



**MINISTRY OF LABOUR
OFFICE OF THE CABINET SECRETARY**

REMARKS

BY

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CABINET SECRETARY

MINISTRY OF LABOUR

**DURING THE EAC REGIONAL CONFERENCE
TO ESTABLISH A REGIONAL CONSULTATIVE PROCESS
ON MIGRATION**

31st March, 2022

Honorable Ministers,

Regional Director IOM

Delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good After noon

Honorable Ministers,

It is my pleasure to welcome you all this afternoon, for this Regional Consultative process on Migration, as a follow-up to the Kigali meeting. Let me start by thanking the EAC secretariate for facilitating the previous meetings in Arusha and Dar-salaam and IOM for facilitating this meeting, let me also thank you Ministers and your delegations for accepting our invitation to attend this meeting here in Nairobi.

Honorable Ministers,

The people of East Africa have been migrating from one locality to another from as early as the late 800 AD when traders from the Arab world started visiting our coastal town. Since then, our people have been migrating within and outside our region for either search of better economic prospect, to further their education, and sadly to run aware from civil conflicts and natural disasters like draught and famine.

With the advent of free market economy, our people continued to interact with each through trade either by use of currency or even barter trade, especially in our border towns. For majority of the border communities, restricting them to a country border has therefore remained a challenge because their families are mostly found on each side of our borders.

To make movement of our people much easier, our founding fathers found it necessary create EAC in 1967, even though it later died. However, the vision and aspirations for which it was originally established never died and it was for this reason that in 1999 EAC was reborn.

This new EAC, has now grown with the addition of new members to what it is today, we are therefore happy to welcome our newest Members, The democratic Republic of Congo, into our fold.

As a region we have come from far, and today we have a common EAC passport, going across the border is much easier than before. We have witnessed progressively that member states are easing restrictions on movement of labour and by so doing we are facilitating movement of people, labour, goods and service, and promoted tourism.

Hon Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As members of EAC, we recognize the need and importance of allowing our people to move and interact with each other. To facilitate this movement all the countries within EAC agreed to adopt measure to achieve free movement of person, good and services among others, through the establishment of the EAC common market protocol.

My appeal is for Member states to implement this protocol, and avoid tendencies that restrict or hinder our people from moving freely within the region, of course being mindful of our security concerns.

Even as we encourage our people to freely migrate, we recognize that, migration journey within and out of African has faced challenges. We have witnessed migrants transiting to Europe and other parts of Africa, through illegal channels.

This underground migration has created a lucrative market for human smuggling in some migratory corridors, and has become a source of illegal funds which have been used to even destabilize some countries. We must therefore take concerted efforts to streamline migration in our continent to take advantage of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement, which emphasizes the reduction of tariffs and non-tariff barriers, and the facilitation of free movement of people and labour, right of residence, right of establishment, and investment.

We need to be cognizance of the fact that, as Africa population continues to grow, our youth continues to migrate to cities and abroad to seek for education and work opportunities. This therefore means that, migration flows, is likely to continue into the foreseeable future, and as leaders within this sector, we must quickly find solutions within our Region, to facilitate this movement so that our countries can benefit from migration.

Honorable Ministers, Ladies and gentlemen,

Narrowing down to Labour migration, I have consistently emphasized that we are witnessing a new scramble for Africa, this time not for our natural resources but for our Labour, and for our continent to receive maximum benefit from Labour Migration, we must as a matter of necessity approach the global labour market as a bloc. This way we will be in a better position to negotiate for better terms of services for our migrants' workers and to ensure that their rights and welfare is protected.

It is true that labour migration has immense socio-economic benefits to both countries of origin and destination. It is a source of employment and livelihoods for the migrant workers, addresses skills gaps in destination countries and brings in the much-needed remittances to migrants' countries of origin. It is also one of the main avenues of technology and skills-transfer between countries. However, for Africa to benefit from Labour Migration, we must remain united and approach the destination countries as a bloc.

But even as we approach the global market, we need to open up our borders to each other. There are numerous opportunities that we can all exploit in Africa, if we opened our borders to each other and allowed free movement of persons and labour.

One of the main reasons why we are not in a position to benefit from opportunities that exist in Africa, is because of lack of up-to-date labour market information. It is very difficult to know skills in high demand and skills in surplus in our individual countries. We therefore need to prioritize gathering of labour market data, and preparation of Key labour market indicators by individual countries. This is the only way that we will be in a position to make decision based on facts, as we promote intra Africa migration.

Honorable Ministers, Ladies and gentlemen,

Like most developing countries, Kenya continues to experience migration of workers to and from other countries. Currently, approximately 4 million Kenyans live and work in the diaspora, remitting USD 3.7 Billion in 2021, and hence becoming Kenya's highest foreign exchange earner.

In realization of the immense benefits of labour migration, Kenya has drafted a National Policy on Labour Migration, which seeks to establish a mechanism to promote inclusive and sustainable development through safe, orderly and productive labour migration. We have also developed a Right-Based Model BLA guidelines with support from ILO to extend rights and labour protection to Kenyan Migrant Workers.

In addition, with the support of IOM, Kenya is training Private Recruitment Agencies on International Recruitment Integrity System (IRIS) standards; has put in place a comprehensive pre-departure and orientation programme for migrant workers; automated the process of registration of Private Employment Agencies; enhanced Consular and Labour attaches Services to Kenyan Migrant Workers; and has started the process of establishing of Kenyan Migrant Workers Welfare Fund. All these initiatives are meant to safeguard labour migration.

While Kenya has done its part to promote migration, this forum is a good opportunity for member states to share experiences of good labour migration governance practices; share strategies in use in collecting Labour migration data and information; share practices in development of model Bilateral Labour Agreements; develop modalities of ensuring portability of social security benefits; ensure mechanism and harmonized policies of establishment of comprehensive social protection schemes for the migrant workers within the region; explore possibility of sharing consular services in all regions of the world as each brothers keepers and also share lessons learn in handling of the handling of Covid-19 pandemic.

Honorable Ministers, Ladies and gentlemen

As I close, allow me to say that the establishment of this regional consultative process, is timely and Kenya will support it, and there wish to thank you all for attending thin meeting.

Let me also once again thank the EAC secretariate led by its Secretary General for organizing this and the other three previous meeting in Arusha, Dar-e-salaam and Kigali, and IOM for the financial and technical support, you are truly our valued partner. Finally, let me invite you all to imagine a future, a future when the whole Africa will be a **‘One continent and One people’**

Thank You all and God bless you all