MALTA’S EUROPEAN MIGRATION NETWORK PRESIDENCY CONFERENCE: THE REFORM OF THE COMMON EUROPEAN ASYLUM SYSTEM: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES 24-25TH MAY 2017

TOPIC: COOPERATION BY GHANA & OTHER AFRICAN COUNTRIES WITH THE EUROPEAN UNION ON MIGRATION: (COOPERATION WITH OTHER COUNTRIES & REGIONAL PROTECTION PROGRAMMES)

BY

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INTRODUCTION

As today marks African Union Day, it is an honour to be given this opportunity to talk about an issue that is pertinent towards a peaceful, prosperous and Integrated Africa - the issue of Migration which fits perfectly into this year’s AU Day theme: “Harnessing the Demographic Dividend through Investment in the Youth”.

Throughout the Western world, generally, and in Europe, a mix of physical, economic, and cultural insecurity has been fuelling anti-immigration sentiment and politics. And this is precisely at the time, when the disintegration of post-colonial states across the Islamic crescent is producing a refugee problem on a scale not seen since World War II. (Robert Skidelsky).

Prior to the current crisis, a key benchmark for liberal-democratic societies had been their openness to newcomers, and the reason for which migrants from all over the world would seek greener pastures at the least opportunity.

Africans wander and they are no strangers to migration. From time immemorial, they have wandered throughout Africa for purposes of trade, to look for work, improve their lives, or escape from the harsh unforgiving economic and political challenges at home. Today, a new form of their migratory behaviour can be found in what is commonly referred to as the new global migration and transnational border crossings. This migration is characterised by the voluntary, and at times involuntary movement of skilled and unskilled population principally from the emerging nations to the advanced nations.
It is also true that intra-Africa migration is higher compared with migration between Africa and the rest of the world. (Adepoju 2011, Awumbila et al. 2013, UN ECA 2015, UNDESA 2015).

Various attempts at various times have been made to either stem the tide of, especially, illegal immigration through strict law enforcement; assisted voluntary returns, re-admission and re-integration; and outright deportation. None of these, however, have yielded effective results.

**TACKLING MIGRATION PROBLEMS**

- World yet to adopt a ‘one-fist’ approach to the issue of forced migration and illegal migration.
- The line between economic (illegal) migrants and migrants uprooted by conditions of insecurity blurred: in the past, Europe needed economic migrants for development, today it is forced to accept migrants, especially on compassionate grounds.

Today’s tension set by policies past and present. E.g.

- Economic: after WWII – the need to balance the economic benefits of immigration (cheap labour) with the protection of domestic jobs, 1955-1973 - West Germany admitted 14 million “guest workers,” largely from Turkey.
Tackling Migration Problems (contd.)

- Other motives: ethnic, religious, and political persecution eg. expulsion of Jews from Spain (1492), Huguenots from France (1685), and of Indians from Uganda (1970s). (Robert Skidelsky).

- Add: the immigrants from areas of state implosion due to global geo-political hiccups – Vietnam, Iraq, Somalia, Yemen, Syria, Libya etc.

- Most fragile countries affected by migration crisis: (war, political instability, poverty, globalisation, urbanisation, inequality) eg. from the Sahel Region and Lake Chad, Horn of Africa, as well as North of Africa - Ethiopia, Tunisia, Algeria, Niger, Nigeria, Mali and Senegal, etc.

The above issues are exactly why tackling the problems of migration needs an understanding of the root causes – the “push” and “pull” factors.
The EU’s Cooperation with Africa on Migration

2005 Global Approach to Migration and Mobility (GAMM) - bedrock of the EUs’ dialogue and cooperation with third countries:
The EU’s Cooperation with Africa on Migration (contd.)

**Continental level:** the Africa-EU Migration, Mobility and Employment (MME) Partnership was launched during the EU-Africa Summit in 2007


**Regional collaborations**
- the Rabat, and Khartoum processes respectively,

**Bi-lateral**
- dialogues with so-called “priority” African countries.

The above global and regional initiatives and international agreements (multilateral, regional or sub-regional) have served to inform the various responses of African and EU countries to international migration.

Also, the **2000 ACP-EU Partnership Agreement (Cotonou Agreement, revised 2005)**
The EU’s Cooperation with Africa on Migration (contd.)

The 2015 Valletta Summit on Migration

The Valletta Summit on Migration & its Joint Valletta Action Plan (JVAP): Africa and the EU to address the challenges of & opportunities for migration.

• spirit of solidarity, partnership and shared responsibility.
• pivoted the importance and impact of the regional dialogues (Rabat and Khartoum Processes)
• five priority domains: include addressing the root causes of irregular migration, the prevention of migrant smuggling, and the protection of refugees and other displaced people, co-operation on return, readmission, and reintegration.
• Impact of the Valletta Summit: awareness creation, political will, etc

The Emergency Trust Fund (EUTF):

• One of the most significant results of the Summit: almost €1.8 billion at the time of summit to finance initiatives
• The Trust Fund now worth over €2.6 billion, over €2.4 billion from the European Development Fund, €154 million from EU Member States and other partners.
• One Hundred and Twelve (112) programmes approved across the three regions: approximately €1.7 billion
The EU’s Cooperation with Africa on Migration (contd.)

- creation of jobs and economic development: young people and women in local communities
- vocational training and the creation of micro and small enterprises.
- focus on Stability and Governance, conflict prevention, prevention of human rights abuses, enforcement of the rule of law.

Noteworthy:
- Funds to be extended to neighbouring countries
- Civil society actors such as community or women’s organisations to be supported from the EUTF.

Other positive developments since Valletta Summit:
The EU’s Cooperation with Africa on Migration (contd.)

Tangible progress made with the five countries:

Niger:
• number of migrants supported in IOM centres doubled (over 15,000 in 2016)
• almost 5,000 people were assisted with voluntary returns

Nigeria:
• Negotiations on re-admission agreement in progress

Senegal and Mali:
• additional projects in support of reintegration and the creation of employment opportunities adopted.

Central Mediterranean route:
• management of migration flows with €200 million in Libya to continue to save lives at sea, train coast guards, etc.
• Egypt, Tunisia and Algeria, increased cooperation through regional programmes

Additionally:
EUs increase in investment in Africa (over €44 billion by 2020)
EU Cooperation with Ghana
Following the Valletta Summit, Ghana and the European Union (EU) have:
• Held high-level dialogues on the Implementation of the Valletta Action Plan
• Initiatives with ECOWAS of which Ghana is a part.
• National Migration Policy (NMP) which identifies return, readmission and reintegration
• Already existing programmes to be strengthened - Ghanaian Integrated Migration Management Approach (GIMMA).
• Under the 11th European Development Fund (EDF) for Employment and Social Protection (€ 31 million)
• Agriculture sector (€ 160 million)
• € 6 million initiative - local economic development and job creation in regions prone to migration.
• Ghana fully eligible for the Trust Fund established to support the Valletta Action Plan.
CHALLENGES

Concerns raised on levels of cooperation include:

The segmentation of the challenge into three levels of approach - the continental level, the regional level, and the bilateral level seems to fall short of tackling some of the root causes of migration:

- **Continental** - continued bad governance in certain countries on the African continent, engendering pockets of instability and triggering emigration; global interference in the form of unilateral actions – Somalia and Libya in focus etc.). Clearly then, the Continental commitment would remain a rhetoric.

- **Regional level** - arrangements fraught with inconsistencies as the regional groupings are undefined and non-cohesive.

- **Bilateral Level** - no matter what the volume of support would be if the ‘push’ factors remain, nothing effective may be achieved.

Concerns regarding the Valletta Summit include the following:

- risk that efforts to stem the flow of migration to the EU will fail to address the human rights abuses and hardships that drive migration.

- pertinent to address abuses & hardships

- there should be no violations of the rights to leave one’s own country to seek asylum,

- need to be protected against réfoulement
Challenges (contd.) - Concerns with Valletta Summit

- Africa: migration is a tool for development and poverty reduction
- EU’s strategy on migration - securitisation of its borders with Africa.
- the Summit may lay the foundation for the mass repatriation of sub-Saharan African migrants
- moral dilemma for the AU and its leadership - the EU is the biggest donor to the AU. Therefore, possibility of political blackmail and arm-twisting of the AU.
- The Hague Institute’s Global Governance Reform Initiative, (workshop in December 2016) failed to concretely show how Valletta had worked;
- Valletta Summit was overtaken by events in 2016, when more than 1000 emigrants from Africa were reported to have died in the Mediterranean alone.
Challenges (contd.) – Concerns with EUTF

The EUTF has raised the following criticisms among others:

• funds may be channelled through abusive governments in Africa, in ways that might end up harming people trying to flee persecution.

• initial amount of €1.8 billion, and the later increment worth €2.5 billion earmarked for rolling out the 16 programmes is ridiculous. Tax evasion (estimated at $56 billion every year), by multinationals from Africa could well have helped better stop emigration from the continent;

• €30 billion of diaspora remittances sent to Sub-Saharan Africa in 2015 alone (more than the EUTF);

• real benefits of approved programmes yet to be seen.
RECOMMENDATIONS

• Partnership agreements to address a strong stance against authoritarianism and repression, bad governance, imprudence in economic management, or global interference. Otherwise, the AU & EU cannot speak of addressing root causes of forced displacement.

• Regardless of their origin and status, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers should be protected.

• Women and children, especially unaccompanied children should be better protected against rape, human trafficking, including the trafficking in human organs.

• Adoption of unaccompanied children by host country families recommended.

• Better initiatives should be taken to address organized crime, extremism and terrorism, associated with assisting refugees.

• Return, re-admission, reintegration and reinsertion programmes to be supported by both countries of destination and countries of origin and details of such programmes, should be agreed upon by both sides.

• Swift implementation of the Valletta Declaration and Action Plan in relation to mobility e.g. an increase of the number of scholarships for students and academic staff and the promotion of migration schemes in small and medium enterprises (SMEs).
Recommendations (contd.)

• The EU to pursue expanded family reunification and reform of the EU Visa Code to create a Schengen humanitarian visa.
• Continue to avoid a “one-size-fits-all” approach and rather adopt capacity building initiatives to RECs & Member States on a demand-driven basis, in complementarity with regional and national programmes.
• Mental health should be an important part of assistance to migrants.
• Address discrimination, racism, xenophobia and stereotyping.
CONCLUSION

Former AU Commission Chairperson, Madam Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, “migration, the search for safety, a better life, better climates, markets, goods to trade, is as old as humanity itself....... Africa too has been a recipient of European migration, even before colonization...... during and after the Second World War.......They were welcomed, and at the time, there was no crisis of European migrants in Africa.”

The African has achieved growing accomplishments and their contributions in every aspect of human endeavour are enviable and noteworthy. Their strong work ethics, entrepreneurial acumen, cooperative familial spirit and selfless sense of community, anchored in traditional African spirit, provides the African with the strategies to confront and deal with uncertainties such as racism, marginalisation, discrimination, and the status of being a foreigner, most of the time black, African and an outsider.

The Valletta Declaration: **“We reiterate our firm commitment to respect international obligations and human rights. Respect for the dignity of refugees and migrants and protection of their human rights, regardless of their status, will remain our priority at all times. We recall our common commitment to fight all forms of discrimination, racism and xenophobia.”** Let us add to the list, stereotyping.
Declaration recalled to remember our compatriot, Mr. Frederick Ofosu, a Ghanaian migrant in Malta who tragically committed suicide on 18th January 2017 at age 37.

Gratitude to:
• the University of Malta
• President of Malta, Her Excellency Mrs. Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca
• Dr. Yonah Matemba of the University of West Scotland
• Their role in organising the First Memorial Lecture on 12th May 2017, in honour of Frederick on: "Speaking for Ofosu: Immigrant experience, multiculturalism and the psychological trauma of migration".

• painful story represents that of most African immigrants the world over.
• migrated from Ghana to Malta in 2009 where he lived and worked for a number years.
• Got stuck in the immigration quagmire - as most migrants do - and tragically took his own life.
Conclusion (contd.)

Dr. Matemba:

- Cultural and religious ‘identifiers’ that make migrants “visible”.
- Race concerns (colour of their skin).
- Other immigrants difficult to spot from afar.
- Religion: for example, the hijab for Muslim women.
- “They are everywhere” and “they will soon “swamp us”, “there are no jobs here – our children don’t even have jobs”, “Schools and hospitals are already full – we have no space here”.
- Immigrant work: jobs that the locals don’t want to do.
- Immigrants contribute immensely to the social and economic life of the host country.
- Migrant continually made to feel that he is a burden on the host society.

Psychological trauma and stressors: uncertainty of his status, fear of forced removal, no right to dignified/better income generating work due to immigration restrictions, poverty and social exclusion and feelings of utter despair, perceived and actualised discrimination, social conditions, language barrier, lack of recognition of skills or educational achievements, difficulties accessing medical care and welfare services, lack of social and emotional support, loneliness, separation from and worry about family members.
Conclusion (contd.)

• post migration stressors have been shown to act as determinants of mental health disorders and was likely what drove Frederick Ofosu to the edge.

**Positive factors:** feelings of acceptance, welcoming societal attitudes by the host country, (heart-warming stories of young refugees adopted by host country nationals and who ended becoming responsible adults), involvement with the host country’s culture, access to employment opportunities and better integration policies in the host country.

Other positives:
• Civic education for adults to understand ”why migrants are here” and ”what the country should do to support them”.
• Political will to make the right changes needed to protect immigrants and create policies with a Human Rights touch.
• The national school curriculum is another important key in addressing this issue.
Conclusion (contd.)

• It is believed that in Malta civic education is underway and so it is for other European countries.

• A migrant who feels accepted, and a part of society, will work with the citizens of the host country and this ultimately reduces the risk of crime on the migrant’s part.

• In life or in death, a refugee deserves dignity and respect. Unfortunately, with Frederick’s situation, it was the contrary

• Need for better collaboration between Africa and the EU and not rhetoric.

The large movement of people to explore new, safer and better horizons is likely to continue unless we continue to address the root causes of migration fueled by diverse issues (war, political instability, poverty or persecution, increasing globalisation, urbanisation, geopolitical tensions, inequality, marginalisation and exclusion).
Conclusion (contd.)

Contribution of migrants to development (remittances, investment and transfer of knowledge and skill) are largely viewed as a tool for development.

More important—the SDGs: migration and human mobility, four of the 17 targets of the Sustainable Development Goals (SGDs), placing well managed migration at the forefront of regional and global agendas.

Curbing illegal migration by sealing borders will rather improve the business of traffickers and make migrants’ journeys more dangerous as we are witnessing today.

The African Union must take responsibility to address conflicts, tackle corruption and to promote good governance, economic development and the rule of law. The European Union, on its part, must take into consideration the common position of the African Union on migration and to continue to assist the AU in building institutional capacity in good governance.

Ladies & Gentlemen, I thank you for your attention.
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