

High-level Panel on Migration in Africa



United Nations
Economic Commission for Africa

Background

The High-level Panel on Migration in Africa was established in response to the resolution that emerged from the 2016 Conference of Ministers, namely, resolution 940(XLIX) on international migration in Africa,^{1*} which, inter alia, further requested the African Union Commission and the Economic Commission for Africa to establish a high-level panel on international migration in Africa, to provide overall guidance and support to policy dialogues on an African perspective on international migration in Africa. The resolution was in recognition of the need to develop an African perspective on international migration in Africa and avoid the skewed narratives that have led to negative perceptions, for example, the criminalization of migration.

The Panel, which comprises 15 eminent persons from migrant-sending, migrant-receiving and migrant-transit countries, conducts consultations at the national, continental and global levels and engages with a wide range of stakeholders. These include African Governments, African civil society organizations, diaspora groups, migrant organizations and private sector partners, as well as representatives from ECA, the African Union Commission and the African Development Bank.

The overall objective of the Panel is to promote international cooperation, with a view to promoting development in Africa by harnessing the benefits of migration.

The Panel's mandate includes the following:

- Advance an understanding of issues of international migration from an African perspective;
- Build momentum for constructive policy dialogues on international migration in Africa;

- Propose innovative ways for governments, parliaments, civil society organizations, the business sector, academia, and local communities to engage in such dialogues;
- Mobilize support for practices that encourage the effective utilization of political, financial and intellectual resources of migrants for Africa's development;
- Sensitize policymakers to the benefits of integrating migration into national plans and strategies;
- Raise awareness among, and support the efforts of, African member States and other stakeholders, such as citizens, civil society organizations, academia and think tanks, and international development partners, of the need for developing workable methods to leverage the benefits of migration for all.

Context

The Panel recognizes that negative narratives about migrants and migration in general will continue to dominate international discourse unless concerted efforts are made to foster understanding of the contribution that migrants make to inclusive growth and sustainable development. This requires a sound and contextualized understanding of the structural and economic factors behind migration, of existing policy and legal frameworks and of tailored responses that take those factors into account. The Panel seeks to enhance synergies between migration and development policies and ensure that African Governments speak with one voice on migration-related issues. The Panel therefore aims to build effective partnerships among relevant stakeholders and strengthen the political will of African Governments to take action to harness the benefits of migration, while also safeguarding migrants' rights and promoting international cooperation and governance of migration.

¹ * Economic Commission for Africa resolution 940(XLIX) was adopted at the Ninth Joint Annual Meetings of the African Union Specialized Technical Committee on Finance, Monetary Affairs, Economic Planning and Integration and the Economic Commission for Africa Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, which were held in Addis Ababa on 4 and 5 April 2016.

Migration is vital to Africa's transformation and for helping the continent to achieve the goals enshrined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to achieve the aspirations of Agenda 2063 of the African Union. Sensationalist media reporting has served to confirm existing stereotypes by focusing much of the recent attention and debate on international migration. In fact, the percentage of the continent's population that has migrated (internationally and within Africa) is very small – amounting to little more than 3 per cent.

As Africa positions itself to face a high-mobility future, its policy responses need to be proactive, pro-poor, and far more coherent. At present, the continent's responses are driven by multiple, often contradictory, interests and impulses. The Panel seeks to embrace mobility and view it as an opportunity for continental integration, security and prosperity.

The High-level Panel on Migration in Africa emphasizes that migration is central to Africa's development and requires political leadership at the highest level. It will also involve encouraging civil society to embrace mobility in ways that it has largely failed to do. As Africa moves forward with the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area provisions, and the recommendations of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, it must also find ways of projecting its voice beyond the continent, to influence global and other regional processes that will shape African development, security and mobility.

International migration: an overview

Globally, the number of migrants increased by 80 per cent between 1990 and 2017. The African emigration

rate nevertheless declined, from 3.2 per cent to 2.9 per cent, during the same period, owing to the doubling of the continent's population. The table below compares African emigration trends with the emigration trends for migrants originating in other regions.

Thematic focus and specific objectives of the Panel

The thematic focus of the Panel is on the economics of migration. It aims to support efforts by governments and other relevant stakeholders to leverage the opportunities arising from migration flows, with a view to, among other things, reducing unemployment and underemployment, combating poverty and fostering broader social and economic development. In that connection, the Panel recognizes that migration can contribute to the transfer of skills, knowledge and technology and can thereby boost productivity and economic growth. The specific objectives of the Panel include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Conducting migration trend analysis to deepen an understanding of the scale and impact of migration. Such analysis covers topics such as the impact on countries of the “brain drain” and “brain gain” resulting from migrant flows; circular versus permanent migration; illegal migration; the role played by the diasporas, including the impact of remittances on migrants' countries of origin; the situation of women migrants; the integration of migrants; and the role of the media and public officials;
- Promoting multi-stakeholder mechanisms to encourage regular information exchange and ensure that Africa speaks with one voice on migration;
- Raising the awareness of policymakers to the need for and promoting the use of appropriate strategies

Table: Migrants by region of origin (as a percentage of that region's population), 1990–2017

	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2017
World	2.9	2.8	2.8	2.9	3.2	3.4	3.4
Africa	3.2	3.0	2.8	2.8	2.7	2.9	2.9
Asia	1.8	1.7	1.7	1.8	2.1	2.3	2.3
Europe	6.6	6.7	6.8	7.0	7.5	7.9	8.2
Latin America and the Caribbean	3.4	4.1	4.7	5.2	5.8	5.8	5.8
North America	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.1	1.2	1.2	1.2
Oceania	0.6	3.7	4.0	4.1	4.3	4.6	4.6

Note: Figures represent the total percentage of the world's population living outside their country of origin.

Source: United Nations, International Migration Report (2017).

to leverage opportunities arising from migration for the benefit of all;

- Advocating a supportive policy and governance environment that can help countries to harness all benefits resulting from migration, while fully upholding migrants' rights.

Activities of the Panel

To achieve its objectives, the High-level Panel on Migration in Africa will undertake the following activities:

- Advocate for the production of migration-related knowledge to support the development of evidence-based national policies and strategies;
- Determine the economic impacts, both the costs and benefits of international migration to Africa to promote policy dialogues and policy formulation;
- Advocate for the collection of reliable data on migration to promote policy dialogues and policy formulation;
- Engage with other stakeholders on the strategies for implementing and monitoring of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration;
- Engage member States on the signing and ratification of the Protocol to the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community relating to Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment;
- Build partnerships among African member States, regional economic communities, and international development partners to promote rights of migrants and facilitate their movement, and reduce vulnerability of migrants, especially women;
- Extend the state of knowledge to determine the nature and patterns of national and international migration streams in Africa;
- Assess the impact of irregular migration, particularly in transit countries, and the impact on border communities, assess skilled migration both for countries of origin and of destination and the long-term implications of remittance flows for development.

The Panel will participate in multi-stakeholder forums and regional consultations in order to support the full implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

Intended target

The target audience of the Panel's work are African Union member States, African civil society organizations, diaspora groups, migrant organizations, private sector partners and other relevant stakeholders.

Composition of the High-level Panel on Migration in Africa

The High-level Panel on Migration in Africa comprises the following members:

1. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Chairperson of the High-level Panel on Migration in Africa and former President of Liberia
2. Vera Songwe, Executive Secretary, ECA (in Ethiopia)
3. Abdalla Hamdok, Deputy Executive Secretary, ECA (in Ethiopia)
4. Amira Elfadil, Commissioner for Social Affairs, African Union Commission (in Ethiopia)
5. Akinwumi Adesina, President, African Development Bank (in Côte d'Ivoire)
6. Laura Thompson, Deputy Director General, International Organization for Migration (in Switzerland)
7. Joseph Muscat, Prime Minister, Malta
8. Almaz Negash, Founder and Executive Director, African Diaspora Network (in the United States of America)
9. Aminata Touré, former Prime Minister of Senegal
10. Knut Vollebæk, former Minister for Foreign Affairs, Norway
11. Ahmed Hussen, Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Canada
12. Samir Abi, Permanent Secretary, West African Observatory on Migrations (in Togo)
13. Danisa Baloyi, former President, South African Black Business Council, South Africa
14. Aigboje Aig-Imoukhuede, Founder and Chairman, Coronation Capital (in Nigeria)
15. Cynthia Samuel-Olonjuwon, Assistant Director General and Regional Director for Africa, International Labour Organization, Côte d'Ivoire

Members of the High-level Panel on Migration in Africa at the Geneva meeting, May 2018



Members of the High-level Panel technical team at the Abidjan meeting, September 2018



Perspectives of Panel members

A lot of work has been done on migration in Africa, taking into account all the research analysis and empirical evidence, but the truth is that we have allowed the perception to supersede the reality and not internalized the benefits of migration in our own policies. **Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Chairperson, High-level Panel on Migration**

Our joint initiative with ILO and ECA is a flagship project and a strategic element of the revised Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons in Africa... [which] ... will be a key tool for labour as well as free migration in Africa. **Laura Thompson, Deputy Director General, International Organization for Migration**

A lot of work is ongoing in Africa to lay the groundwork for the new economic pan-Africanism – the kind of economic liberation that will help avoid undue or forced migration. **Vera Songwe, Executive Secretary, Economic Commission for Africa**

The future of African youth does not lie in the heat of the Sahara Desert or in the depth of the Mediterranean Sea, but in the continent's economic development and ability to create jobs. **Akinwumi Adesina, President, African Development Bank**

Contact

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The refugee crisis can be a force for good if refugees can contribute to the economic vitality of their host countries and within Africa. **Almaz Negash, Founder and Executive Director, African Diaspora Network**

We need to debunk the myth that only Africans migrate to other regions and cause problems there. Migration into Africa is happening as well. **Danisa Baloyi, former President, Black Business Council, South Africa**

Migration is not inherently bad as is portrayed in certain media circles and it can be effectively harnessed to address issues of labour shortages globally and especially on the continent. **Aigboje Aig-Imoukhuede, Chairman and Founder, Coronation Capital, Nigeria**

Mobility has become the leading issue for youth in Africa. We are integrated at a cultural and social level but this is not recognized at the political level. **Samir Abi, Permanent Secretary, West African Observatory on Migrations**