

EU- AFRICA MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

SYRTE, LIBYA 22-23 November 2006

The EU-Africa Ministerial Conference on Migration and Development will involve governments of the EU and the entire African continent. The Conference will discuss a comprehensive agenda of issues of mutual interest in the area of migration and development, as a basis for a strengthened partnership in this area, based – inter alia – on the AU Common position on Migration and Development.

Throughout its history, Africa has experienced important migratory movements - voluntary and involuntary. These movements could be legal or undocumented and have taken place within or beyond its borders. The context of migration in Africa may take place in the form of nomads migrating in search of pasturelands; young men from the country side setting off to work in the city; highly qualified educated professionals responding to greater opportunities overseas; refugees fleeing civil war or natural disaster.

In Africa, poor socio-economic conditions, such as low wages, high levels of unemployment, rural underdevelopment, poverty and lack of opportunity fuel out-migration. Of the 150 million migrants in the world, more than 50 million are estimated to be Africans. Furthermore, about 50 per cent of the internally displaced persons in the world and 28 per cent of the world's refugees are in Africa. Given that the number of migrants is rising and that this trend is likely to persist in the foreseeable future, the management of migration has become one of the most critical challenges for African States in the new millennium.

In recent years, migration has been making its way steadily towards the top of the continental and international affairs agenda. There is a need for a comprehensive and balanced approach to migration taking into account migration realities and trends as well as linkages between migration and other key economic, social, political and humanitarian issues.

A contemporary aspect of migration in Africa is the growing feminization of migration as women have also started to migrate in search for greater employment/economic opportunities. Women currently make up half of Africa's migrants suggesting that traditional social roles have been modified considerably. This calls for a paradigm shift in the way migration is managed.

Whereas well-managed migration may have a substantial positive impact for the development of origin States and yield significant benefits to destinations States, mismanaged or unmanaged migration can have serious negative consequences for States' and migrants' welfare, including potential destabilizing effect on national and regional security. Migration management now centres on how to maximize development effects of migration while at the same time minimizing the negative aspects such as brain drain, human rights violations, human trafficking, migrant smuggling, exploitation, xenophobia, racism and discrimination.

The increasing number of illegal migrants *in a context of limited opportunities for legal migration, including to Europe*, have exacerbated the tensions and the passions over the whole issue. In this context, and given the magnitude of the phenomenon, EU and African states are called upon to identify measures conducive to find solutions to stop and /or reverse the trends observed.

Background

The European Council Conclusions of December 2005 set out a list of priority actions to be implemented in the course of 2006 with a view to increasing dialogue and cooperation in broad range of migratory issues between EU and Africa. One specific initiative in this context is to bring together countries of transit, origin and destination to address challenges of migration and to convene an EU-Africa Ministerial Meeting on Migration and Development.

The eighth ordinary session of the executive council of the African union meeting in KHARTOUM from 16 to 21 January 2006 adopted the decision EX.CL/DEC.264 (VIII). During this session, the African Ministers while recognizing the magnitude and the impact of migration on the development and the related problems on one hand, and the importance and the imperative need to engage as quickly as possible a global and inclusive political dialogue with European countries in order to find appropriate solutions, within the context of a development partnership on the other hand, decided to launch a number of new joint initiatives which included establishing a comprehensive dialogue on migration, including at ministerial level. In this context, the Executive Council decided to convene an experts meeting on migration and development in Algiers, Algeria at the invitation of the Algerian government in order to prepare a common African position in preparation for an Africa-Europe conference at Ministerial level. This meeting took place from 3-5 April 2006.

Decision Assembly/AU/ Dec.125(VII) adopted during the Banjul Summit endorsed the African Common Position on Migration and Development and requested the AU Commission to convene as soon as possible the EU-Africa Ministerial Conference on Migration and Development to be held in Libya. The 7th EU-Africa ministerial troika meeting that took place on 10 October 2006, in Brazzaville. Congo agreed to hold the EU-Africa Ministerial Conference on Migration and Development on 22-23 November 2006 in Libya and underlined the necessity to prepare for it thoroughly.

Objective

The EU-Africa Ministerial Conference on Migration and Development will involve governments of the EU and the entire African continent. The Conference will discuss a comprehensive agenda of issues of mutual interest in the area of migration and development, as a basis for a strengthened partnership in this area, based – inter alia – on the AU Common position on Migration and Development.

ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

In view of the continued rise in the number of migrants in the region, the African Union considers migration as one critical challenge of the new millennium. To that end, the Strategic Plan of the AU Commission places emphasis on promoting migration management. The EU-Africa Ministerial Conference on Migration and Development will consider the following issues among several others:

- Migration and Development including the role of remittances
- Migration and Peace, Security and Stability
- Migration and Human Rights
- Migration and Human Resources (Brain drain)
- Fight against illegal migration, smuggling of migrants and trafficking in human beings

THE CONFERENCE FORMAT:

On 21 November 2006 there will be a Senior Officials Meeting to finalise preparations for the Ministerial Conference of 22 and 23 November 2006. The Conference will be designed to generate a maximum amount of discussion and interaction. It will include a limited number of key note presentations.

DOCUMENTS:

A . African Common Position on Migration and Development (EX.CL 277(IX)).

B . Background documents will include in particular:

- EU Strategy for Africa
- AU-EU Plan of Action on Trafficking in Human Beings especially women and children
- The European Council's Conclusions of 16 December, 2005 on the "Global Approach to Migration: Priority Actions focussing on Africa and the Mediterranean
- Report of the AU Commission on the UNHLD on Migration and Development
- EU position on the Preparation of the UN High Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development

PARTICIPANTS:

This Conference is convened at Ministerial level. Ministers responsible for migration and development and Foreign Affairs Ministers will take part in this Conference. Participants to the Senior Officials' session will include experts in migration from African and EU countries and the AU permanent representative committee (PRC), RECs, AU and EU Commissions, as well as a limited number of selected UN agencies, international organizations and NGOs specialized in matters of migration and development.

CONTACTS :

African Union Commission:

Dr. Thomas Bisika - Department of Social Affairs
Tel + (251) 11 551 77 00. *Ext 300* **Fax: + (251) 11 553 36 16**
e-mail: BisikaT@**africa-union.org** AND TBisika@**yahoo.com**

Libyan Government:

The Secretary
The General People's Committee for Foreign Liaison and International Cooperation
The Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya.

European Commission:

Mr. Rob Rozenburg - Deputy Head of Unit, DG DEV/C2
Tel. +32 2 296 1831
e-mail:robertus.rozenburg@ec.europa.eu

Presidency of the European Union:

Mr. Ilkka Rentola - Councillor, MFA of Finland, Political Department
Tel. +358 9 1605 5641
e-mail: ilkka.rentola@formin.fi