



REPUBLIC OF KENYA
MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL PROTECTION
OFFICE OF THE CABINET SECRETARY

REMARKS
BY HON. FLORENCE BORE
CABINET SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF
LABOUR AND SOCIAL PROTECTION
DURING A MEETING WITH THE DIRECTOR
GENERAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL
ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION (IOM)

**HELD IN THE BOARD ROOM ON 8TH FLOOR,
BLOCK 'A', SOCIAL SECURITY HOUSE**

MONDAY, 13TH FEBRUARY, 2023

Our main guest today, António Vitorino, Director General of the International Organization for Migration (IOM)

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

Mohammed Abdiker, IOM Regional Director for East and Horn of Africa

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

Ms. Aissata Kane, IOM Senior Regional Advisor for Sub-Saharan Africa

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 afternoon?

It gives me great pleasure to welcome the Director General and his delegation from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to this meeting. *Karibu Kenya Bwana Mkurugenzi Mkuu* (Welcome to Kenya Mr. Director General).

We are grateful that you have found time from your busy schedule to meet with us. This meeting will be useful in familiarizing ourselves with the leadership in both organizations, highlighting progress in our joint programmes and agreeing on ways to deepen the valuable cooperation between our two organizations even further.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has been an invaluable partner to Kenya and this Ministry in particular since our country joined the organization in 1983. This partnership has realized numerous milestones especially in the area of labour migration. It is a partnership that is clearly aligned with the current Government's Agenda and one which I am personally committed to strengthening further.

I am indeed happy to notify you that the IOM Kenya Country Office were amongst the first partners my Principal Secretary and I met since we came into office just a few months ago. We have already been familiarized with the work the team is doing and we are satisfied with the progress reports we have been receiving so far.

Director General

Labour migration has significant socio-economic benefits to Kenya in terms of providing job opportunities, especially for our youth, thereby providing significant relief from the challenge of unemployment in the local labour market. It is also a major avenue for skills transfer and remittances from Kenyans in the Diaspora.

As witnessed over the years, the number of Kenyans migrating to other countries has significantly increased with the bulk being the youth who are seeking employment opportunities in international markets where their skills are in demand.

The benefits of this migration have also steadily increased over time. For instance, remittances inflows into Kenya in the last decade have significantly increased reaching USD 4.023 Billion in 2022 up from USD 3.72 Billion in 2021 and compared to just USD 1.29 Billion in 2013 and USD 104.6 Million in 2004. Diaspora remittances is currently Kenya's highest foreign exchange earner having overtaken traditional leaders - 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 been witnessed in the economic sectors of ICT and the Digital Economy, Finance, Agriculture and Building and Construction.

Labour migration and the welfare of Kenyans in the Diaspora in particular are very central to the current Government's agenda. None other than His Excellency the President has from time to time pronounced himself on this area in terms of improving the value of foreign jobs for Kenyans and promoting the welfare of Kenyan migrant workers.

Director General

As I noted earlier, my Ministry and the IOM Kenya Office have enjoyed a cordial and mutually beneficial relationship for a long time. Currently, your organization is supporting this Ministry on various projects and programmes aimed at achieving our common agenda of safe, regular and productive labour migration.

Key amongst this support is in development of the National Policy on Labour Migration and the Labour Migration Management Bill, 2023. These policy and legal frameworks are new and transformational as they seek to improve the labour migration process, enhance the welfare and safety of migrant workers, streamline the operations of Recruitment Agencies and increase access to productive jobs for Kenyan migrant workers.

In addition to this, my Ministry with support from the IOM is implementing a comprehensive programme aimed at building the capacities of Private Recruitment Agencies to undertake ethical recruitment and for self-regulation. This area has been flagged by my Ministry as a major gap and a source of unethical recruitment which has affected the welfare and safety of our migrant workers and brought about untold suffering to many workers and their families.

I note with gratitude your organization's assistance towards ensuring that our Recruitment Agencies adhere to the International Recruitment Integrity System (IRIS) and in establishing Community Oversight Mechanisms for monitoring and reporting unscrupulous practices by Recruitment Agencies. This will not only enhance the welfare and safety of migrant workers and

improve operations of these agencies but it will also make their businesses competitive both in the local and international labour markets. The Ministry request continued support in capacity building of the Private Recruitment Agencies on ethical recruitment.

IOM has also played a key role in supporting the Ministry in development of Pre-Departure Handbooks to provide information about the destination countries.

Director General

One of the key challenges we face in this labour migration space is the inadequate access to accurate, timely and reliable data and information at the national and regional levels. I am glad to note that IOM is supporting Kenya and other countries in the region in strengthening the availability and quality of labour migration data to inform evidence-based and gender-sensitive policies and programmes, especially around labour migration governance. The Ministry will require support in implementation of the developed National Capacity Building Strategy on Labour Migration Data.

I have had first-hand experience, during a recent visit to Saudi Arabia, about how proper management of data and information on labour migration can be a great tool for streamlining the migration

process, resolving disputes, evidence-based decision making and sharing data and information with partner states. This is therefore one programme I will be keenly following up in order to ensure that we achieve these goals.

Beyond these areas of support, the International Organization for Migration has been supporting the Regional Ministerial Forum on Migration (RMFM) on Harmonizing Labour Migration Policies in East and Horn of Africa.

The Forum brings together ministries in charge of labour migration in the region with the overall 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.

It will please you **Director General** to note that the genesis of this Regional Ministerial Forum was from a meeting you held with one of my predecessors, Hon. Ukur Yattani in 2019 in Geneva on the sidelines of the International Labour Conference. This just demonstrates further the importance of such meetings.

Kenya was the inaugural Chair of the Forum in January 2020 and played a critical role in laying the ground for achievement of its objectives, including establishment of the governance structures. My Ministry remains committed to this process and is looking forward to participating in its activities both at the country and regional level.

Director General

Going forward, I wish to appeal to your organization to consider extending support to two key areas which I have noted to have major gaps. The first one is in strengthening labour migration information systems.

Kenya has several information systems which are relevant in the labour migration cycle. However, these systems lack sufficient capacity to serve the needs of the migrant workers, the Government, recruitment agencies and other key players. They also operate largely in isolation.

There are opportunities therefore to build the capacities of these systems and enhance their integration in order to improve efficiency and effectiveness in the labour migration process. I wish

to personally appeal to IOM to support current efforts in digitizing the attestation of foreign contracts of employment, upgrading of the National Employment Authority Management Information System and integration of these systems with other relevant systems such as the passport processing system.

The second area is in the diversification of accredited facilities for medical examination of migrant workers, especially those traveling to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. Only a handful of health facilities have been accredited in the country. This limits access to these facilities for migrant workers and inevitably increases the cost of services.

We have already proposed to these countries to have Government Level 5 hospitals in the country to undertake the medical

examinations. These are national level hospitals with requisite facilities and human resource capacity to undertake the examinations. It is my request that IOM can lend its significant influence in lobbying the GCC countries to accept our proposal.

Director General

As I conclude my remarks, allow me to once again thank you for visiting our Ministry and for the invaluable support which your organization continues to extend to us and the country in general. I want to reiterate my commitment towards strengthening this partnership and growing it even further in this dynamic and increasingly complex world of labour migration.

I want to wish you a happy stay in Nairobi and hope that you will squeeze in some time from your hectic schedule to enjoy what this

magnificent city has to offer beyond just the call of duty – the people, the food, the places and our diverse culture. I also wish you safe journeys as you continue with your travels and hope that you will find some time in the near future to come back, hopefully as we celebrate the successes of our numerous joint initiatives.

Thank you.