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Third Thematic Consultation: International cooperation and governance of migration in all its dimensions including at borders, on transit, entry, return, readmission, integration and reintegration

Statement prepared by Trade Collective on behalf of Women in Migration Network (WIMN)

Re integration : Challenges and Frameworks from Southern Africa

- **16 million Afrikans¹ are moving within the continent** contrary to the normative media narratives that suggest migration takes place primarily between Afrikan countries and Europe. South Africa has the fifth highest number of asylum seekers and is the highest destination route for other Afrikan countries. It is also **a hub for filmmaking, astronomy international events and a leading medical destination**. It is essential that migration flows and patterns within the Afrikan continent are understood beyond the uni-directional and mono- dimensional discourses that dominate popular discussions.
- **Migration and integration within Afrikan countries accounts for 63%** and within Southern Afrika is primarily as a result of economics, climate change, employment opportunities and governance challenges. Much of this is as a result of the ever-shifting forms of globalisation, economic structural adjustment and ongoing political and economic incursions on the Afrikan continent.
- Accordingly, it is important to recognise that reintegration can challenge classic forms of humanitarianism. However Migration and reintegration must not justify and erase the global economic system that buffers the **shocking divide between the North and the South and the stark class and economic divisions within states**.

Effective re-integration strategies

- It is essential to that **States invest in training public officials such as teachers, immigration officers, medical personnel and the police**. This will immeasurably support returning migrants and **avert some of the stigma, confusion and criminalisation** as faced by many South Afrikans -like myself- who returned after the defeat of colonial Apartheid in 1994. These difficulties and complexities are similarly faced by migrants returning to

¹ Please note this is Author's preferred spelling of *Afrika* with a **K** as deliberately distinct from the Europeanized Africa with a **C**. The exceptions are place names like 'South Africa' and institutions like 'African Union'.

countries across the region including Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Malawi, Zambia , DRC and Mozambique.

- A collaborative approach to integration and re-integration is necessary to ameliorate misperceptions about the returning migrants such as the association with coming from overseas and having wealth, complex ideas of identity and belonging particularly for long term migrants, social stigma and resentment, loss of family, social , cultural ties and the need to regain social and emotional support.

Policy considerations

- South Africa has recognised some of the complexities of migration and integration. **The South African Green Paper on Migration** recognises that globalisation is causing increased interdependence between trade, migration and social investment. **Migration seems to be influenced by regional economic integration processes** in the Afrikan context rather than **human solidarity**. State support for returning migrants has been weak [particularly for economically vulnerable or marginal returnees]. However, these migratory flows are also marked by mixed institutional capacity and data capturing in many Afrikan countries.
- **The Green Paper** claims to build national consensus around a new international migration policy. It proposes policy interventions in seven areas of which three policy areas are not currently addressed in the 1999 White Paper on International Migration. They include managing international migration in an Afrikan context; **managing ties with South African emigrants; and, managing the integration of international migrants into society**. These policy areas are also the least developed. Therefore, public inputs on these issues are required to provide a solid foundation for the drafting of new legislation that is vertically and horizontally coherent but also in sync with economic integration efforts taking place at the regional and continental levels. **The development of an Afrikan oriented immigration policy offers an opportunity for South Africa to offer new commitments and extract concessions from Southern African Development Community (SADC and CFTA Members on the movement of people**. Equally, the imminent Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) negotiations could potentially shape and accelerate the development of South Africa's new immigration regime. However this potentially feeds into the **dogma of 'most favoured migrants and most favoured returnees'**.
- **MOUs between EAC, COMESA , ECOWAS** and other regional economic commissions are proving almost impossible to harmonise and **leave migrants from beyond SADC in an hostile and difficult environment** and in fact privilege migrants from Europe and North America. In relation to the CFTA, a systematic process of harmonisation is required to enable visa free entry across and between Afrikan countries thereby enabling greater flexibilities for reintegration.
- The Green Paper acknowledges at least two resolutions adopted by the Assembly set clear parameters for South Africa's immigration policy, namely, the establishment of a **Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) and a continent-wide visa-free regime, including the issuing of visas on arrival at ports of entry for Afrikan citizens**. As a result, visa-free entry should be the norm provided bilateral return agreements are concluded. Recently, the **Department started issuing 10-year multiple entry visas to frequent travellers from other Afrikan countries which supports an integrative approach to migration and choices of abode among member states**.
- Migration policies potentially help to shape the future composition of a population. However most policies still give preference to professionals or investors or set quotas to limit the intake of other migrants. **However, Southern Africa is still developing a coherent policy to assist holders of long-term work visas, permanent residents, naturalised citizens and refugees to integrate into society**. This could for example

include the granting of family-based visas, induction programmes and social security to qualifying refugees.

- In SADC, although lagging behind other regional economic communities on the continent, **the Protocol on the Facilitation of Movement of Persons has been adopted to facilitate the free movement of people, encompassing the right to visa-free entry, residence (temporary and permanent), and establishment (income generating activities)**. The main challenge in this regard is to develop critical enabling conditions, such as compatible immigration policies, laws, systems and accurate population registers. In light of slow progress regionally, South Africa has unilaterally or bilaterally adopted visa-free entry for nationals from **11 SADC countries. It also offers special permits to irregular migrants from Zimbabwe and Lesotho.**

Other Policy interventions

1. Bi lateral agreements
2. MOUs between States and institutions
3. Bi laterals on social security protection
4. State led support on re-integration processes
5. SADC Labour Migration Plan [2016-2019]
 - Protection of pension plans and social protection across SADC, continuum of health care across borders, governance of SADC labour migration activities
6. SADC Revised Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan
 - Ensure that the SADC Labour Migration Policy Framework should be improved in order to bring various bi lateral and multi lateral labour agreements into force
 - Portability of savings, pensions and pension plans across border thus facilitating smoother re-integration
 - Facilitate SADC protocol on movement of people