



**COMMUNIQUE OF THE HIGH-LEVEL CONSULTATION ON MIGRATION,  
TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS AND MODERN SLAVERY HELD AT THE DESMOND  
TUTU CONFERENCE CENTER, NAIROBI, KENYA FROM THE 8<sup>TH</sup> – 10<sup>TH</sup>  
OCTOBER 2024.**

The All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), established in 1963, is a continental ecumenical community, bringing together 215 churches and related institutions representing over 200 million Christians across Africa. In its recent high-level consultation, the AACC gathered expert representatives from all African regions, alongside non-state actors, international religious bodies, and scholars, to reflect on the theme: ‘Migration, Trafficking in Persons, and Modern Slavery.’

Recognizing its role as a member of the worldwide ecumenical network, the AACC guides faith-based institutions and like-minded organizations toward a shared understanding of living a faith that is informed by biblical and theological interpretations, providing transformative responses to societal challenges while upholding and respecting human dignity.

The High-Level Consultative meeting built on the momentum of four regional consultations organized by the AACC in the past, aimed at understanding the patterns and trends of migration, trafficking in persons, and modern slavery in each region. These regional consultations ended with an all-Africa youth consultation in Benin on migration, guided by the theme: ‘Africa My Home! My Future.’ This initiative sought to reignite the spirit of Pan-Africanism among young people, emphasizing how this philosophy shapes their identity and creates pathways that strengthen unity and solidarity, leading to cultural, social, political, economic, and holistic empowerment as Africa's emerging leaders.

During the two-and-a-half days of consultation of 8 – 10 October 2024, we reaffirmed our understanding of migration as a complex phenomenon which is essential to modern society, through a deep exchange of knowledge and ideas. Historically, human beings have always moved from one place to another in search of better living conditions for their families or opportunities for personal growth. In the context of Africa, migration and development are closely intertwined, with each influencing the other in significant ways.

Participants acknowledged with appreciation the progress made at national, regional, and global levels in implementing the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees, the 1967 Optional Protocol on the Status of Refugees, the African Union Migration Policy Framework, and the Global Compact for Migration. These frameworks are grounded in international human rights law, reaffirming UN member states’ commitment to respecting, protecting, and fulfilling the rights of all migrants, while upholding principles of non-regression and non-discrimination.

We as participants recognize the importance of these legislative frameworks, we also reaffirm our commitment to eliminating all forms of discrimination, including racism, xenophobia, and intolerance, against migrants and their families.

However, participants expressed a deep concern that irregular migration, trafficking in persons, and modern slavery practices are among the fastest-growing criminal industries worldwide. While migration and trafficking in persons are not new issues, their escalation is driven by the dynamics of globalization, protracted conflicts, climate change, poverty, unemployment, and the feminization of migration. The most common forms of human and child trafficking such as, organ trafficking and sexual exploitation, are proliferating at alarming rates, with devastating and dehumanizing impacts on vulnerable populations, particularly women and youth.

Participants expressed serious concern over the combination of structural, governance, and socio-economic factors contributing to the rising levels of migration within and out of Africa. While participants acknowledged that regular migration serves as a vital source of labour for host countries, they also recognised that migrant workers face extraordinary risks, including exposure to human trafficking. This exploitation leads to severe physical and mental health consequences, such as loss of life, violations of basic human rights, disrupted childhoods, family separations, and serious mental health issues, including anxiety disorders, post-traumatic stress response (PTSR), and depression.

Participants also recognise the major push factors driving irregular migration, including fragile governance systems, weak or unenforceable legislative norms and standards, economic depression, human rights violations, political instability, environmental challenges, corruption, conflict, and civil strife. These factors, combined with the real or perceived opportunities for a better life, greater security, and improved education and healthcare, often circulate through social media platforms, sometimes luring or trapping young people into unrealistic fantasies of lucrative futures

Participants affirmed that an effective response to trafficking in persons should be guided by the 3P Framework, which treats trafficking as a human rights issue requiring a strong commitment to **P**revention, **P**rotection, and the **P**rosecution of perpetrators.

However, were deeply concerned that in recent years, powerful countries have developed strategies to externalise and offshore their migration policies, aiming to circumvent the principle of non-refoulement. These practices often shift responsibilities to developing countries who have limited capacities to effectively deal with migration issues, leading to labelling asylum seekers as national security and public health risks and closure of borders without regard for human consequences.

As the AACC, participants collectively call for urgent and proactive action as follows:

### **1. Enforcement of Migration Legislative Norms and Standards**

- As the AACC, participants committed to leverage on their moral authority and soft power to collaborate with governments, the African Union, and its agencies; actively engage in the drafting, implementation, enforcement and review of legislative norms and standards that focus on prevention, protection, and prosecution of all forms of migration exploitation.

- As the AACC, participants committed to adopting a reflective and transformative role, establishing ourselves as a trusted entity where individuals can seek guidance on migration issues, particularly in cases where misleading theologies and misinformation target vulnerable groups. It is crucial that we actively counter these misleading narratives that contribute to human trafficking and modern slavery.
- In partnership with governments, participants committed to support efforts to detect and prevent irregular migration, including trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants. This includes strengthening immigration and border management, providing assistance to returnees, facilitating legal migration through visa schemes, and strengthening the provision of public health and psychosocial counselling services for all migrants.

## **2. Bilateral Agreements**

- As the AACC, participants strongly voice their concerns regarding bilateral labour agreements between African states and other countries.
- In consultation with the African Union member states and labour recruitment agencies, we commit to take a bold and proactive stance against the externalization of border and offshoring agreements by powerful countries, as some of these agreements lack transparency, are discriminatory, and, at worst, blatantly violate international law.
- As the AACC we commit to strengthen our partnerships with European institutions and other organizations to gain access to the details of agreements signed between African states, as this enables us to inform our member churches.
- As the AACC we encourage our member churches to appoint focal points and legal teams dedicated to migration issues. This would help decipher the complex legal language often found in bilateral agreements, raise awareness, and critically assess the legal foundations of labour laws like the Kafala system, which binds workers to employers, leading to exploitation and abuse of migrant workers in particular, the Middle East.
- As the AACC, participants encourage sending countries in Africa to build their capacity to negotiate more favourable terms in bilateral agreements. This includes strengthening training of diplomats and negotiators in labour market needs, migration management, and specifying the developmental goals they aim to achieve.

## **3. Inter and Intra-Regional Collaboration Partnerships**

- As the AACC we commit to act as mediators and bridge builders in negotiating and building consensus on key migration issues within bilateral agreements, providing solutions to migration challenges that benefit all parties involved. Particular attention shall be given to addressing discrepancies in the arbitrary application and payment of visa fees between African countries.
- As the AACC, through our liaison office at the African Union (AU) we encourage all AU member states to ratify the Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons across Africa, strengthen migration governance systems and protection migrant rights.

- We encourage sending countries to collaborate with regional and continental bodies to harmonise their migration policies, share best practices, and collectively negotiate with receiving countries as ways of strengthening their bargaining power and achieving balanced bilateral agreements.
- We encourage AU member states sending their skilled manpower to other countries to negotiate for favourable employment conditions for their citizens that are at par with the workforce in receiving countries, ensuring equal pay for equal work, access to social benefits, and opportunities for career advancement.
- As the AACC we commit to strengthen our diaspora engagements by utilizing the resources and expertise of diaspora communities, through knowledge exchange and skills transfer, which reduces the negative impact of skills drain, enhances investment and the developmental impact of migration.

#### **4. Skills, Empowerment Development, and Retention**

- As the AACC we commit to continue playing a unique and instrumental leadership role, using our moral and ethical influence to shift the narrative on investing in Africa's youth. This includes promoting transformative innovations such as skills development projects grounded in spiritual and discipleship values, start-up project initiatives, and creative arts like film, storytelling, and documentary-making.
- In partnership with like-minded institutions, including faith-based organizations, we commit to continue supporting community and industry-linked projects and services including vocational and entrepreneurial training and educational campaigns that foster youth empowerment, ownership, trust, and legitimacy for young people as active agents of transformative change. Such holistic approaches will empower youth, returnees, their families, and communities as they reintegrate back into society.

#### **5. Evidence-based Research and Knowledge Management**

- As the AACC, in collaboration with our ecumenical member churches and partner institutions, we commit to conduct evidence-based research on migration and its intersections including gender and climate change with the aim of gathering disaggregated data that help in identifying trends, patterns, and emerging issues in migration including, migrants' contributions to their countries of origin through remittances, trade, and foreign direct investment,
- As the AACC we commit to adopt and use human rights-based approaches in all our migration research efforts, as these approaches critically examine unequal power relations, interrogate injustices and social exclusion that deprive individuals of their migration rights.
- In partnership with research institutes, academic institutions, and non-governmental organizations, as the AACC we commit to support and engage in collaborative migration research that shapes policy thinking and practice at the local, regional, and international levels.

- As the AACC, we commit to consult with survivors of irregular migration and trafficking in persons, ensuring that their voices and lived experiences are included in our development and research intervention strategies. This approach does not only empowers survivors but also strengthens their self-worth and confidence while acknowledging their vital contributions to knowledge generation.

## **6. Gender, Intersectionality on Migration, Trafficking in Persons and Modern Slavery**

- As the AACC we commit to continue leveraging on the agency of migrant women and youth who comprise more than half of the world's 272 million migrants, through capturing their empowering narratives of migration journeys, using rights-based and strength-affirming stories that validate their migration experiences and lives rather than representing them just as survivors of human trafficking and modern slavery.
- We commit to continue mainstreaming gender in all our skills and empowerment development projects, legal and psychosocial counselling services paying attention to the different needs of youth, men and women aimed at improving their livelihood conditions and quality of life.
- We commit to strengthen our partnership with media agencies highlighting the crucial role of media journalism in shaping public perceptions about migrants, their contributions and influencing transformative migration policies, thereby countering most media reports which tend to be unbalanced and sensationalised when reporting on migration issues.

**Adopted on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2024, Nairobi, Kenya**

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