

Forthcoming Inaugural NOMRA Scientific Conference

In recent times, particularly in the last five years, discussions on international migration issues have gained a topical dimension. These have subsequently featured notably at international events, beginning from the release of the report of the Global Commission for International Migration (Geneva, October 2005), followed by the United Nations High-Level Dialogue on Migration and Development (New York, September 2006) and the Global Forum on Migration and Development (Brussels, July 2007). At the regional African level, the adoption of the African Union's Strategic Framework for a Policy on Migration and the African Union's common position on migration and development, in 2006 are significant landmarks. During 2006 and 2007, the Euro-African Conference on Migration and Development; the joint African-EU Declaration on Migration and Development; the Follow-up Meeting of the Rabat Process and the EU-Africa Strategic Partnership, mapped out areas of migration concern, common interests and collaboration at the Euro-African level

In the light of these events, the forthcoming NOMRA Scientific Conference will explore the opportunities and challenges posed by the dynamic and extremely complex international migration scenarios within and out of Africa. Clearly, migration has tremendous effect on development-related issues through its far-reaching economic, demographic, social and cultural implications for individuals, families, communities and nations. It is this context that NOMRA's inaugural scientific conference is packaged to advance knowledge on various migration configurations and articulate the African perspective as input to migration discourse and policy.

In line with the foregoing, and two of NOMRA's objectives which are to assist in raising international migration issues and discourse at the highest political level, and ensure that migration is adequately mainstreamed into development activities, NOMRA's Inaugural Scientific Conference has been aptly titled:

Migration for Development in Africa: Opportunities and Challenges

Six sub-themes will be covered during the two-day conference as follows:

- **Traditional and changing patterns of intra regional (African) migration.**

Migrants within the region are mainly clandestine workers, temporary cross-border workers, traders (especially women), professionals and refugees. In recent times, however, there have been notable changes in the African migration milieu. For one, there has been an upsurge in the number of migrants who are predominantly youths, who engage in irregular migration within and outside the region; migration is feminising; labour migration is giving way to commercial migration; trafficking in women and children is increasing. Migrants are also willing to explore opportunities in countries where they hitherto had limited or no connections. Some of these flows can be contextualised in terms of the scope and complexities of the migratory configuration, migration management, current policies and flaws as well as migrants' rights in Africa.

- **Brain drain and brain circulation: emigration of skilled professionals.**

Africa is being brained of its scarce skilled professionals, especially doctors and paramedical staff, professors and IT specialists required for national development, research, training and also for achieving the MDGs. Concurrently, some measure of intra-regional brain circulation is taking place in the form of exchange of such skilled experts between countries (within the region). It is pertinent to critically review the causes and trend of such migration, its costs and benefits, implications for development and policy responses to guide governments to address these configurations.

- **Diaspora's financial and social remittances.**

The involvement of the African Diaspora in the development process is an important feature in the migration-development nexus. Financial and social remittances of migrants (in diaspora) can and do impact individuals, households, communities and home countries. However, it is noteworthy that most of policy research and analysis dwell largely on financial rather than social remittances made by the diaspora to their original homelands. This session focuses on the social and financial remittances, its magnitude and impact, and the opportunities and constraints as well as policy measures to facilitate transfers and optimise its use for development.

- **Regional organisations and intra-regional migration.**

Sub-regional organisations have a part to play in ensuring the coordination and management of migration within Africa, and also in promoting sustainable development. A significant migration takes place within regional communities, and few centres of attraction play dominant roles in this process, often resulting in anti-immigration sentiments by the local population. The vibrant RECs (ECOWAS, SADC) have initiated forms of free movement/facilitation movement of persons' protocols. We need to take stock of these protocols, progress made, opportunities and obstacles in their implementation, and what lessons can be learnt.

- **Institutional framework for the management of migration, data and information.**

Data and information regarding migration in Africa is inadequate, sometimes unreliable, and outdated. All these hamper incisive research on the subject matter. Besides, only few countries have comprehensive migration policies. National capacities remain weak and should be strengthened. Many agencies that have mandates in migration-related areas work at cross-purposes; collaboration is weak or does not exist. Migration management is still perceived in terms of migration control. This session is designed to take stock of the current situation, and come forth with a road map in ensuring that migration-for-development framework takes root to the benefit of migrants, sending and receiving countries, policy and

decision makers. Good quality data on migration is fundamental to forming reliable, relevant and all-inclusive migration policies, initiatives and programmes.

- **Bilateral and multi-lateral agreements for migration management.**

For migration management to be comprehensive, bilateral and multi-lateral agreements within the region are virtually indispensable. Migration matters need to be handled under the auspices of these agreements in such a way that migration policies are harmonised, coherent and migrant-friendly. This session should take stock of existing migration bilateral and multi-bi agreements between African sending and receiving countries in Europe, especially; the content and scope of these agreements (including migration quotas), and propose new orientations, where desired. The stress is on need for dialogue and cooperation between countries, current policies and their flaws, stakeholders' claims, and the way forward.

Kindly note that the **emphasis of the contributions** should be on the **positive** aspects of migration with focus also on **gender perspectives**.

Time- The two (2) day conference is scheduled to hold in September 2008.

Venue- This is yet to be announced and the pertinent information will be communicated in due course.

Members wishing to contribute papers on related state-of- the-art issues are to forward a one (1) page abstract **on or before the 31st of May 2008** to the NOMRA e-mail address (info@nomra.org). All accepted papers will be presented at the conference and subsequently published in a book form, after necessary revisions.

About 20 participants (i.e. **all authors and chairmen/discussants**) will be funded by NOMRA. Other participants are however encouraged to source for support and sponsorship from their or other institutions and other donors in order to facilitate their attendance at this all-important event.

NOMRA members are enjoined **to help disseminate the conference agenda as widely as possible**. Please, be on the look-out for specific details about the exact date and venue of the conference which will be communicated to you, and also posted at the NOMRA website shortly.