



AFRICAN CIVIL SOCIETY & DIASPORA



1 FEBRUARY, 2023

THE ABUJA STATEMENT

We, the representatives of African and diaspora civil society organisations met in Abuja, Nigeria on 30th January – 1st February 2023 at the Abuja CSO and diaspora Forum. The forum aimed to build capacity and strengthen African engagement in global migration processes and frameworks and to launch the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) civil society process 2023.

We acknowledge the importance of **creating and sustaining the space for civil society organisations as independent actors** and integral partners within the GFMD. We equally acknowledge the role of civil society organisations, and particularly African and diaspora civil society organisations in contributing to the Global Compact on Migration (GCM) process.

We recognise that the GFMD process includes CSOs, states and other partners (the Business Mechanism, and the Mayors Mechanism) as part of the continuing dialogue on migration and development aimed at **improving livelihoods** for migrants and their families.

We reaffirm our commitment to **engaging in the 2022-2023 GFMD** process and its leadership. We have aligned our deliberations on the six thematic issues identified by the GFMD leadership, while adding to the discourse. The thematic areas are the impact of climate change on human mobility; rights and migration; multi-level governance; diasporas; labour migration; and perception of migrants, culture and discourse.

We reiterate our commitment to **engage with states and other mechanisms** of the GFMD in contributing to the discussions and actions envisaged by the Government-led Roundtable Teams (GRTs) as we approach the 14th GFMD Summit in February 2024.

We note the recent policy developments at regional and continental level, such as the African Union (AU)- Free Movement of Persons Protocol and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) with implications on labour mobility, the progress on the implementation of the GCM and the International Migration Review Forum (IMRF) and upcoming Regional Migration Review Forum (RMRF) for Africa. Further, we note the contributions of these processes in **protecting the welfare and wellbeing of migrants and their families** through creating avenues for safe, orderly and regular migration. Thus, ensuring coherence with the GCM, the African Union 2063 Agenda, various sub-regional protocols, and the thematic priorities identified by the 2022-2023 GFMD.

We are concerned about the **failure of states to provide legal, safe and regular pathways** which contribute to trafficking, exploitation and loss of life at land and sea.



We are gravely concerned about the non-compliance of states with international human rights, in general, and specific to migration instruments and frameworks. We reiterate the urgent need to provide specific and **tailored protection** to groups at risk and in vulnerable situations. These include women, children, refugees and asylum seekers, stateless persons, migrants in irregular situations and those fleeing the effects of conflict and climate-induced disasters. We also reiterate the urgent need to advance the development of diaspora engagement policies, and their implementation, as well as bi-lateral engagements which improve migration governance and significantly strengthen diaspora contributions to sustainable development.

In general, we recommend the following actions to states:

- Promote the **human rights** of migrants, social justice for migrants, decent work, inclusive integration policies and a focus on migration and development that reflects the realities of migrants and their communities.
- **Protect women and child migrants on the move**, guarantee their safety while on the move as well as provide safe avenues for their mobility.
- Adopt a **humane approach** in addressing security issues linked to migration to avoid the maltreatment of migrants and their families in the guise of security threats.
- Prioritise **regularisation** as a twin objective of providing legal pathways to the diversity of migrants.
- Extend the migration and development dialogue to the subnational and community level.
- Advance the **accountability** of countries as part of the GCM process through robust monitoring and review processes and mechanisms;
- Specifically, we urge Regional Economic Communities (RECS) in their coordination role to provide an **enabling space for CSOs** to engage in their various processes through existing institutional structures and mechanisms on migration and development.
- Prioritise urgency on **diaspora engagement** as a route to enhancing and adding significant value to ongoing development, while ensuring mutual benefit for countries of origin, residence and the diaspora itself.

On three priority areas identified by African CSOs at the Abuja Forum, we make the following recommendations.



ON THE IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON HUMAN MOBILITY

We acknowledge that climate-induced mobility is posing multiple threats to people's lives and properties in Africa. We affirm that climate-related disasters are forcibly displacing people from their homes, while disproportionately affecting women and youth. We recognise that the drivers of climate migration, such as extreme weather events, are prevalent across African countries and they often cut across borders and communities with devastating effects on livelihoods, further resulting in food insecurity, job loss, health crises, violent conflicts, among others. In view of these, we urge states, working with other partners to:

- Establish an **early warning and preparedness** system that provides valid data linked to climate-related mobility.
- Collaborate through **cross-border partnerships** to promote safe, orderly, and dignified human mobility, and planned relocation in the face of climate change, while putting in place gender-sensitive and human rights-based approaches.
- Adopt policies and frameworks that factor in **climate-induced migration**.
- Diversify **economic opportunities** that provide adaptation mechanisms (e.g. entrepreneurship, paid employment, etc) to migrants and their families.
- Meaningfully integrate **frontline communities** and vulnerable populations in decision-making and policy implementation processes on climate migration-related issues.
- Raise awareness and promote **knowledge exchange** among communities affected by climate change, in particular women and youth.
- Prioritise immediate **funding of the loss and damage fund**, with a focus on people affected by climate-related disasters, while eliminating the bureaucratic processes and barriers to access the funds and ensuring fair and equitable distribution.
- Collaborate with partners, including the Mayors migration mechanism to promote measures related to **adaptation** and devising innovative solutions.

ON LABOUR MIGRATION

We acknowledge the importance of labour migration and the prevalence of African migrant workers in the informal economy. **We are gravely concerned about the criminalisation of the mobility of migrant workers within and outside of Africa.** We are concerned about the **exclusion of migrants in the informal sector** from socio-economic protections, including access to healthcare, social security, freedom of association and collective bargaining. We note the role of migration, especially labour migration, in **catalysing economic growth, development and prosperity**, and the importance of remittance flows and of skills transfers. Taking this into account, we call on states, working with other partners to:

- **Adopt** the United Nations and International Labour Organisation (ILO) **conventions and regulations**, in particular, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (1990), the Migration for Employment Convention (Revised), 1949 (No. 97) and the Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, 1975 (No. 143), the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189), and their accompanying Recommendations.
- Promote the ILO Decent Work Agenda and promote **fair and equitable recruitment** in coordination and engagement with civil society, as part of an enabling environment allowing freedom of association and collective bargaining.
- Ensure **ethical recruitment** practices are adopted throughout the migration journey by adopting the relevant policy and taking stock of best practices and lessons learned.
- Promote the mobility of workers through enhancing, expanding and creating schemes that will ensure temporary **mobility of migrant workers** and their families.
- Establish **visa pathways** and extended visa categories for migrant workers across skills categories.
- Recognise **skills** of all migrants by adopting Recognition of Prior Learning guiding principles that include aspects of skills improvement and recognition especially for migrants engaged in the informal economy.

- Create **legal avenues** for migrant workers to access social welfare systems and promote the portability of social benefits especially when returning to their countries of origin.
- Conclude **labour mobility agreements** (e.g. bilateral labour agreements, global skills partnerships) that include specific provisions to ensure the protection of the rights of migrant workers and guarantee their fundamental rights at work, including wage protection systems, legal complaint and mediation mechanisms through diplomatic missions of countries of origin. This process should include consultation of social partners, including trade unions and CSOs.
- Ensure **inclusive approaches** to labour migration governance and recognition of skills across borders especially those migrating from African countries.

ON THE DIASPORA

We recognise that the diaspora are key actors in promoting the development of their communities, countries of origin and countries of residence. We acknowledge that **the diaspora amplifies the concerns of migrants, their families and communities of origin**. We underscore the journey of the migrant, and the multi-generational power of its diaspora, strongly acknowledging that while all migrants are diaspora, not all diaspora are migrants - this needs to be integrated into every aspect of migration and development. Thus, we call on states, working with other partners to:

- Enhance **collaboration between diaspora and the governments** in the countries of origin to promote diaspora networks for productive investment and development.
- Address **challenges related to remittances**, including methods of transfer, reducing the cost of transfers and increasing coverage and access.
- Provide an enabling environment for **diaspora investment** through reducing the cost of doing business, introducing security for investment (diaspora fund), **incentivising remittances** including through tax breaks or reduced tariffs.
- Ensure that the diaspora can access (and retain) their **civil and political rights** in countries of origin, including through citizenship (such as voting abroad) and representation in government.

- Re-prioritise Pan-Africanism that is focused on heritage and culture as part of our global history linking the diaspora to countries of origin, and amplifying the **cultural capital** of diaspora in sustaining the cultural heritage of their countries and regions of origin.
- Engage diaspora organisations (communities) as **technical partners** with governments to promote skills transfers, upskilling and create decent job opportunities in countries of origin, using their networks.
- Enhance **bi-lateral collaborations** that build on diaspora contributions to residence and origin countries, and develop frameworks for access to rights such as portability of social protection.
- Promote the engagement of the diaspora that considers the importance of **generational links** through mapping and engagement of multi-generational diaspora as well as targeted activities
- Recognise the important contributions of **second and subsequent generations of diasporas** (that is the children of migrants and their descendants) in all areas of migration and development as well as humanitarian support and encourage their continued support in diaspora engagement efforts.

ON OTHER IMPORTANT AREAS FOR CONSIDERATION

We recognise that the six priority areas identified by the GFMD leadership do not adequately cover all aspects related to African migration and development.

In relation to supporting effective engagement of African actors, we recognise the **limited financial support** and **shrinking space for engagement** from the international community which constrains the effective engagement of African actors. More concretely, we note that the Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MMPTF), in its current form, is not an appropriate mechanism for financing civil society and diaspora organisations. To this end, we further recommend:

- The organisation and **self-mobilisation** of civil society, including building the capacity of civil society organisations to engage on thematic issues from their perspective and agendas.
- Strengthening platforms for CSOs, the diaspora and trade unions to engage through **multi-stakeholder** dialogues.



- Strengthen the engagement and participation of the **African youth** in countries of origin and destination in seeking practical solutions that address migration and development;
- Strengthen an **Afro-centric and migrant-focussed approach** to addressing return and reintegration of migrants with effective programmes that involve communities of return.
- **Targeted funding** of diverse and innovative programmes, projects and initiatives, including advocacy for a civil society fund as part of the UN Network on Migration through the MMPTF and other funding mechanisms.
- Explore and establish an **alternative, inclusive and empowering mechanism** where civil society and diaspora organisations are direct beneficiaries and principal applicants.
- An enhanced role of the **GFMD Civil Society Mechanism** to lead discussions on financing of migration related projects.

We count on the support for African civil society and diaspora for the implementation and follow-up of this declaration.

