



**MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL PROTECTION
OFFICE OF THE CABINET SECRETARY**

REMARKS

BY HON. FLORENCE BORE

**CABINET SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND SOCIAL
PROTECTION DURING THE BILATERAL MEETING
BETWEEN THE MINISTRY AND THE INTERNATIONAL
ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION (IOM)**

HELD AT THE SAROVA PANAFRIC HOTEL, NAIROBI

THURSDAY, 19TH JANUARY, 2023

Hon. Geoffrey Kaituko, The Principal Secretary, State Department for Labour and Skills Development,

Ms. Susan Demache, Chief of Mission, International Organization for Migration (IOM) Kenya Country Office

Eng. Stephen Ogenga, Director General, National Industrial Training Authority (NITA)

Mrs. Edith Okoki, Ag. Director General, National Employment Authority (NEA)

Senior staff from the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection

Staff from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Kenya Country Office

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning?

It's a pleasure to join you today in this breakfast meeting as we appreciate our collaborations and deliberate on various issues regarding labour migration management. I welcome you all to this meeting between my Ministry and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

First and foremost, allow me to thank the leadership of the IOM Kenya Country Office for the congratulatory messages extended to me and my Principal Secretary **Mr. Geoffrey Kaituko** following our recent appointments by His Excellency the President to our current responsibilities. This meeting is therefore timely and will provide us with a ample opportunity to be apprised on the implementation of the joint projects and programmes with the IOM, and further enable us to deliberate on strategies to improve them.

I appreciate our invaluable partnerships which has existed for decades. I am well briefed that the IOM collaboration with my Ministry, especially in the area of labour migration, has achieved a number of milestones. I therefore commit to advancing this partnership.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Labour migration has significant socio-economic benefits to our country in terms of skills transfer, remittances and relieves the unemployment pressure in the local labour market especially among the youth. As witnessed over the years, the number of Kenyans migrating to other countries has significantly increased with the bulk being the youths who are seeking employment opportunities in international markets where their skills are in demand.

The benefits of labour migration have steadily increased over time. For instance, remittances inflows into Kenya in the last two decades have significantly increased. In 2004, the remittances were USD 104.6 Million. It rose to USD 1.29 Billion in 2013 then to USD 3.72

Billion in 2021 and recently USD 4.023 Billion in 2022. In the year 2021, Kenya was the ranked 4th highest remittance-recipient countries in Africa behind Egypt, Nigeria and Ghana. Diaspora remittances is currently Kenya's highest foreign exchange earner having overtaken tea, coffee and tourism.

Kenya has also seen an increase in the number of migrant workers returning to engage in economic activities thus transferring valuable skills gained during employment abroad. This has especially been witnessed in the areas of ICT and the Digital Economy, Agriculture, Building and Construction.

The importance of Kenyans in the Diaspora to this country has been demonstrated by the Government through the establishment of the State Department for Diaspora Affairs in the Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs. I am glad to inform you that my Ministry is already

collaborating with this new State Department in exploring ways of improving the welfare of Kenyan migrant workers abroad and on other key labour migration issues.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Last week I was privileged to lead a delegation of the Government of Kenya to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for bilateral discussions on labour migration. This was an eye-opener and highly informative visit. It provided us with insights which we could not have been realized without physically interacting with the various institutions that we visited.

My delegation held meetings with Officials of the Kenyan Embassy in Riyadh, the Kingdom Saudi Arabia's: Ministry of Human Resource and Social Development, the Ministry of Health, Coordination Council for Recruitment Companies (CCRC) an Association of Private Recruitment Agencies in Saudi, Call Centre, the Embassy of the

Philippines in Riyadh, Sakan which is an holding centre for distressed migrant workers, Human resource recruitment companies, and Kenyans living and working in Saudi Arabia.

While I have to admit that we have long held the overall view that our counterparts are to blame for a lot of the challenges we face as a result of recruitment of Kenyan labour to Saudi Arabia, it has become clear to me from the visit that we also have a lot to do in order to streamline labour migration between our two countries.

From the meetings, we learnt that while there are still major challenges affecting Kenyan workers, the Saudi Government has made significant efforts aimed at addressing these challenges. These initiatives include legal and policy reforms to improve welfare of migrant workers; development and integration of systems for managing the entire labour migration cycle (from the registration of migrant workers,

to their tour of duty and finally their return to countries of origin such as Kenya); and collaborating with the private sector in labour migration management.

As a result of the visit, I have personally picked four Priority Areas on which I want us to focus upon as a sector in order to address challenges related to labour migration in Kenya. These are:

- a. strengthening the capacities and monitoring operations of Private Recruitment Agencies;
- b. review and complete overhaul of pre-departure training;
- c. restructuring of the attestation and management of foreign contracts; and
- d. development and integration of labour migration information management systems.

This should inform our future implementation of joint programmes. I have listened to the three presentations by staff from the Ministry and IOM and I am glad to note that

they resonate very well with the Priority Areas I have just highlighted. We have witnessed progress on these broad goals by the Saudi Government and I have no doubt in my mind that we can even do better as a country if we commit and remain steadfast to the course.

Ladies and Gentlemen

The case of Saudi Arabia is just a reflection of the overall picture of labour migration in Kenya. The lessons we learnt from our visit can be contextualized and replicated in addressing other labour migration issues with other countries and regions.

The support being extended towards development of the National Policy on Labour Migration and the Labour Migration Management Bill in particular is very welcome. These policy and legal frameworks have been marked by the current Government as

High Priority and are indeed receiving attention from the Highest Office in the country.

I want to direct the team from the Ministry handling the two documents to fast-track their approval and legislation in order to facilitate the implementation process by the beginning of July this year. I remain committed to supporting the processes particularly in ensuring the agenda succeed ones presented to the Cabinet and in lobbying for support from the two houses of Parliament for their legislation.

I also note the support IOM has extended towards building capacities and enhancing ethical practices and accountability of Private Recruitment Agencies in Kenya. I want us to focus on this challenge since it is a major source of distress to our migrant workers abroad.

I request the IOM to develop a framework of support towards ensuring that all licenced Private Recruitment Agencies in Kenya are certified under the International Ethical Recruitment Standards (IRIS) and ensure they are monitored on a regular basis to adhere to the Standards.

I appreciate the support of the IOM towards enhancing capacities on labour migration data collection, analysis and sharing to support labour migration governance in East and Horn of Africa. From my experiences during the visit to Saudi Arabia, proper management of data and information on labour migration is a great tool for streamlining and harmonising the migration process, resolving disputes, enabling evidence-based decision making and sharing data and information with our partners.

Ladies and Gentlemen

The labour migration information systems needs to be enhanced to an integrated system to leverage on institutional strategic advantages and enhance efficiency. Therefore, the systems for registration and recruitment of migrant workers, pre-departure training of migrant workers, attestation and management of foreign contracts of service, reporting and resolution of complaints and disputes, and monitoring of Private Recruitment Agencies, all of which are domiciled in this Ministry, must be digitized and integrated within the next Financial Year.

During my visit, I was informed that some of our workers arrive in Saudi Arabia completely unable to perform the tasks expected of them in their new workplaces. There has also been a recurring concern by our Saudi counterparts that we do not seem to prepare our workers adequately for the culture, labour market system and workplace expectations in the host country. This is very worrying and therefore the need for a thorough review and overhaul of the entire pre-departure training

programme. I wish to appeal to the IOM to support the review and overhaul of pre-departure training in order to make it responsive to the needs of potential migrant workers, especially the first-timers.

Ladies and Gentlemen

I have further been notified that the IOM has been supporting the Regional Ministerial Forum on Migration (RMFM) on Harmonizing Labour Migration Policies in East and Horn of Africa, which brings together ministries in charge of labour migration in the region with the aim of jointly addressing labour migration policies, fostering labour mobility and enhancing protection of the fundamental human, labour, and social rights of migrant workers migrating within and from the continent.

As I conclude my remarks, **Ladies and Gentlemen**, allow me to go back to the recent visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and share with you a valuable cross-cutting lesson

which I picked. This is related to the adoption of a One-County-Team-Approach in labour migration by the Government of the Philippines.

While noting that this approach by the Philippines has mainly involved Government agencies and has indeed realized major benefits, I dare say that we can expand it to the collaboration between our two institutions. With this in mind I wish to challenge the implementing agencies and departments in my Ministry to develop and share with me a clear roadmap on how we plan to domesticate this approach in Kenya and how it will be extended to include clear roles for partners such as the IOM. This will enable us to leverage on the strengths of a wider array of stakeholders thus improving the efficiency and effectiveness of our programmes.

Finally, I want to wish you all success in implementation of projects and programmes in the future. I further reiterate my commitment to support and to continue with the open-

door policy for consultations and deliberations regarding not just our joint programmes but also other areas of opportunity in which we can engage. Let us remain focused on our common aspiration of safe, regular and productive labour migration.

Thank you and God bless you all.