

MS. LOUISE ARBOUR
SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR
INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

--

Video message for the workshop “ITUC-Africa/OTUWA/ECOWAS workshop on the
ECOWAS Free Movement and Migration Programme”

Abuja, Nigeria, 7-9 December 2017

Recorded in New York, 8 December 2017

Dear participants,

Let me thank the African Regional Organisation of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC-Africa) and the Organisation of Trade Unions of West Africa (OTUWA) for the opportunity to speak to you today.

This workshop is very timely since we are in the middle of the process to develop a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration.

Over the past year, Member States and other stakeholders have been engaged in an intensive preparatory process. They have exchanged views and experiences on six thematic issues on the global level, at 5 meetings organized by the UN Regional Commissions, two multi-stakeholder hearings, seven Regional Civil Society Consultations and numerous national consultations. All of these have taken place with civil society organizations, trade unions, private sector and many other stakeholders.

The importance of labour migration governance was discussed in the sixth thematic session which took place in Geneva in October, and in the regional consultation meeting in your region, organized by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in Addis Ababa also in October.

These discussions have shown us that there is a need for enhanced cooperation on labour mobility and better information sharing and planning, to offer more legal migration pathways for the greatest number of prospective migrants for the benefit of both the migrants and their places of destination.

Safe, orderly and regular access to jobs in the formal economies of receiving countries, through fair and transparent decent work programs, and systems for effective skills recognition, can also be expected to reduce recourse to irregular migration. Facilitating regular migration can be based on a range of options: from temporary work visas and circular migration programmes to residency permits.

Labour migration programmes should be designed in a way that guards against exploitation of migrant workers, maintains appropriate wage and working conditions, and makes the legal employment-based immigration system sufficiently attractive to employers to discourage illegal employment, including in the informal economy.

There was a broad agreement that a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach should be fostered at all levels, and cooperation should be strengthened among all relevant actors, including trade unions, workers' associations, private sector, employer federations, local authorities, civil society, and host communities.

I would like to strongly encourage all trade union organizations to stay actively engaged in the Global Compact ongoing discussions, and in the negotiations that will start next year. Trade unions are a key stakeholder in labour mobility issues. Your role is not only important in the discussions that will take place in New York, but your engagement will also be crucial at the national level in terms of advocacy to determine appropriate labour migration policies with mutual benefits for all involved.

I wish you fruitful deliberations and I look forward to the positive outcome of the workshop. I thank you for your kind attention.