

East African Community (EAC) experts on Migration meeting in Kigali have concluded their conference as ministers called for fast-tracking the establishment of a Regional Consultative Process (RCP) on Migration.

The experts held in-depth discussions on the modalities to set up a Regional Migration Dialogue that will among other things, provide a framework for the EAC to have an informal, discrete and non-binding discussion on migration and governance issues.

The aim here was to create a platform for regional information-sharing and policy dialogue dedicated to discuss specific migration issues in a cooperative manner among EAC Partner States.

Speaking during the opening session of the ministers, Rwanyindo K. Fanfan, the Rwandan Minister of Public Service and Labour, expressed her appreciation to all stakeholders and Partner States for the joint efforts to initiate the RCP, which would enable Partner States to enhance and facilitate orderly human labour migration in the region and beyond.

She urged the EAC Secretariat to ensure the timely establishment of the Regional Consultative Process on Migration as a permanent forum for addressing migration issues in the EAC as the initiative directly responds to the EAC Treaty commitments.

The Minister noted that migration policies in the EAC are yet to be harmonised, therefore raising the need for Partner States to discuss various interventions and collaboration on immigration, labour and employment as pressing matters.

“I implore you Honourable Ministers to utilise such a Forum as a conduit to better collaboration, cooperation, and mobilization of resources to support regional matters through a single platform,” she added.

On his part, the Director General Immigration Services, State Department of Immigration and Citizen Services, at the Kenyan Ministry of Interior, Alexander Imbenzi Muteshi noted that a consultative process, especially at regional level, has advantages compared to binding processes such as treaty making process.

“It is less formal and non-binding forum bringing together migration officials of countries of origin and destination to discuss migration-related issues in a cooperative way”, Muteshi said.

He noted that Intra regional migration is on the rise and prior to the advent of COVID-19 outbreak; there are long standing patterns of seasonal and circular migration; existence of refugees and migratory flows to the Middle East affecting migration among others.

He informed the participants that the establishment of regional consultative process is key for the EAC focusing on policy dialogues and information sharing.

Christophe Bazivamo, EAC Deputy Secretary General in charge of Productive and Social Sectors, informed the conference that Article 104 of the Treaty for the Establishment of EAC and the EAC Common Market Protocol provide broad areas of cooperation under the movement of persons, workers, self-employed persons, as well as the rights of establishment and residence.

“The RCP will give the Community an opportunity to have a multi-sectoral dialogue beyond labour and immigration sectors which are currently the existing platforms but do not address other migration related aspects such as migration health, migration and environment, as well as migrant development” said Bazivamo.

Bazivamo further disclosed that the RCP will be used as a platform to bring together stakeholders and development partners to collectively mobilize resources for priorities set out from the RCP forums which will benefit Partners States’ efforts to facilitate governance of labour migration management, harmonization of labour migration policies, and capacity building initiatives, research and all initiatives geared towards, a united approach to safe, regular and humane labour migration management.

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) Regional Director for East and Horn of Africa, Mohammed Abdiker said the region was in need of a common approach in addressing migration in a holistic manner, creating intergovernmental networks to consult on migration governance and development.

“Let me take this opportunity to reiterate IOM’s commitment to continue support EAC processes on migration through technical advice, capacity building, research, building synergies and networking,” said Abdiker.

The Ministers directed EAC Secretariat to enhance the Concept Paper for the Establishment of the RCP and the draft Operational Modalities/ Terms of Reference and submit the same to Partner States for inputs by 4th March, 2022.

The meeting was attended by the Partner States' Ministers in charge EAC Affairs; Interior / Home Affairs; Labour and Directorates of Immigration from EAC, the EAC Secretariat, International Organization for Migration (IOM) and representatives of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) among others.