

Check against Delivery

**Statement**

**By**

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**Mr. Chairman,**

Allow me to start by conveying my gratitude to the organizers of this dialogue for inviting me to share my country's experience on diaspora and migrants' contributions to the Agenda 2030.

**Mr. Chairman,**

As we all know, the globalization phenomenon has increased labor mobility over the past three decades and migration has become cross-cutting global issue. This in turn has generated immense interest that resulted in normative and policy frameworks response. In this regard, the Agenda 2030 offers a wide range of framework to address migration issue. The Paris Agreement also makes explicit reference to migrants in climate change actions while the Addis Ababa Action Agenda calls for reduction of transaction costs or remittances to less than 3%, with no corridor higher than 5%. These global outcomes have clearly shown that the issue of migration that has been neglected for many years in the past and needs global concerted efforts and actions.

In similar manner, regional frameworks have also been designed to address the challenges surrounding migration. The Africa Region has for instance launched a Comprehensive Migration Policy and the Ouagadougou Plan of Action to Combat Human Trafficking.

It is in this context that I would like to present today Ethiopia's efforts towards addressing migration issues particularly in relation to labor mobility.

In the past decade, managing the huge flow of largely unskilled labor migrant workers to Middle East, which is by and large characterized by illegal trafficking and smuggling, continues to be a major preoccupation of Ethiopia's public policy. This is because human trafficking has made migrant workers vulnerable to abuses of rights including denial of portability of earned benefits. Migrant workers often find themselves in a situation where they have no access to health services, insurance, compensation to fundamental breaches of labor rights.

In response to this situation, the Government of Ethiopia has launched the Ethiopian Employment Policy in the 2009 and the Overseas Employment Proclamation in 2016, the preamble of which make it clear that employment generation is fully based on creating job opportunities at home. However, the policy notes that, migration of labor could come as supplement to the efforts we make in employment creation. The proclamation hence tries to offer a legal regime that protects the violation of rights and portability of earned benefits.

In this respect, the proclamation takes a strong stance in terms of guaranteeing social benefits where it says overseas employment contract is only approved if and only if the host country can give assurance that the employer provides health insurance, compensation benefits and meets minimum wage.

Ethiopia has also concluded numerous bilateral extradition and mutual legal assistance treaties to dismantle criminal trafficking networks in addition to passing a proclamation law that punishes traffickers, redress victims and regulates private overseas employment agencies.

Furthermore, in addition to regularizing labor mobility and control human trafficking, Ethiopia is also working to tap the potential of the Ethiopian Diaspora in various parts of the world. The Government has issued a Diaspora Policy in 2002, established dedicated departments at federal and regional offices and incorporated diaspora engagement as core functions of its foreign relation activities. The diaspora policy encompasses aspects of harnessing the diaspora potential for national development while also putting due emphasis on protecting their rights in destination countries.

**Mr. Chairman,**

In the past two decades, the diaspora and migrant's contributions to the socio-economic development have been increasingly evident, particularly in remittances. The National Bank of Ethiopia data shows that in 2015 and 2016 alone, remittances have reached 3.7 billion and 4 billion USD, respectively. The study conducted by UNCTAD in 2015 estimated that private transfers benefit nearly 5.5 million people thereby contributing to reducing the rate of household poverty level. In terms of investment, diaspora projects worth over 14.7 billion USD have been registered over the last 15 years. Out of the five thousand projects which have gone operational 500 of them are in the manufacturing sector thus contributing to the structural transformation agenda of the country. The nine regional states have also issued licenses to over 2,700 Diaspora projects worth 2.7 billion USD which generated a total employment for over 200,000 citizens. Far more important is the engagement of the diaspora and migrants in the construction of the Grand Ethiopian

Renaissance Dam whose contributions around 40 million USD over the past six years.

The most important takeaway from Ethiopia's diaspora policy experience, Mr. Chairman, lies in its two-way approach where policies are geared towards ensuring the diaspora benefit from their countries development while also they contribute to their country's socio economic development.

**Mr. Chairman,**

The contributions of diaspora the SDG's are not without challenges. In the area of remittances, access to banks, informal money transfer, low savings from remittances, huge transaction costs and low access to financial technologies remain major hindrances. In the area of portability of earned benefits, host country national legislations in some cases make the transfer of health insurance benefits to origin countries difficult. Trafficking also poses a challenge since migrant workers are made invisible to laws of host countries by informal arrangement of labor and triangular employment relationship.

In view of the above, and to fully harness the diaspora and migrant worker's contribution to the SDGs, we believe that the Global compact on Migration which we have embarked to develop needs to give due consideration to partnerships in strengthening diaspora mapping, reducing transaction cost of remittances, coherence between regional and global migration policy frameworks, institutional capacity building and development of evidence-based national and regional operational normative frameworks. Ethiopia's experience, particularly in harnessing

knowledge diaspora networks shows that portability of earned benefits is also vital for origin countries to benefit from diasporas.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, I would like to reiterate that migrants and the diaspora have a big role to play in achieving the SDGs. Our experience is a telling example. It should be underlined that harnessing the potentials of diaspora and migrants requires legal and institutional framework, partnership at all levels and most importantly an enabling environment.

**Thank You**