



THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

STATEMENT BY UGANDA, AS CHAIR OF THE STC ON SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT, LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT

AT THE

PAN AFRICAN FORUM ON MIGRATION (PAFOM) - 8

ON

BOLSTERING FREE MOVEMENT AND TRADE NEXUS IN AFCFTA:
OPTIMIZING BENEFITS OF MIGRATION, LABOUR MIGRATION FOR
DEVELOPMENT

ROYAL ARIA CONVENTION CENTRE, GABORONE, BOTSWANA

31ST OCTOBER 2023

- Honourable Anna Maria Mokgethi, Minister of Labour and Home Affairs of the Republic of Botswana,
- Honorable Ministers from Member States, here present,
- Members of regional and national parliaments,
- Mr. Rule Jimmy Opelo, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs of the Republic of Botswana,
- Other Senior Government Officials from the Republic of Botswana,
- ACP Lynder Nkuranga, Director General and Representative of the PAFOM 7 Chair (Rwanda),
- Members of the Diplomatic Corps, and in a special way here I recognize H. E. Margit Hellwig-Botte, The Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to Botswana,
- Members of the UN Family – Mr. Zia Choudhury, UN RC Botswana and Mrs Mariama Cisse, IOM SLO Director, Ethiopia,
- Mr. Maemo Machete, Director Khartoum Center, African Union Commission
- Representatives of the RECS here present,
- AfCFTA Representatives here present,
- Members of the Press Corps,
- Distinguished Delegates,
- Ladies and Gentlemen,

I bring you greetings from Honorable Betty Amongi Ongom, Minister of Gender, Labour and Social Development, in her capacity as Chairperson of the Specialized Technical Committee - STC - on social development, labour and employment.

In a special way, let me welcome you to Gaborone, a meticulously clean city in the heart of Southern Africa. Thank you, Botswana, for the warmth, hospitality and the excellent facilities placed at the disposal of my delegation and other Member States, invited guests and other participants.

For a long time, Botswana has been a beacon – a radar that showed Africa that Diamonds and Democracy can go hand in hand.

That Diamonds and Democracy can lead to Development.

You've also brought in another "D", and that is Diversification of the economy.

Another "D" is BioDiversity, for which you are world renown – which makes me add another "D" to the equation, and that is the Okavango Delta.

Excellencies,

Uganda – a country with a warm heart

We are here to deliberate on the nexus between trade, free movement of persons, migration, employment and social development.

But allow me start by saying a thing or two about the country called Uganda.

And am not going to say how it is the most beautiful country in the world.

Not that it has the friendliest people.

Note even that it has abundant wildlife and fauna.

Not that it is permanently green, with average temperatures of 28°C.

Not even that it's the Source of the longest river in the world – the River Nile – and
home of the largest lake in Africa – Lake Victoria.

But yes, it's the Pearl of Africa.

Not any of that.

Let us be our brother's keepers

With a population of about 45 million, Uganda is host to about 1.5 million refugees.

And yet we continue to promote an open-door policy.

We do not encamp refugees and asylum seekers.

Refugee children can attend our schools.

The Government gives refugees land to farm.

They are allowed to start their own businesses.

And above all, they are part of the national labour market, and are allowed to work.

For us, this is about solidarity with the unfortunate and African integration.

Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen, what have we proven over the many years

we've hosted refugees? There is no tangible proof that refugees are a burden to the

economies of their host countries, that they take away our jobs, or that they are a source of insecurity.

Why? I am because we are, and because we are, therefore I am.

So, if there is any message to take away from me today, my number one point is that we should be our brother's keepers.

Intra-African trade

We just picking up the practice of trading with each other. That's why we are all supportive of AfCFTA.

We can no longer continue to consume what we do not produce, and produce what we do not consume.

We need to create jobs in Africa by adding value to our products.

We need to save the scarce foreign exchange, and spend on what we really must.

In short, we need to trade more with each other.

In January 2024, President Yoweri Museveni will host the 19th Nonaligned Movement (NAM) Summit in Kampala. If you've been to Kampala off late, you'll have noticed that delegates are ferried in cool and calm electric buses, made in Uganda by Ugandans at the Kira Motors Corporation at the source of the Rive Nile in Jinja. These buses are already operational, as the plant is also venturing into SUVs, Sedans and Pickups for the domestic as well as regional markets.

We have created jobs.

We are saving the environment.

We have saved the much-needed foreign exchange.

We are using our local products.

You are all more than welcome to place your orders for these authentic African vehicles.

Challenges abound

Yet I know there are a number of things that are still work in progress in the journey toward a truly integrated Africa that trades with itself.

Infrastructure – road, rail, water and air - needs to be revamped.

Energy is still a tall order, much as we have all that it takes to generate that energy – e.g., hydropower from the Nile, Congo, Zambezi and Limpopo rivers, let alone the ever-present sun's rays, uranium, lithium, oil and gas, etc. that we possess in abundance.

Peace and security elude some parts of the continent, fueled by illicit trade in arms.

Illicit financial flows out of the continent are a huge waste of our would-be development budgets.

Allow me speak to the issues that are most squarely within the realm of the STC I am representing here, much as I am fully aware that we the Sustainable

Development Agenda calls for a holistic approach in the pursuit of the SDGs by 2030.

Employment planning and financing

We are all aware of the youthfulness of Africa's population. Feeding, educating, skilling, providing adequate health care, housing, water, sanitation, and giving them decent jobs is the primary objective of any government. Therefore, proper planning and financing is called for. Most times the only asset that a poor person possesses is their labour.

Yet labour can be exploited if not well regulated. That's why we stand with trade union and employer delegates here in calling for respect for international labour standards across the continent.

The provision of decent jobs for all is not just smart economics but is politically correct.

In other words, create jobs at home, ensure peace and security, and attract investments, so that your young people will not be desperate to leave the continent.

Migration for development

My next message is about the age-old phenomenon of migration. Migration for employment is a key pillar for AfCFTA. For long the people and the private sector have been ahead of their governments when it comes to cross border trade and investments.

If goods and services are able to move freely, why are there huddles for the free movement of persons?

Many African countries have signed bilateral labour migration agreements with the GCC countries, as well as the EU, UK, and North America. By so doing, African nationals have sourced jobs in those countries. Moreover, remittances continue to grow.

Unfortunately, such cross-border movement of persons has also attracted the attention of the bad guys – human traffickers who through unethical recruitment practices lure innocent souls into untold danger.

We continue to watch with horror the death of our kith and kin in the Mediterranean, as well as the suffering and dehumanization, they go through when they eventually reach what they perceived to be the promised lands.

This is where we need to act as one – ensuring that migration is not a death sentence, but a fact of life, a development policy that will bring benefits to the countries of origin, transit and destination, as well as the migrants themselves and their families and communities.

Harnessing intra-African migration

As we move toward free movement of labour across the continent, it would be most appropriate to see more labour, employment and human resources exchanges

between African countries. In this way we are able to bridge each other's human resource needs.

A visa-free Africa is possible

And yet, we continue to hinder free movement of labour through stringent visa and residence regimes.

We are 55 AU Member States – 55 brothers and sisters – children of Mother Africa.

And yet we continue to deny each other entry into our homes.

I welcome the steps that the RECs – the building blocks of Africa's integration - continue to do in facilitating free movement of persons.

In a special way, let me congratulate and applaud Honorable Dr. Peter Matuku Mathuki, the Secretary General of the East Africa Community for fast-tracking regional integration in Eastern Africa.

The DRC is now a full member of the EAC, joining Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi and South Sudan.

Ethiopia and Somalia have also expressed interest to join the regional block.

The blue passport is now our common means of travel within the EAC block.

With my Ugandan national ID, I can walk into Kenya and Rwanda.

I know that other RECs are doing the same - SADC, ECOWAS, IGAD, CEEAC and UMA – and are at different stages in ensuring free movement of labor across their international boundaries. These are welcome moves that should be encouraged and supported.

However, the most exciting news comes from my other President, His Excellency William Ruto of Kenya. So, Excellencies, allow me end my speech by quoting him verbatim, speaking in Brazzaville on Saturday, October 28, 2023:

"When people cannot travel, businesspeople cannot travel, entrepreneurs cannot travel, we all become net losers.

"Let me say this: As Kenya, by the end of this year, no African will be required to have a visa to come to Kenya"

Can we all make that commitment? Yes, we can.

On that optimistic note, let me thank the generous support of the IOM, African Union and the GIZ in bringing us together here in Botswana. The technical and financial support cannot be taken for granted, and we remain always indebted to them.

As the STC Chair, we look forward to some concrete steps in ensuring that trade, investments, migration and employment deliver the much-needed social development that Africa strives to achieve.

I thank you for listening.

FOR GOD AND MY COUNTRY.