

**Second Regional Review of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration**

**in the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa Region**

**8-10 October 2024, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

**Opening remarks by the Coordinator of the UN Network on Migration**

09:00 - 10:00            Opening Session: Second Regional Review of Implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in Africa

(7 minutes – Drafted by Claudia)

**Mr. Claver Gatete**, Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa

**Excellency Amb. Minata Samate Cessouma**, Commissioner for Health, Humanitarian Affairs & Social Development, African Union Commission

**Excellency Mr. Mohamed Raman Swaray**, Minister of Employment, Labour and Social Security, Sierra Leone **and co-chair of the Meeting**

**Excellency Dr. Gedion Timothewos**, Minister of Justice, Ethiopia

It is a pleasure to be here for this Africa Regional Review of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration – the second such review since the Compact was adopted six years ago.

I would like to thank the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and the African Union Commission for convening this conference, together with the UN Network on Migration. Thanks also to our hosts the Government of Ethiopia.

And special thanks to all of you here – and of course all those beyond this room – who have been working so hard over the past few years to turn the Compact into a reality on the ground. This means everyone from States, including the 15 Global Compact champion countries in Africa, to regional and sub-regional organizations, municipalities, non-governmental partners and all our many colleagues in the Network, at every level. My heartfelt gratitude and appreciation for your dedication and hard work.

Over the next two days, we will reflect on what is working well in implementing the Global Compact, what challenges remain and – most importantly – how best to accelerate progress.

Because we know, despite all our best efforts, plenty of challenges remain and we have a lot of hard work still ahead of us.

I would like to highlight four priority areas that I strongly encourage you to focus on in your discussions.

**First and foremost** is the urgency of saving lives and protecting and assisting migrants in distress.

Almost every day now, we hear tragic stories of migrants from this continent risking their lives – and all too often losing them – in a bid to find a brighter future elsewhere. Last year, at least 1,200 migrants from Africa died or went missing on migration routes – and the real figure is likely to be much higher.

This shocking reality – not just in this region but around the world – risks overshadowing all the less visible gains made elsewhere. To move us further in the right direction, this December, the Secretary-General will propose concrete actions in his report on GCM implementation that we will *all* have a vital role in implementing.

We know that when there are no safe options for people to move, they will move anyway – despite the many dangers they may face. Which brings me to the **second priority** – building safe and regular pathways for migration.

We know this is the best way to reduce the risk of exploitation and strengthen protection of migrants' human rights – including labor rights – and access to essential services. And we know it is the best way to safely connect people, goods, services, knowledge and innovation.

In Africa, more than 85 per cent of employed people work in the informal sector, where movement of workers is common. Strengthening labor migration frameworks is therefore essential, particularly through bilateral agreements that safeguard migrant workers' rights.

There are already some great examples across the continent.

Just one is in East and Southern Africa, where intraregional migration is driven by the increasing demand for high- and low-skilled workers. The EAC Common Market Protocol provides for the free movement of labor and has driven notable progress on migration governance in the subregion.

Another example is the Southern African Development Community's labor migration plan, facilitating the free movement of people and workers.

The African Union's Free Movement Protocol offers an important path forward, yet only four countries have ratified it to date. I strongly urge all States to take action and follow suit.

The **third priority** is to better leverage accurate, timely and reliable data—disaggregated by sex, age and migration status. This is essential for designing policies that enhance safe and regular migration pathways.

The recent establishment of the African Migration Observatory and the African Migration Data Network are commendable strides in this direction.

Strong data can also help to reshape migration narratives – in both countries of origin and destination. It shows that migrants can – and do – enrich societies economically, socially, and culturally. It proves the

point that migration – and migrants – are a solution, not a problem – which can power the Africa Agenda 2063.

**The fourth and final priority** – which is also at the heart of *all* these priorities – and the search for solutions – is the need for cooperation on all levels. We can support you in this endeavor.

The Global Compact and the United Nations Network on Migration provide three key tools for system-wide support to national partners, building their capacity and making their commitments operational.

One is a technical assistance facility, helping partners to integrate the Compact into national planning, which is already working with four States on the continent.

The second is a Hub, with a repository of hundreds of best practices from across the region. I urge all of you to use this great resource and add to it.

And the third is the Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund, which is currently financing eight initiatives in Africa, with a further nine in the pipeline.

But more resources are needed so that we can do more – and better – across the continent. To this end, I would ask all of you to support the Trust Fund as much as you possibly can.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, our discussions here matter very much. I will brief the General Assembly on the outcomes of this and other regional reviews later this year – which, in turn, will inform the International Migration Review Forum in 2026.

In short, what we say and do over these two days will help us chart the way forward to a better future for this region, one in which migrants are acknowledged as agents of positive change and migration as an opportunity to boost economic growth and development.

I wish you all constructive and productive discussions. Thank you very much.