



ECOSOCC
Economic Social & Cultural Council

**The voice of the
African Citizenry**

**THE AFRICAN UNION
ECONOMIC SOCIAL AND CULTURAL COUNCIL**

CONCEPT NOTE

**Colloquium on Women and Gender Advocacy on the African
Union Free Movement Protocol (FMP)**

Permanent Observer Mission of the African Union to the United Nations, New-York

**Venue Address: 3 Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza 305 East 47th Street, 5th Floor New York, NY 10017
United States**

17 MARCH 2025



1.0 Introduction

The Economic, Social, and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC) of the African Union (AU), established in July 2004, serves as a key advisory organ within the AU, amplifying the voice of African civil society in continental policymaking. Since the establishment of its Secretariat, ECOSOCC has strengthened its capacity to provide policy advice and foster constructive engagement with the AU Commission (AUC). Its diverse membership, drawn from civil society organizations across Africa, positions ECOSOCC as a conduit for dialogue between AU institutions and citizens, thereby shaping Africa's development trajectory. Through partnerships with key stakeholders, ECOSOCC plays a strategic role in advancing the AU's principles, policies, and programs across various sectors, including peace and security, economic development, social justice, and human rights.

2.0 Promoting Migration and The Free Movement of People

In its advisory role, ECOSOCC has spearheaded efforts to address migration and human mobility from a civil society perspective. In spite of global migration trends, intra-African migration, typically driven by economic opportunities and political instability, remains a persistent issue. In order to manage and harness the potential of migration, the AU has developed several frameworks, including the Migration Policy Framework for Africa (MPFA) and the Free Movement Protocol (FMP). However, limited awareness, coupled with challenges in domesticating these frameworks, has hindered their effective implementation. For instance, since the FMP's adoption in 2018, only 4 Member States have ratified the protocol, slowing its operationalization.

In response, ECOSOCC, in collaboration with the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, launched the project "Championing Free Movement of Persons, Towards African Prosperity, Through Youth Advocacy." This initiative seeks to stimulate dialogue on the ratification, domestication, and implementation of the FMP by leveraging ECOSOCC's mandate to work with civil society organizations (CSOs), particularly those focused on youth and gender issues. Specifically, the project took a holistic approach to enhancing technical knowledge of the FMP, reinforcing advocacy efforts, correcting misconceptions, and emphasizing its benefits. Further, it placed special emphasis on incorporating the perspectives of women and youth in shaping key continental agendas, particularly the AU FMP and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

3.0 Women, Gender & Youth Inclusion

A core part of ECOSOCC's mandate is to promote Africa's socio-economic transformation through its citizens, as outlined in the AU's Agenda 2063, particularly Aspiration 6, which focuses on empowering women and youth. With Africa's youth population projected to grow significantly by 2050, it has become increasingly imperative to involve and capacitate women and youth in advocacy efforts to propel the continent's growth. Moreover, as African women continue to face disproportionate socio-economic barriers related to mobility, trade, and migration, frameworks such as the AU FMP and AfCFTA must address their specific challenges.

The AfCFTA Protocol on Women and Youth in Trade already provides a foundation for inclusive trade practices. However, its full potential can only be unlocked when it is harmonized with the AU FMP, especially as women and youth, particularly those engaged in cross-border trade, stand to benefit greatly from these frameworks, provided their concerns and contributions are integrated into policy. Other key AU policies reinforce this imperative such as the AU Strategy on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE), which underscores women's economic empowerment as a cornerstone of inclusive development, as articulated in Agenda 2063. Likewise, the AU Decade on Financial and Economic Inclusion for African Women draws attention to the importance of inclusivity in Africa's development agenda, particularly in facilitating women's full economic participation. Collectively, these frameworks prove the need to prioritize women and youth in all socio-economic initiatives.

In order to advance this agenda, ECOSOCC, in partnership with GIZ, organized youth advocacy training sessions on the FMP. The first session was held virtually in March 2024, followed by a second session in Addis Ababa in June 2024, which featured the top ten winners of the "Children and Migration" Young African Writers Contest (YAWC) exploring youth mobility within the FMP. These trainings enhanced advocacy skills, fostered networking, and raised awareness of migration issues in line with Agenda 2063's vision of African unity and sustainability. Building on these initiatives, ECOSOCC hosted two webinars in October 2024 to further explore the intersections between the AfCFTA and the FMP, focusing on how women and youth can contribute to advancing the AfCFTA while addressing the challenges they face in maximizing the benefits of both frameworks.



4.0 Women and Gender Advocacy Workshop on The AU Free Movement Protocol (FMP)

Following the success of the preceding initiatives, ECOSOCC organized a workshop on ‘Women and Gender Advocacy Workshop on the AU FMP,’ themed "Championing African Integration through Free Movement: The Role of Gender and Women’s Advocacy" from 15 to 16 November 2024 in Johannesburg. The workshop concluded a three-year initiative focused on raising awareness, promoting popularization, and advancing the domestication and implementation of the AU FMP, in partnership with GIZ. One of the main outcomes of the workshop was the conceptualization of the ‘Johannesburg Action Plan’ which would entail a finalized Action Policy Document outlining actionable recommendations for integrating gender considerations into discussions related to the AU FMP and AfCFTA.

The upcoming colloquium on the margins of CSW69 aims to provide a platform to share best practices and lessons learned on integrating gender considerations into migration and trade policies—an often-overlooked critical issue in the international community. The event will highlight ECOSOCC’s ongoing efforts and link these discussions to the Beijing+30 review, which will assess progress on gender equality and the empowerment of women in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. By aligning with the themes of CSW69, the colloquium will contribute to global discussions on gender-responsive policy frameworks and promote African perspectives on inclusive migration and trade policies.

5.0 Objectives

The colloquium will seek to:

1. Improve understanding of the AU Free Movement Protocol (FMP) and its intersection with the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA);
2. Promote the importance of integrating gender considerations into migration and trade policies to empower women as key drivers of economic growth;
3. Facilitate dialogue among women and gender-based CSOs to exchange best practices and strategies for effective advocacy.



6.0 Expected Outcomes

1. Policy Influence and Commitments

- Strengthened global recognition of gender-responsive migration and trade policies.
- Increased commitment from AU Member States and partners to integrate gender perspectives into policy frameworks.

2. Strategic Advocacy and Frameworks

- Clear policy recommendations for gender-inclusive migration and trade governance.
- Defined actions to advance implementation at national, regional, and continental levels.

3. Strengthened Partnerships and Collaboration

- Expanded multi-stakeholder engagement for sustained advocacy.
- Creation of a collaborative platform to monitor progress and share best practices.

7.0 Participation

Participants, primarily women representatives, will come from various sectors, including civil society organizations (CSOs), academic institutions, and the media, all engaged at the intersection of gender, migration, and trade; UN Major Groups and relevant AU departments

8.0 Venue and Date :

The workshop is scheduled to take place on 17th March 2025 at the Permanent Observer Mission of the African Union to the United Nations, New York.