

Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development

Concept note for a joint side event at the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development

“Unleashing the Transformative Potential of the Joint Labour Migration Programme (JLMP) for the Achievement of Agenda 2063 and 2030”

Co-hosted by the African Union and IOM in collaboration with the ILO, the East African Community (EAC), AU Labour Migration Advisory Committee and the Swedish International Development Cooperation (SIDA)

26 February 2021, 11am – 12.30pm, Virtual

Context:

The rapid rise of cross-border labour and skills mobility has necessitated labour migration governance being identified as a key policy priority for Africa (AU, 2015). Effective labour migration governance can be promoted by enhancing coherence of existing policies and capacities, bilateral and regional cooperation, access to social protection, availability and quality of disaggregated labour migration data and skills development, matching and recognition (IOM, 2020).

Recent studies show that, Africa is home to an estimated 7.9 per cent of the global migrant workforce, most of which originates within the continent (ILO, 2018). The share of migrants as a percentage of the population grew from 1.8 per cent in 2000 to 2 per cent in 2017 over a period of 16 years (AU, 2020). At the same time, the number of African women migrating independently for work (and education) is on the rise (Jonsson, 2009), accounting about 30 per cent of the stock of all migrant workers in Africa. Migration to Europe and the Gulf from countries in the East, South, West and North Africa regions, particularly for economic reasons, has risen significantly owing to among other things geographical proximity, post-colonial ties, the promise of higher income and increased poverty and unemployment rates across the continent.

In 2018, African Union Member States (MS) reiterated the significant contribution of well-managed migration to national development of countries of origin and destination while adopting AU Migration Policy Framework for Africa (MPFA) and Plan of Action (2018-2030). Through the MPFA, MS further underscored global and regional vision to mainstream migration in development planning, through frameworks such as the Agenda 2030, Agenda 2063 and the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), and committed to cooperate to “*enhance safe, orderly, and regular migration, remittances, and decent work and labour migration*” to unleash Africa’s growth potential and promote regional integration. Despite their proven contribution, migrant workers remain subjected to discriminatory practices, xenophobia, human trafficking and smuggling, low wages, long working hours, and inadequate access to basic services. Female migrant workers, mostly concentrated in the informal and service sector such as domestic workers often find themselves in situations of precarious employment, poor work and living conditions, movement restrictions and non-payment of wages.

The overnight spread of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 fundamentally impacted human mobility and brought to light the significant contributions of migrant workers providing essential front-line services to communities (UN 2020). In the aftermath of widespread global restrictions of cross-border movements, States realized their high dependence on migrant workforce in key sectors such as agriculture, domestic care, construction, health care and maintenance in countries of origin and destination (IOM, 2020). Public health responses have ranged from being sources of best practices to exacerbating pre-existing inequalities and encroaching migrants’ rights and dignity (AU LMCA, 2020). The pandemic has highlighted the critical need for States to collaborate in addressing its impact, beyond the immediate health concerns, to long-term economic and social disruptions, through a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach (UN Network on Migration, 2020).

What is the AU/ILO/IOM/ECA Joint Programme on Labour Migration Governance for Development and Regional Integration in Africa (JLMP)?

Adopted by African Union Member States in 2015, the JLMP is a long-term partnership among the AU, ILO, IOM and ECA, in coordination with governments, Regional Economic Communities, development cooperation actors, diasporas, local communities, civil society, academia, the private sector, employers' organizations, parliamentarians, trade unions, national human rights institutions, the media and other relevant stakeholders in labour migration governance. It was designed to address identified challenges in many African countries, particularly labour and skills shortages in some sectors and unemployment and a growing youth bulge in others. JLMP results target Africa's Regional Economic Communities (RECs), national institutions responsible for labour migration management (ministries of labour and labour market institutions and institutions responsible for migration management), employers and workers' organizations and migrant associations.

The Programme supports the achievement of the labour migration aspects of several global and continental frameworks such as the SDG 8, 10, and 17, the GCM, the African Position on the GCM, Ouagadougou + 10 Declaration and Plan of Action on Employment, Poverty Eradication and Inclusive Development in Africa, Agenda 2063 and its First Ten Year Implementation Plan (2014 – 2023), MPFA, Protocol to the Treaty establishing the African Economic Community relating to the Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment (2018) and, the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA), 2018.

In its implementation, the JLMP operates on a two-pronged approach: governance and operational to ultimately improve the lives of male and female migrant workers and members of their families. The governance component addresses the critical need to develop in concert the four cardinal pillars of labour migration governance: 1) law based on international standards; 2) establishing viable and coherent policies; 3) strengthening the core institutions; and 4) engaging tripartite participation and cooperation among the main economic actors at national, regional, and international levels. The operational implementation component covers three other key interdependent technical operational areas: 1) decent work and social protection for migrant workers and their families; 2) addressing the key constraint of skills shortages; and 3) obtaining essential labour migration statistics and knowledge for the governance of labour migration and protection of migrant workers. The JLMP Partners (AU, ILO, IOM and ECA) each provide policy, technical and operational support in the implementation of the Programme in line with each agencies' comparative advantage.

Goals and Objectives:

The event will focus on highlighting achievements and lessons learned by partners while implementing the JLMP. It aims to bring visibility to labour migration management as envisioned in Agenda 2030 and 2063 and facilitate sharing of best practices. It will bring together senior and technical officials from governments, the African Union, Regional Economic Communities, development partners, diasporas, workers and employer organizations, the private sector and civil society organizations.

Draft Programme of Work:

Opening session 11:00am – 11:20	Opening remarks & keynote speeches - Senior representatives of the AU, IOM, EAC, and SIDA highlight experiences in partnerships for effective labour migration management in Africa and contribution to the Agenda 2030 & 2063
Discussions: 11:20am – 12:10pm	- ILO, EAC, AU LMAC representatives experience sharing perspectives in achieving JLMP objectives
Closing remarks: 12:10pm – 12:30pm	- Senior representative from the AU highlights key areas of discussions and recommendations

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