

AFRICAN UNION

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Fifth Ministerial Consultation

16 & 17 October 2019

Habtoor Palace Dubai, LXR Hotels & Resorts, Dubai

**Keynote Address by H.E Amira Elfadil, Commissioner for Social
Affairs, African Union Commission**

Opening of 5th Ministerial Consultation, 16th October 2019

Honorable, H.E. Harin Fernando, Minister of Telecommunications, Foreign Employment and Sports, Chair-In Office of the Abu Dhabi Dialogue,

Honorable, H.E. Nasser bin Thani Al Hamli, Minister of Human Resources and Emiratisation

Honorable, H.E. Maryam Aqeel Alaqeel, Minister of State for Economic Affairs, Kuwait

H.E. António Vitorino, Director General, International Organization for Migration

H.E. Santiago Chávez Pareja, Chair-in-Office, Global Forum for Migration and Development

H.E. Dr Ruba Jaradat, Regional Director for Arab States, International Labour Organisation

Honorable Ministers and Heads of Delegation

Distinguished delegates

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to deliver this keynote address on behalf of H.E the Commissioner for Social Affairs of the African Union, H.E Amira Elfadil my sister. She regrets not being able to honor the official opening ceremony of this important gathering on the occasion of the 5th ordinary session of the consultation of the Ministers of labour of the Abu Dhabi Dialogue.

I wish to congratulate, H.E. Nasser bin Thani Al Hamli, the Honorable Minister of Human Resources and Emiratisation, and the Government of the UAE for the Chairmanship of the Abu Dhabi Dialogue. I also congratulate H.E. Harin Fernando, the Honorable Minister of Telecommunications, Foreign Employment and Sports of Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, outgoing Chair, for the outstanding achievements over its term of chairmanship.

We recognize that the Abu Dhabi Dialogue today is one of the most active state-led, voluntary Regional Consultative Processes (RCP).

At the onset, allow me to thank the Abu Dhabi Dialogue, and particularly the Abu Dhabi Secretariat for extending an invitation to the delegates coming from Africa; namely, the African Union commission, and the Regional Economic Communities represented here through ECOWAS, ECCAS, IGAD, and COMESA. Africa, a continent and a region of the world from which many migrant workers in the Gulf States and other Middle East countries, originate.

This is indeed a landmark step reflecting the start of a partnership between the Abu Dhabi Dialogue and the African continent for effective and mutually advantageous labour mobility.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The African citizen is amongst the chief concerns of the African union. The centrality of the African citizen whether in Africa or outside Africa, in the diaspora, is enshrined in the African Unions constitutive act which prides itself as a people centered and people driven organization.

The AU focus on its diaspora, finds root in the different decisions and strategies of which recognize the role of its diaspora in the building of the continent.

Migration and labour migration are themes that thus remain a central policy concern for the African Union and its Regional economic Communities. The AU Assembly of Heads of States and Government adopted the Migration Policy Framework and the protocol on Free Movement of People in January 2018, as well as the African Continental Free Trade Area. This framework highlights the importance of regional and inter-regional cooperation on migration. Regional Consultative Processes were put in place in several RECs with IOM support, working on general agenda of migration.

The Regional Economic Communities also put in place the necessary policy frameworks and legal instruments for human mobility and labour migration in their space. As a result of this high level political commitment at continental and regional levels, African citizen migrate more within the continent than to other regions of the world.

The AU Specialized technical Committee on Social Development, Labour and Employment offers a space for ministers of labour to discuss labour migration issues at continental level.

Outside of the continent, several strategic partnerships features the themes of migration and the diaspora, such as the AU-EU strategic Partnership which facilitates discussions on issues related to migration between the two regions.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Middle East and the GCC remain key destinations for African migrants. The trends are on the rise, due to demographic, social, and economic factors. Several countries such as Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Somalia, Ghana, and Sénégal have signed bilateral labour agreements with the Middle East countries and the GCC. However, the absence of an inter-regional process such as the Abu Dhabi Dialogue impedes the promotion and the protection of the rights of African migrant works, conversely to the situation of their Asian counterparts under the Abu Dhabi Dialogue.

The Areas of cooperation between the two regions that need to be covered are many, and many will be deliberated on during this forum, but the goal underlying it is one, a partnership that is beneficial to both regions and that safeguards the dignity of all human beings.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This forum today is an opportunity for us in Africa to learn through the processes, programming and achievements of the Abu Dhabi Dialogue and in return provide a platform for us to share knowledge on our processes, and experiences relating to managing labour migration.

The African Unions plan to embark on a similar journey in establishing a regional cooperation mechanism for oversees labour in the form of the Colombo process, and an Inter-regional cooperation platform inspired by the Abu Dhabi Dialogue.

The first step of this journey will commence next month in November through an experts level dialogue on Africa-Middle East labour migration multilateral cooperation in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, AUC Headquarters.

I am certain that this forum will help us better understand the working methods of Abu Dhabi dialogue and allow us to refine our practices as we proceed. We look forward to the enriching conversation.

Thank you for your kind attention.