



IOM International Organization for Migration
OIM Organisation Internationale pour les Migrations
OIM Organización Internacional para las Migraciones

36th Meeting of the COMESA Intergovernmental Committee

Remarks delivered by Mr. Josiah Ogina

IOM Regional Director for Southern Africa

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Your Excellency Mr. Sindiso Ngwenza, Secretary general of COMESA

Excellencies, representatives of COMESA Member States,

Excellencies, representatives of Malagasy government hosting this meeting,

Excellencies, members of the diplomatic corps in Madagascar,

Distinguished guests, Ladies and gentlemen, all protocols observed.

IOM is honoured to be part of this important summit and I would like to start by thanking COMESA for extending an invitation to development partners to attend this conference.

As an International Organization working with a number of Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in Africa, IOM appreciates the role they play in advancing the regional integration agenda as envisioned in the Abuja Treaty of 1991 establishing the African Economic Community (AEC).

In this regard, I commend the efforts of COMESA which has been at the forefront in promoting intra-regional trade and economic integration among its member states through various policies and programs. For instance, there are now 16 countries¹ who have joined the COMESA Free Trade Area laying ground for a promising future in terms of intra-regional trade and investment. This is further strengthened by the recent signature of the Tripartite agreement on Free Trade Area between COMESA, SADC and EAC.

Similarly, the COMESA protocol on Gradual Relaxation and eventual Elimination of Visas has already been ratified by all member states and the COMESA Free Movement Protocol, although yet to be ratified, has been in place way before the issue became a top priority on the continental agenda with the African Union now working actively towards a freer movement of people in Africa.

Despite existing challenges in terms of implementation, it is important to recognize how far COMESA and its member states have come in establishing the foundational structure that would facilitate increased integration in the COMESA region in years to come.

IOM has had the privilege of working closely with COMESA around these issues since 2003 when the two organizations entered into a Memorandum of Understanding. This partnership has grown over the years with COMESA's various organs, especially Ministers responsible for immigration making concrete recommendations for joint initiatives on migration related issues. Based on priorities identified by COMESA, important interventions have been jointly initiated and I will mention two which are very key:

¹ The 16 countries who are part of the COMESA FTA are:
Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Kenya, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Rwanda, Seychelles, Sudan, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe

1. The first is the **launch of the Migration Dialogue for the COMESA** region also known as MIDCOM. This platform started in 2013 with the objective of bringing together COMESA member states to discuss migration issues that are relevant to the region in an informal and non-binding manner. I would want to highlight that the follow-up MIDCOM meeting has been delayed due to resource limitations. However, keeping this platform vibrant is key as it provides an opportunity to create awareness on existing regional integration frameworks among member states and reflect on how to tackle implementation challenges on the ground.
2. The second is the **launch of a pilot program supported by IOM's International Development Fund (IDF) which was designed to support the ratification and implementation of COMESA Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Services, Labour and the Right of Establishment and Residence (Free Movement Protocol)**; This pilot program focusing on 2 COMESA member states, Zambia and Zimbabwe, started in February 2016 is still ongoing. We are hopeful that the lessons learnt from this intervention will allow-us to scale it up across the COMESA region with the support of the relevant COMESA Task Forces as well as other relevant partners.

In addition to these two key programs and in line with focus areas that are agreed upon, IOM continues to work closely with COMESA to address issues related to migration and border management in the broader context of regional integration. The One Stop Border (OSBP) concept which is being promoted across the continent shows that coordinated border management is of critical importance to enable trade and transport facilitation which engender economic growth and development. The OSBP at Chirundu, at the border between Zimbabwe and Zambia, is the continent's first One Stop Border Post (OSBP) and is also known

to be a model for replication. Given the important role of women in cross-border trade in Africa, this approach will create a safe operating space for this important group whilst promoting intra-regional trade.

As we live in an era of the greatest human mobility in recorded history, migration has become a critical policy area at the global, regional and national levels. Just recently, the UN General Assembly held its first ever summit on Addressing Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants on September 19th, 2016 and agreed on the need to adopt a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration in 2018. As we await to see the impact of such a framework on migration governance, it is important to firm up regional channels through which global recommendations will be implemented.

As the lead migration agency, IOM sees the potential of regulated and well-managed migration and the contribution it can bring for sustained economic and social development. The 2030 development agenda and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals also recognize the role of migration in advancing socio-economic development for both countries of origin and destination as well as migrants themselves.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In conclusion, I would like to underscore that the vision of an integrated region will become a reality with freer movement of goods, services and most importantly freer movement of people. I believe this is an objective which can be achieved through cooperation and collaboration. IOM values its partnership with COMESA and we are committed to support its efforts towards achieving that goal.