labour migration data gaps, mutual recognition of qualifications; portability of social security benefits; inclusive institutional arrangements to facilitate effective dialogue among key

stakeholders within RECs as well as building the capacities of the concerned key player. She reiterated the ILO's commitment to continue supporting the AUC and RECs through the JLMP in close partnership with the IOM and the ECA. She ended by commending the AUC for the very consistent and effective leadership which has contributed to the success of the Roundtable and the joint initiative.

Senior regional Advisor for Sub-Saharan Africa at the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), Mr. Charles Kwenin pointed out the fact that the Kigali Meeting gave provide a framework for a better understanding and awareness of intra-regional mobility and dispel some of the myths about migration and cross-border mobility. He also commended the importance of the spirit of partnership and cooperation among the partners in support of the AU programs and policies. For Mr. Kwenin, this meeting will definitely to inform governments and RECs to ratify the existing protocols which have not been ratified and those which are yet to be developed.

The meeting will close on the 26th March 2015 with the 2nd AUC-REC Technical Meeting on Labour Migration. The main objective of this technical Meeting is to agree on an indicative plan for the implementation of the Joint Labour Migration programme in the different RECs.

Background information

This first initiative of this kind, held under the theme “Enhancing capacities of RECs and member States to facilitate Intra-Regional Migration and Labour Mobility for Regional Integration and Economic Cooperation” aimed to encourage and facilitate free movement within Africa with the potential to unlock opportunities to deepen regional integration and economic cooperation on the continent. The prioritisation of the free movement of persons, goods and services in the process of development is very critical, notably in the framework of the Agenda 2063 which intend to establish the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) by June 2015, the establishment of an African passport by 2018 across the continent. Accordingly, the roundtable was an opportunity to share experiences, good practices and lessons on the opportunities and challenges RECs and African states need to address in order to take advantage of migration and labour mobility.

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