

**REMARKSBY
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**AT THE MEETING OF THE
HIGH-LEVEL PANEL ON MIGRATION**

**BELLA CASA HOTEL
MONROVIA, LIBERIA
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Excellences,
Distinguished -Panel Members
Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is a great pleasure to welcome you today. You are in Liberia at a time of a historic event, a moment that will stand as a landmark in our long march towards a society of freedom, peace and equality. In more than 70 years, we will witness a smooth transition from one democratically elected government to another. Reaching this milestone took many sacrifices. Thousands of Liberians have lost their lives for the battle to democracy, for a political system that recognizes the rights of all and where all have equal rights and opportunities. There are more challenges ahead, but I have no doubt, the new administration will keep the country on the trajectory of peace, reconciliation and development.

As I prepare for exit from an active political scene, I am happy to convene and chair this panel, to discuss migration, one of the most crucial issues of our time.

The movement of people from one place to another, in search of wealth, knowledge or simple curiosity is an integral part of the evolution of nations. We are all from somewhere but we all share one planet and our destiny as one humanity is the link that keeps us together.

In recent years, this natural phenomenon of people moving from their dwellings to seek wealth, knowledge or peace of mind has become the subject of political debates. On the one hand, we see the

negative aspects of migration: thousands of young people risking their lives to cross borders for better opportunities in life. Rising death tolls in the Mediterranean or in the Sahara, the slave trade in Libya, detention camps in Europe, all tell a horrifying story of migration. Then we see the other side, successful migrants, who managed to resettle in new cultural environment and contribute highly to the growth of their new society while supporting the ones they left behind. Liberia is a good case in point: when there was no functional government here for many years, the Diaspora supported the nation with remittances.

In this dichotomy, many questions need to be answered, not just in Africa but throughout the world. These answers may help nations that are facing a migration crisis resort to xenophobic policies to stop people from other cultures from entering their land. We need to search deep to understand all the complex issues of migration and how they affect and benefit development.

Africa is not an island that is connected to the rest of the world. As much as 87 percent of African migrants are reported to stay on the continent, moving from one country to another, and a great number of these move to other countries.

Today, we are extremely pleased to welcome the President of the African Development Bank, Dr. Akinwumi Adesina, who recently joined that panel. We also welcome the Former Foreign Minister of Norway, Knut Vollebaek, who was with us during our June meeting. We are happy to have amongst us Mr. Glen Linder, Director General

on International and Intergovernmental Relations from Canada standing in for Minister Ahmed Hussein. The private sector is well-represented, Ms. Denisa E Baloyi, Black Business Caucus from South Africa and Mr. Aigboje Aig-Imoukhuede, Chairman, Corporation Capital Ltd, Nigeria. I am pleased that Ms. Cynthia Samuel-Olonjowon, Regional Director for Africa of the International Labor Organization could join.

I extend a very warm welcome to our Special Guest at this meeting, Dr. Vera Songwe, UN Under-Secretary and Executive Secretary of Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and thank her for support to the special secretariat in my office and the Ministry of Finance Development Planning. Welcome Vera! Your presence here is clear manifestation of the importance ECA accords to migration.

Panel Members, Ladies and Gentlemen:

The High-Level Panel on International Migration was established through Resolution 940 (XLIX) on International Migration in Africa - at the Ninth Joint Annual Meetings of the African Union Specialized Technical Committee on Finance, Monetary Affairs, Economic Planning and Integration and the Economic Commission for Africa Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development in Addis Ababa in April 2016.

The objective of the High-level Panel is to affirm Africa's commitment to global objectives and values on migration, and harness migration for Africa's development in the context of international cooperation. The Panel is expected to enhance the

production of migration-related knowledge to support formulation of evidence-based policies; sensitize policy makers to integrate migration into national plans and strategies; and propose and advocate policies and mobilize support for practices that promote international migration for the development of Africa.

Fellow Panel Members:

In his message on January 1, for the celebration of World Day of Peace, His Holiness Pope Francis called upon the United Nations to draft and approve two Global Compacts, one for safe, orderly and regular migration and the other for refugees. These aspirations can be found in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and in Africa's Vision 2063.

As we work towards presenting a report to the African Union Summit in July 2018, our objectives are as follows:

- Champion migration issues at the highest level of political discourse;
- Increase policy space for migration and promote better migration governance;
- Bring about change in the African migration narrative; and
- Use our experiences and offices to enhance international cooperation on migration.

The expectations are high, and the challenges are many. Implementation of the numerous well-articulated international and Africa regional migration policy frameworks and instruments fall far below what is required. Human rights of migrants are not being

observed in many cases. Smuggling and trafficking in persons continue. Africa is one of the most visa restrictive regions of world. Xenophobic and negative attitudes towards migrants are undermining the socio-economic development potential of migration. Policy and institutional frameworks to govern labor migration are most inadequate.

Media images of desperate African in boats risking their lives across the Mediterranean, and the recent migrant detention stories continue to shame Africa. While the drivers of migration are varied and complex, much can be done towards poverty eradication, job creation (especially for our youth), good governance and peace and security, in line with development frameworks, particularly the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 which address the drivers and challenges of African migration.

Panel Members:

We have our work cut out. However, a lot has already been done in terms of policy outlook. The AU strategic and policy frameworks on migration are a good reference point for guidance. The recommendations from the recently concluded African Regional Consultations on the Global Compact on Migration, and the African Common Position on the Global Compact are also laudable initiatives. Both will ensure that Africa's narratives and priorities are reflected in the Global Compact.

In this regard, I thank the ECA, IOM and the AUC for the great work in delivering on the regional consultations on the global compact on migration.

Panel Members, Ladies and Gentlemen:

The objective of this meeting is twofold:

- To be a forum to identify and articulate key issues on the African migration story, and challenges and priorities to inform the Panel's work;
- To agree on the work plan, approach and methodology as well as the format of the final report of the Panel, to be presented at the AU Summit in July 2018. Of course, it does not end there – we are ambassadors of better migration governance for development.

On behalf of the Panel, I wish to thank Norway for supporting this process and ECA for working closely with us in organizing this meeting. Special thanks to all of you and those who came from near and far to be with us to discuss this very important issue.

I thank you.