



MINISTRY OF LABOUR
OFFICE OF THE CABINET SECRETARY

REMARKS BY

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MINISTRY OF LABOUR

**DURING THE EAC FORUM FOR MINISTER
RESPONSIBLE FOR LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT**

IN

TANZANIA

ON 29TH OCTOBER, 2021

**Fellow Ministers in charge of Labour and Employment in EAC
Region;
EAC Executive Secretary,
Other Distinguished Guest**

Good Morning,

I am delighted to join you all for the 5th EAC Forum for Ministers responsible for Labour and employment to deliberate on various issues affecting our region on labour and employment.

Honourable Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen

Let me start by thanking the EAC Secretariat for organizing this valuable meeting. I note that the last time the Forum was more than 12 year ago.

I also wish to thank all Partner States for accepting invitations to this forum and participants in particular for taking time to contribute to the various Agenda items discussed.

The main purpose of this Session is to receive and consider the report of the Principal /Permanent/Under Secretaries. I am informed that the Senior Officials presented their Report to the Principal/Permanent/Under Secretaries who adopted it with amendments.

May I thank all of you for the valiant effort and sacrifices in preparing the report for our consideration today.

Kathleen O'Connor, a clinical professor in organization behaviour says that, the COVID-19 pandemic has called into focus the importance of visible leadership, a leadership that requires one to rally people to move in the right direction by being more motivational and less directional.”

As leaders in the labour and employment sector, we have a challenge to direct our people to building back a better future and that is why this meeting today is important for all of us in the EAC.

As Ministers responsible for Labour and Employment within our region, we need to document lessons, we have learnt from the COVID -19 pandemic which has impacted free movement of persons and by extension free movement of goods and services.

Allow me to share with you my thoughts on the key issues which we need to take into consideration as Minister.

First is the need to harmonize our Labour laws so that we can allow free movement of workers within our region. This will help us as a region to address the unemployment, which is largely a challenge in our region especially among the youth.

Second we need to enhance the use of ICT in collection, analysis and dissemination of Labour market information, this will make it possible to have comparable Labour Market Indicators within the region. The starting point is for each partner state to have an active and up to-date Labour market information System.

Third, it is true that migration can be a positive force for development, when supported by the right set of policies such as bilateral labour migration agreements (BLMAs) between countries of origin and countries of destination.

We need to take a concerted effort towards this as a region and negotiate for decent work for our Labour migrants to other regions especially in the view of the negative impacts that COVID-19 has had on Labour Migration.

We are now seeing a new scramble for Africa, this time not for our land, but for our skills. We have to therefore negotiate as a bloc for our people to receive maximum benefit from employment opportunities in foreign markets.

The starting point is for all of us to adopt the model rights based Bilateral Labour Agreement guidelines, and accept to approach the available markets as a bloc.

Fourthly, we need to align our social security laws so that we extend access to social protection and portability of benefits for workers across the region. This is not only the right thing to do, but it is also humane.

Lack of portability of social security benefits within the EAC partner states, robs migrant workers the potential benefits of employment.

It is therefore my hope that EAC will develop a mechanism to ensure that migrant workers benefit from their savings.

Fifth, I wish to propose that as a region, we consider the possibility of sharing Honorary Consuls services in key labour destination countries to improve the provision of necessary consular assistance and protection of the social, economic, labour and human rights of our migrant workers.

Sixth, I also wish to encourage all member countries to promote ethical recruitment of migrant workers according to international standards and principles of International Migration Law.

Honourable Ministers

Climate change has had a negative impact on livelihoods and therefore the labour market. The EAC partner states need to take this into consideration, and put in place relevant measures for her citizens, these measure my include enhancing the agricultural value chains, and strengthening the SMEs to adopt the green economy and other Technological emerging trends.

In the labour sector we need to come up with mitigation measure that SMEs will upscale their skills and adopt appropriate technology to exploit the environment for improved livelihoods, while at the same time conserving it.

I note with delight that this forum has discussed issues pertaining to decent work Agenda. I wish to take this opportunity to urge the partner state to implement this Agenda, as it will help us improve the labour force and create appropriate aptitudes for the work arena.

Honourable Minister,

I have highlighted just a few of the issues I feel are important for our region in the Labour and Employment sector. Allow me to mention that one more issue that is of urgency is Labour Migration.

Despite the benefits, of labour migration there are some challenges that continue to erode the gains that would have been realized in this sector.

These include: infringement of migrant's rights; trafficking in persons; smuggling of persons and child labour; forced returns; inadequate return and reintegration frameworks; high cost of remittances; gender

segregation; restrictions on freedom of expression and movement, amongst other.

Honourable Ministers,

As I conclude, May I take this opportunity to inform you of other initiatives we are taking in the Eastern and Horn Africa region to address the labour and employment Agenda.

To this end, the Republic of Kenya hosted Ministers of Labour from 11 countries in the region in January 2020 namely; Uganda, Tanzania, South Sudan, Somalia, Rwanda, Burundi, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Sudan and Eritrea.

The meeting was supported by IOM and ILO and in attendance were representatives of AU, EAC and IGAD.

Ensuing from this meeting was a Communique and a Call-to-Action Priorities which established, the Regional Ministerial Forum on Migration **(RMFM)**.

The key role of RMFM is to harmonize Labour Migration Policies in East and Horn of Africa, under ‘ ***a united approach on safe, regular and humane labour migration***’

Honourable Ministers,

Allow me to give a snapshot of the progress of **RMFM**

1. We have so far held two (2) Regional Ministerial Forum on Migration meetings both physical and virtual.
2. Three (3) Technical Advisory committees chaired by Permanent/Principal Secretaries both Physical and virtual.
3. Development and adoption the Operating Modalities, Roadmap on Implementation of the Regional Ministerial

Forum objectives and Terms of Reference for the Technical Advisory Committee.

4. Each country has established a National Technical Advisory Committee, which is chaired by Permanent Secretaries/Principal Secretaries/Directors in the Ministries responsible for Labour Migration.
5. Held two consultative meetings with the Ambassadors of the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries to discuss a number of issues ranging from recruitment process and protection of migrant workers from the region.

Honourable Ministers, Let me make my clarion call and request that we implement the Communiqué on Regional Ministerial Forum on Harmonizing Labour Migration Policies in East and Horn of Africa signed in 2020 in Nairobi.

Honourable Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen

I wish to take this opportunity to thank the ILO and the EAC Secretariat for organizing this timely forum so that we begin to dialogue on challenges, and existing opportunities in our region and to also devise strategies to promote decent and productive work opportunities for our people.

Finally, to be able to move the Labour and Employment sector to the next level, it is important, for EAC Secretariat to elevate this Forum to a Sectoral Council.

Thank You.