



SIDE EVENT

Saturday, March 20th, 2021 10:00 AM – 11:30 AM Ethiopian Time

Digitalizing Migration Response to harness Africa's Economic Development and Demographic Dividend in the COVID-19 Era

Background and Introduction:

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 has had an unprecedented impact on mobility and highlighted the potential crisis to Africa's economic development and the necessary mitigation strategies required to ensure that the continent's industrialization pathways are not stalled. This includes the critical role of border infrastructure, cross-border traders and migrant essential workers in the response to the pandemic. The economic contributions of migrants to development remain vital to the continent's industrialization. In 2018, it was recorded that diasporas globally contributed an average of USD 554 billion¹ in remittances. However, migrant contributions go beyond remittances. They include investments, trade promotion, tourism, philanthropy, skills and knowledge transfer and innovative entrepreneurship.

COVID-19 has also led to digitalization of workforces as well as business and trade services as an adaptation measure. The pandemic and the subsequent increase of online operations has also exposed the need to invest in and adopt new and diversified skills, especially in the IT sector, to cope with the transforming dynamics and mode of operationalization. It is critical that these developments are channeled to benefit all African citizens and mitigative measures are deployed to protect against inequality and polarization². Specifically to migration, COVID-19 responses and policies to promote Africa's economic resilience need to consider this changing dynamic, and especially focus on the production and availability of data, skills development, recognition and partnerships, digitalization of migration, green energy and the sustainability of an industrialized continent, leveraging the African young population.

Expected Outcomes of the Event:

The objective of the planned Side Event is to offer a platform for reflection and building consensus on measures that could be taken to harness Africa's industrialization and economic diversification, through migration, including climate induced movements. IOM will use this session to:

1. Highlight key migration thematic areas, which will play a role in the continent's economic development,

particularly for young people. (including legal identity, border infrastructure and trade, labour migration (spotlight on skills development and recognition, and Skills Mobility Partnerships (SMPs), remittances, environment and climate change (MECC), and migration data and statistics.

2. Explore the increasing evolution of digitalized migration response initiatives to promote the changing dynamic, and the operationalization of events in a post COVID-19 era; paying note to the migration and development component, big data, integrated border management systems and existing applications which have facilitated migrant access and information to services which particularly relate to vulnerable migrants, migration health, financial transfers, etc..
3. Explore the interplay between migration and the diversification of the digital economy in Africa, and,
4. Propose policy approaches to sustainable industrialization and economic diversification, to be adopted in the context of migration

Level of Participation

The Side Event targets a wide range of experts and stakeholders, from within and outside Africa, including: Ministers/ Officials responsible for migration and development, senior and mid-level policymakers, development planners, economists, migration experts, African Union Commission officials, ECA and other United Nations officials and the diplomatic community.

Format

Virtual – Zoom link to be shared

Interactive panel discussion with senior representatives and different stakeholders.

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¹ IOM 2020. Towards a Common Framework for Monitoring Migrant Economic Contributions to Development: <https://diaspora.org/sites/default/files/resources/document/IOM%2520Migrant%2520Economic%2520Contribution%2520Summary.pdf>

² IOM 2020. Africa Migration Report: challenging the narrative: <https://publications.iom.int/books/africa-migration-report-challenging-narrative>