

Nigeria

EFFECTIVE MEASURES TO PREVENT AND COUNTER SMUGGLING OF MIGRANTS WHILE PROTECTING THE RIGHTS OF SMUGGLED MIGRANTS PARTICULARLY, WOMEN AND CHILDREN AND THOSE OF UNACCOMPANIED MIGRANT CHILDREN: A THEMATIC DISCUSSION AT THE 30TH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON CRIME PREVENTION AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE (CCPCJ) HOLDEN IN VIENNA AUSTRIA 8TH DECEMBER 2021

PROTOCOLS

Thank you, Mr. Chair,

I am grateful for the honour and privilege to present the African Group's Opening Statement. Africa believes in and supports the Commission's thematic discussion on smuggling of migrants as a cogent subject, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and its latest variants – Delta and Omicron.

2. COVID-19 is probably the most devastating public health crisis in recent world history. It was sudden, complex and chaotic; with unprecedented impacts on global migration and its governance, its debilitating ripple effects created crisis across public health, socioeconomic and humanitarian sectors.

3. Of particular significance is the worsening global 'human insecurity' due to intractable armed conflicts and their cross-border spill-over effects, chronic poverty with protracted economic instability, the combined effects of COVID-19 lockdowns and economic downturns; and the looming resurgence of lock-downs due to the 'Delta and Omicron' variants of COVID-19.;

4. COVID – 19 also had its impact on Smuggling of Migrants in Africa, as it brought with it a complex mix of old and new technology-aided forms of irregular migration trends and patterns. Of special concern in this regard are the, safety and rights of women, children and those of unaccompanied minors who are being smuggled across borders amidst insecurities associated with clandestine international movements.

5. A recurring dilemma in the African migration dynamics is the seemingly unending dilemma of how to ensure safety of the State, protect the rights of regular and irregular migrants in the context of trans-border armed conflicts and the critical need for vigilance against “weaponized migration forms”.

6. Adhering to COVID-19 Protocols, against the imperatives of enforcing regional agreements like the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement has been challenging due largely to the existing neo-liberal sense of “borderlessness” as a result of existing multilateral cooperation in various sub-regions of the continent. The possible implications of the looming threats of upsurge in the spread of the recent Delta and OMICRON variants of COVID-19 on the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (ACFTA) is yet another dimension to the nature of irregular migration challenges being surmounted by the African States given their multiple status as source, transit and destination countries. This calls for an urgent change in continental security strategies, in order to protect the rights of vulnerable migrants.

7. A paradigm shift from the popular notion of “National Security” to the more encompassing concept of “Human Security” is recommended. This entails a set of people-oriented action-plans that address the root causes and perennial drivers of migration on the Continent as well as prioritizing the adoption of the Global Compact

for Migration as a guide for global migration management. It will help resolve the dilemma African countries face in navigating the delicate overlap between regional and continental obligations, especially in relation to the seeming conflicts between human and state security architectures.

8. Most African States have already taken decisive actions towards strengthening human security in their migration management approaches by domesticating the Protocol Against the Smuggling of Migrants as a statutory instrument to combat the smuggling of migrants. , There are also several multilateral efforts covering a wide range of issues such as increased regional capacity building for law enforcement agencies; adoption of integrated border management approaches to facilitate early detection of high-risk passengers, threats from drug trafficking, illicit financial flows, smuggling in wildlife, Trafficking in Persons, Smuggling of Migrants, arms trafficking and counterfeited or falsified medicine certificates.

9. Other measures include adoption of more inclusive visa regimes for liberalized and affordable regular entries; investment in technology-driven modern migration management structures such as the agreements with INTERPOL for direct rollout of I-24/7 and access to the INTERPOL global police communications systems.

10. In conclusion, as we reconvene to examine our progress or lack of it in the collective efforts at ensuring global crime prevention and criminal justice, the Africa Group urges us all to consider prioritizing **Human Security** as the guiding principle of our deliberations, even as we negotiate our individual national security interests and sustainable development goals.

Thank you.