

Elements for Video record of Statement of H.E the Commissioner for the African region
Online consultation on the GFMD 2020

Tuesday 12 May 2020,

Dear Experts of the AU Member States

Dear Participants

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to congratulate the UAE as the Chair of the GFMD 2020, for its innovative approach on the preparation of the GFMD Summit in January 2021 in Dubai. This approach is the rationale of the Regional Consultation in Africa we are launching today.

The African Union, the Regional Economic Communities, our citizens in Africa and in the Diaspora, are eager to leverage this process and set the key issues and priorities for us regarding the global dialogue on migration and labour migration.

The focus of the theme of the GFMD 2020 is on labour migration and development, as it transpired from the preliminary vision for the UAE's 2020 Chairmanship, and from the overarching theme of "The Future of Human Mobility: Innovative Partnerships for Sustainable Development".

The African region has opted to organize its consultation on three sub – themes, essential for the continent's development.

Our first priority is on the Governance of Labour Migration in the Context of Changing Employment Landscapes: Africa foresees an effective human-centred approach to be the cornerstone of international cooperation on migration and labour migration governance.

An effective response to changing employment landscapes requires a whole-of-society and whole-of-government approach. The AU approach involves the key stakeholders in all aspects of the labour migration governance, from the policy formulation process to the implementation and monitoring and evaluation.

These stakeholders are represented by the Member States (governments) as well as non-state actors which include Civil Society Organizations and Social partners' organizations, diaspora organizations representing the 6th Region of Africa, for a participatory and effective policy dialogue processes.

To achieve this imperative Africa will endeavor to establish a regional multilateral labour migration cooperation within the continent. We also will engage in dialogue with other regions to establish multilateral inter-regional labour migration cooperation platforms, as requested by the AU Constituents.

This will contribute to having and enhancing regular migration pathways, in line with the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

Our second priority is on skilling migrants for employment: Africa has a large proportion of unskilled or low skilled migrant workers, majority of whom are either involved in informal activities or. Which means that most African migrant workers are found in the low end of the economy in countries of destination. This can be attributed to brain waste in both the countries of origin and destination.

This calls for the expansion of skills recognition mechanisms in bilateral and multilateral frameworks. Furthermore, capacities are needed to develop skills forecasting and mapping at the level of the Regional Economic Communities.

The adoption of the African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF) could be a reference point for all African countries to link their qualifications and enhance comparability and transparency of qualifications, thus building the basis of an effective mobility of skills within the continent, and perhaps beyond.

Recognition mechanisms tend to be most effective when developed through social dialogue, involving governments, employers' and workers' organizations and education and training institutions.

In addition, governments must invest in working together with African policy makers to expand opportunities for skilling and upskilling of African migrant workers as this improves their chances of moving from the informal to the formal sector, to better remunerated jobs.

.Africa will use the Global Compact recognized mechanism of Global Skills Partnerships to negotiate win-win skills frameworks with the regions and countries of destination. This will entail external funding on occupations and skills needed in countries of destination, to avoid depleting human resources needed for development on the continent.

Our third priority is to see better protection of migrants and migrant workers, respecting their rights and informing them on their rights: We ask that institutions working on labour migration, and particularly the Private Placement Agencies, to be more regulated and assisted to enforce the regulation.

We recognize that unfair and unethical recruitment breeds exploitation, as well as the gaps in international placement processes in both countries of origin and destination.

Therefore, it is important that stakeholders explore and expand the scope of Bilateral Labour Migration Agreements (BLMAs) to other skills, beyond the current focus on domestic migrant workers. Provisions related to the recruitment process as well as redressal mechanisms should be included in BLMAs.

Non-State Actors, including social partners and Civil Society Organizations, are very instrumental in the promotion and protection of the migrants. Equipped with the appropriate capacity and empowerment, they can upscale their services for the benefit of the migrants.

In conclusion, it is essential for the Africa to optimize the partnerships mechanisms and leverage on the potential of strategic migration management in terms of human capital, remittances, etc.

The World bank predicts a decline of 23.1 percent of remittances flow to Sub-Saharan Africa due to the effect of the Coronavirus pandemic in US, Europe, Middle East and China.

In the current COVID-19 context, we foresee challenges for Africa in keeping the health professionals, considering the fact that there could be a massive “pull” of health workers to developed countries.

Special attention should be given to the protection of the vulnerable migrant workers especially undocumented migrants who are subjected to poor living conditions and face difficulties in accessing healthcare, food and medicine.

Measures should be put in place to address job losses issues, forced repatriations, increased discrimination, undue securitization of unarmed irregular migrants and xenophobia against migrant workers.

This is a sector where Africa can engage in Win-Win Skills Partnerships which will preserve and improve the health workforce. Policies which promote brain circulation, involving skills transfer by the diaspora will be critical at this time.

In our quest to work together with the relevant stakeholders in forging ahead with the migration for development discourse into the Africa we want, we seek that the African perspective can be understood and effectively managed.

I wish you all successful meeting and look forward to the outcomes of your consultations.

Thank you.