

AU Opening Plenaries, 12 May.

- Good morning, good afternoon everyone,
- It is my privilege to open the GFMD 2020 Regional Consultations with this first plenary in a series of sessions that are co-hosted and co-Chaired by the African Union Commission for Social Affairs.
- I am also honored to welcome, on behalf of all of you, Her Excellency Commissioner Amira El Fadil, who will co-chair this session and share with us, in a few moments, the African Union's perspectives on the three themes under discussion. Welcome Your Excellency.
- The UAE Chair very much hopes that Africa's Regional Consultations will be a prelude to wider engagement by African Member States and African stakeholders in the GFMD, not only during the next few months and at the Summit in Dubai, but also beyond.
- Let me take a moment to welcome all our panelists: our three distinguished Thematic Leads, Michele Klein-Solomon of IOM, Michelle Leighton of ILO and John Bingham an **Independent Consultant, International Migration, and Geneva representative of the NGO Committee on Migration/New York**. We also have with us **Jacqueline Mugo**, representing the GFMD Business Mechanism, **Mamadou Goita**, representing Civil Society, and **Thembisile Phumelele Nkadimeng** representing the Mayoral Mechanism. A warm welcome to you all.
- All three thematic tracks that were selected for Africa's consultations have taken on a new dimension with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and in view of the impact it has had on Migrants, Migration and Development.

- Real gaps in the protection of migrants have since become evident and they solicit our collective reflection on how best to address them and what lessons are learned;
- The role of skilled migrants in the recovery efforts, the impact of the pandemic on the future of work and how labor migration can continue to be leveraged for development are questions that the GFMD is uniquely positioned to reflect on and articulate answers to.
- So, let us start in earnest and let me ask Her Excellency the Commissioner to take the floor at this time.