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**Economic Commission for Africa
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Item 6 of the provisional agenda*

Statutory issues

Migration programme of the Economic Commission for Africa

Note by the Executive Secretary

I. Background and context

1. African migration patterns are not well understood, and specific stereotypes have developed, given that the media, devoid of robust scientific evidence, have dominated the discourse. There is an imperative for Africa to develop its own narratives on migration, informed by its population, socioeconomic and political dynamics and the dominance of intra-African migration flows.

2. Research on African migration has been based on prevailing migration theories, reflecting push and pull factors that have affected the conventional flows of people from poorer to richer countries. Research has focused mainly on the migrant as an individual, without taking into consideration the families, households, communities and nations that affect and determine migration patterns and dynamics. This research has also focused on the movement of men during their economically productive age, without considering that women and children have always been migrants. Indeed, the causes of migration in their multiplicity and complexity need to be examined.

3. During the past few decades, there have been changes in the global economic and political landscape that have shaped the patterns and prospects of international migration. With economic improvements in the global South, South-North migration has shown a declining trend in recent years and will continue to show further decline in the coming decades. By contrast, and notwithstanding economic improvements in the global South, the influence of other factors, such as growing social and economic inequalities at the global level and differences in governance situations and demographic structures, will maintain the momentum of South-North migration for some time.

4. Migration remains one of the few options for young people to find decent work and escape poverty, persecution and violence. These factors have pushed young people to move internally and across international borders. Young people are not only migrating from rural areas to nearby cities, but also migrating to other African countries where relative prosperity creates a high

* E/ECA/COE/37/1.

demand for labour, while a smaller number of them are migrating to other continents.

II. Mandate and comparative advantage of the Economic Commission for Africa

5. In recognizing the inevitability of human mobility, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) has responded to the issues that surround African migration by focusing on Africa's structural development and enhancing the inherent potential benefits of migration by supporting the development of migration policies that are development-sensitive and migration-sensitive.

6. ECA embraces the fact that migration should be a choice, not a necessity. While crisis situations due to conflict have contributed to large-scale population movements in Africa, more than two thirds of the movement across national borders is attributed to the search by migrants for better employment opportunities.

7. Migration is inevitable and can be harnessed for Africa's development and structural transformation. Its potential is in utilizing the financial and human capital of the African diaspora. With this in mind, ECA seeks to engage with diaspora organizations to inform them of the need to invest in the creation and development of enterprises in areas of origin and to support the productive reintegration of returning migrants, including through enterprise development, better data and labour market information systems and equal access to property and land tenure rights.

8. Migration is a crucial component of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and is included in Sustainable Development Goals 8 (decent work and economic growth), 10 (reduced inequalities) and 17 (partnerships for the Goals). In this regard, ECA recognizes that there is an urgent need to support member States in achieving the Goals that focus on migration by exploring African solutions to what is essentially an African issue.

9. Other frameworks have shaped the overall approach to migration issues. The overarching principle that guides the work of ECA is contained in the Addis Ababa Declaration on Population and Development in Africa beyond 2014, in which the emphasis is placed on the commitment to reinforcing and establishing bilateral, regional and global partnerships on migration to progressively reduce barriers to movement, while upholding the fundamental human rights of all migrants, and to make migration an instrument of mutual development for the benefit of migrants and countries.

10. Many strategies have been established by ECA to address migration issues, opportunities and challenges. In order to harmonize and synthesize the various initiatives on migration that are currently being carried out or planned by the various divisions and subregional offices, ECA is developing a comprehensive programme on migration that will integrate them into one programme.

A. Migration programmes of the Economic Commission for Africa

11. The ongoing work on migration includes the following:

(a) The high-level panel on migration, launched in Monrovia on 6 June 2017, and led by the President of Liberia;

(b) The global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration, which is framed by and consistent with target 10.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals, in which Member States committed themselves to cooperating

internationally to facilitate safe, orderly and regular migration. The global compact is intended to deal with all aspects of international migration, including humanitarian, developmental and human rights-related issues;

(c) The Joint Labour Migration Programme, of which ECA is participating in the implementation, is focused on intra-African migration. It is a partnership comprising the African Union Commission, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The Programme is a broad-based, long-term initiative that includes components on strengthening labour migration institutions, obtaining decent work, tackling skills shortages, obtaining data and knowledge on migration and protecting migrants.

12. In this regard, ECA has been accumulating evidence through these initiatives to support the African migration narrative, with a view to contributing to the development of Africa and protecting the rights of migrants, as envisioned in the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want.

B. Capacity

13. ECA connects the global and local levels and offers regional perspectives on global issues. Its primary role is that of a policy think tank, providing its member States with data and analytical services and policy advice to help them to tackle regional issues and supporting the development of a wide range of regional norms, standards and conventions. In addition, ECA has the mandate to provide high-level platforms for the dialogue and exchange of ideas, best practices and the follow-up and review of regional progress in implementing the 2030 Agenda, as well as analysis of current and emerging challenges on a regular basis.

14. Member States requested that ECA play key roles in supporting them in the implementation of the commitments outlined in the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration. In the draft text of the agreement, it is stated that the technical expertise of regional economic commissions will be utilized to ensure the coordination and support of the implementation efforts of member States at the regional and national levels. The work of ECA on key areas with regard to the demographic dividend and a repository of best practices in such areas can be shared in order to promote positive outcomes. In addition, ECA has experience of working with its member States on issues of population and development, such as the regional review of the implementation of the International Conference on Population and Development agenda beyond 2014.

15. In view of the above, ECA has taken an approach that will integrate and consolidate all the migration projects into a single programme, namely, the comprehensive programme on migration, under the theme “Migration, development and human security”, and conceived to encompass the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration, the high-level panel on migration and the Joint Labour Migration Programme.

16. To respond adequately to the outcomes of the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration and the high-level panel on migration and to support member States and stakeholders, ECA will draw on and use in the comprehensive programme on migration the experiences from past and ongoing programmes and their comparative advantages. In addition, it will draw on joint migration programmes with partners, ECA research, regional protocols and frameworks on migration, recommendations from the African regional consultative meeting on the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration and the global compact itself.

17. To produce the implementation plan for the comprehensive programme on migration, ECA will draw from the evidence generated by the above

activities. To provide input to the implementation plan, member States should focus on the following:

(a) Advocacy and awareness-raising programmes to create a real and broad coalition of support that will be instrumental in the implementation of the recommendations of the high-level panel on migration;

(b) Implementation of the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration as the framework for comprehensive international cooperation on migrants and human mobility;

(c) Recommendation from the African Development Forum X on migration issues, opportunities and challenges;

(d) Issues from the implementation plan of the Joint Labour Migration Programme.

III. Migration programme

18. The comprehensive programme on migration is aimed at facilitating and supporting the design of policies for member States to create a favourable environment that enables the contributions of migrants to sustainable development. The specific aims of the programme are the following:

(a) Promoting coherence among the various national policies, in line with regional and subregional protocols and agreements, and strengthening the capacity of stakeholders to implement policies for the improvement of legal systems on international migration, especially the implementation of free movement of people policies and the promotion of regular migration;

(b) Increasing the capacity of African member States to integrate the impact of mega trends (e.g., the growing population of young people, climate change and urbanization) into national development planning;

(c) Increasing the capacity of African member States to develop migration policies and an evidence-based African narrative on migration;

(d) Improving methodologies for data collection, analysis, harmonization and dissemination of migration indicators.

19. To enhance understanding of the positive implications of migration for sustainable development and the importance of protecting migrant workers in order to ensure the construction of appropriate policy responses that protect their rights, ECA will invest in knowledge generation, data and statistics on migration.

IV. Target groups and beneficiaries

20. The beneficiaries of the comprehensive programme on migration will be governments, international and intergovernmental agencies, research centres, academic institutions, non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations that work on migration issues.

V. Institutional framework and partnership arrangements

21. The Social Development Policy Division of ECA will coordinate the implementation of the comprehensive programme on migration, with a special focus on awareness-raising and advocacy, dissemination of knowledge products and training and capacity-building to member States through various platforms. In addition, ECA subregional offices will provide support and

organize national workshops. In the development of policy options, strategies and good practices, ECA will take the lead by ensuring that attention is given to context-specific key issues in each subregion. Specialized agencies and partners working on migration, such as ILO, IOM and the African Union Commission, will be invited to collaborate. Partnerships with relevant academic institutions will be considered.

VI. Monitoring and evaluation

22. ECA will be responsible for consistently and continually monitoring progress and reviewing migration activities on the continent. Stakeholders benefiting from the advisory services will be requested to provide their feedback on the relevance and effectiveness of the comprehensive programme on migration.
