

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL COUNCIL

Press Release No: 020/2022

Date: May 19th, 2022

Venue: Accra, Ghana

CSOs called upon to promote the AU's Free Movement Protocol



African Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) have been urged to support and promote the implementation of the African Union's Free Movement Protocol (FMP) and the Migration Policy Framework for Africa (MPFA).

This clarion call to CSOs was made during the opening of the Regional CSO Sensitization Forum on the Continental Free Movement Protocol organized by the AU Economic, Social, and Cultural Council (AU-ECOSOCC) with support from the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ).

The forum was held from May 17-19 aimed to popularize the FMP and MPFA, and particularly to improve the understanding of African CSOs of the FMP and to provide them with tools to perform advocacy for implementation of the Protocol by member states.

The FMP and the MPFA have been established by the AU as the primary policy frameworks to address, manage, and promote migration and mobility on the continent.

The FMP, in particular, aims to curb and eventually eliminate barriers to regional border migration (to work, visit, trade, live, etc.) within the continent. Eliminating these barriers translates to economic growth on the continent as well as improved migration procedures for African citizens.

Unfortunately, despite the existence of these migration policy frameworks, policy uptake among AU Member States and their popularization within African civil society remains low and has not achieved the desired impact.

The opening ceremony was presided by The Honourable Kwaku Ampratwum-Sarpong Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration of the Republic of Ghana; Mr Denise Kodhe, ECOSOCC Presiding Officer; Ms. Dorothee Dinkelaker, Head of Cooperation, German Embassy Ghana; Mr Albert Siaw-Boateng, Director in charge of the Free Movement, ECOWAS Commission and Mr William Carew, Head of ECOSOCC Secretariat. Also in attendance during the forum was Ghana's Ambassador to Ethiopia and Permanent Representative to AU and UNECA, Mrs. Amma Twum-Amoah.

In his keynote address, Hon. Amapratwum-Sarpong noted that the concepts of migration and human mobility were a common phenomenon in African history, caused by factors such as poverty, conflict, a lack of good governance, and environmental stress, necessitating now more than ever the need to disseminate and implement the policies which AU Member States endorsed to address, manage and promote migration and mobility for the benefit of Africans.

He expressed regret over the fact that out of about 30 countries that had signed the Free Movement Protocol, only a handful had ratified it.

Mr William Carew, Head of the ECOSOCC Secretariat stated that, "Africa has a common problem when it comes to labour migration and free movement, so unless we have a united approach, finding a common solution may seem utopian, we need CSOs to work hand in hand with Governments and advocate for the prioritisation of labour migration and free movement issues."

He said the issue of cross-border travel was strategic to achieving one of the AU's Agenda 2063's flagship projects which identifies free movement on the continent as key to accelerating Africa's economic growth and development. He therefore urged the CSOs to use their influence to exert some pressure on member countries to take the needed action.

Ms. Dorothee Dinkelaker, Head of Cooperation, German Embassy, Ghana, expressed her satisfaction that the Protocol which had the goal of facilitating safe, orderly, and regular movement in Africa had now entered a new phase focusing on labour migration

as well. She called for continued efforts in developing action plans, as an important part of implementing the Protocol.

The CSOs convened at the forum represented a diverse range of technical experts in a range of thematic areas that intersect with the continent's free movement agenda. As a result, participant-led presentations depicted the expert-level discussions on cross-cutting and pressing issues within the FMP, such as social-economic rights, peace, security, human rights, women and youth, climate change, health security, and food security.

Most importantly, the forum has been critical in identifying the tools and capacity-building requirements for civil society to participate in the protocol's implementation.

The forum's deliberations have been consolidated into a plan of action focusing on advocacy, promotion, ratification, domestication and implementation of the AU's FMP, and particularly in addressing areas where civil society's capacity and engagement require strengthening. The forum concluded with a Civil Society communique for onward transmission to the Member States.

About ECOSOCC

The Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC) was established in July 2004 as an Advisory Organ composed of different social and professional groups of AU Member States. The mandate of ECOSOCC is to contribute, through advice, to the effective translation of the objectives, principles and policies of the African Union into concrete programmes, as well as the evaluation of these programmes.

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