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Report of the Migration Dialogue for Southern Africa (MIDSA) Workshop on Human Capital Mobility, Labour and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in Southern Africa, held in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe 26-28 March, 2007

The MIDSA Workshop on Human Capital Mobility, Labour and the MDGs in Southern Africa was held in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe on 26-28 of March, 2007. Participants from the governments of Angola, Botswana, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Seychelles, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe attended the workshop. Most government participants were senior officials from Ministries of Finance/Economic Planning, Home Affairs and Labour. Other participants included representatives from the African Union (AU), Southern African Development Community (SADC) secretariat, Southern African Migration Programme (SAMP), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), European Commission (EC), World Health Organization (WHO), UNAIDS as well as some academic institutions.

The Seychellois delegation was composed of Mrs Marina Confait, CEO of the National Human Resources Development Council, Mr Ronald Fock-Tave, DG Immigration and Mr Egbert Rosalie, DG Employment Promotion.

The objective of the workshop was to take on board inputs from the UN High Level Dialogue (UN-HLD) on Migration and Development last September, and more recently in the Pan-Africa Parliament, which devoted a full day to migration in a plenary session last November, as well as past MIDSA workshops on the theme, and agree on a set of recommendations that (a) can result in concrete collaborative activities and projects to benefit the region and (b) achieve common understandings and priorities that can help Governments plan for the Brussels Global Forum on Migration and Development in July this year.

The workshop was officially opened by His Excellency Minister Nicholas Goche, the Zimbabwean Minister for Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare.

In his opening address, he said that Zimbabwe was grateful and honoured to host MIDSA, and stated that the workshop will help the SADC countries to come up with common understanding in the field of labour migration regarding its positive and negative development impact. He expressed his concerns about the skilled human resource shortages due to brain drain in Zimbabwe, especially in the area of Health, education and social services sectors and stressed the need to come up with new strategies to attract people in these fields. In cognizant of the fact that significant number of Zimbabweans are undertaking dangerous journeys abroad and engaging in the exploitative works, he called for other countries to take protective measures for migrants who seek employment abroad.

Workshop Proceedings

The first day of the workshop focused on reviewing the global/regional trends on human mobility as well as the initiatives taken thus far in the area of labour migration and human mobility. The second day of the programme focused on the assessment of the migration impact on development, particularly in relation to the attainment of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Two countries (Zimbabwe and Mauritius) in the region shared their experiences regarding their innovative policy interventions and other national initiatives. The second part of day 2 focused on the preparatory discussions for the upcoming Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) to be held in Brussels in July 2007, outcomes of which are to be submitted as a regional contribution to the Belgian Presidency of the GFMD for consideration.

Closing Session/Wrap up

The workshop was officially closed by Mr Lancaster Museka, Permanent Secretary for Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare of Zimbabwe. In his closing statement, he noted that there was general agreement that there exists a complex relationship linking underdevelopment, poverty, social exclusion and migration in the region. While acknowledging the negative effects of the brain drain of the qualified personnel, particularly those in health sectors, he expressed his confidence that this workshop's deliberations will contribute to finding sustainable ways to mitigate such negative impacts. He reiterated the importance for the SADC region governments to develop the capacity to manage migration so as to harness its development benefits and urged respective governments to seriously reflect on the outputs of the current MIDSA Workshop. He expressed his confidence that the conclusions and recommendations from the workshop will no doubt contribute to addressing the challenges of human mobility and labour migration. He hoped that the presentations delivered during the workshop will be beneficial for governments to formulate national and regional migration policies, as well as in ensuring that the SADC Protocol on the Facilitation of Free Movement of Persons will be realized.

Mr Museka noted that very few Southern African countries have formally joined the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and strongly encouraged non-members to consider joining the organization.

In concluding his closing remarks, he proposed to the participants that MIDSA workshop be upgraded to Ministerial level, which will be preceded by technical meetings of officials. He envisioned that such development would ensure that decisions made will get strong political commitment and full attention by policy makers.