

STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL SERVICES, MR. L. C. MUSEKA AT THE INTERNATIONAL DIALOGUE ON MIGRATION: DIASPORA MINISTERIAL FORUM: 18-19 JUNE 2013: GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

Mr Chairman

Zimbabwe is speaking for the first time and would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Swing for his re-election as IOM Director General. I also wish to extend, on behalf of the Government of Zimbabwe, a warm welcome to our new members, Malawi and Suriname.

Mr Chairman

Zimbabwe has lived through more than a decade of severe economic downturn since the year 2000. As a consequence of economic decline and hyperinflation, Zimbabwe witnessed unprecedented and crippling flight of skilled professionals and unskilled workers across all sectors of the economy, with devastating effects on the development of the country. On the social front, families were torn apart and this negatively impacted on the traditional and societal values of the people of Zimbabwe.

The Government has undertaken measures to promote and encourage Diaspora participation in capacity

building and socio-economic development of the country. Engagement with our Diaspora has been and continues to be a priority for the Government of Zimbabwe.

To this end, our Ministry of Economic Planning and Investment Promotion held investment road shows in Botswana and South Africa, in 2012 and earlier this year, to engage with the diaspora on how they could contribute to the development of the country. The government has plans to mount similar investment campaigns in the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, among other countries, where there are large numbers of Zimbabwean nationals.

The Government also launched the Zimbabwe Human Capital Website to advertise the employment opportunities back home and encourage the return of qualified personnel. The database has over 150 registered PHD holders and 40% have already been employed by local universities.

Mr Chairman

The growth in international migration has presented challenges and opportunities for all our countries, great and small. During the Global African Diaspora Summit held in South Africa on 25 May 2012, Member States committed to developing frameworks and structures that facilitate Diaspora engagement. The Government of Zimbabwe has been forging close links with Zimbabweans in the Diaspora and creating

formal, transparent and lucrative channels of investment, to boost direct investment in the economy.

Our Ministry of Health for instance, has, in conjunction with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), organised the return of doctors and other specialised medical personnel for attachments to hospitals and to the University Medical School. This on-going project has helped alleviate the critical shortage of doctors at medical institutions in the country, as well as teaching staff at the Medical School.

Following the same paradigm, the Government, through the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, and, in partnership with the IOM, contracted qualified Zimbabwean professors and lecturers in the diaspora to come and conduct short courses at local universities and polytechnics. The short courses enhanced the understanding of students and capacitated local lecturers. We are pleased to note that the Short Sequence Return of Professionals Project has generally improved the quality of education in the country.

Mr Chairman

I wish to highlight that it is imperative for developing countries to increase South-South cooperation in addressing the political and socio-economic marginalisation of the Diaspora communities in their countries of residence. Migration is a cross-cutting

phenomenon and there is need for a coordinated response to these issues. As a natural process, migration cannot be eliminated, as that will be a violation of people's rights. We only can manage the processes. I urge that we take advantage of this forum to share best practices and exchange ideas about our diverse experiences.

It is note-worthy that migration flows have increased between developing countries. This development is contrary to past experiences when nationals from developing countries migrated to developed countries.

Mr Chairman

In recognition of these new dynamics, the Government of Zimbabwe accords all foreigners who are legally resident in Zimbabwe have access to all fundamental rights such as health care, education, protection, security, employment, among others. The Government has accorded these rights to all foreign nationals living in the country and believes that these rights should also be availed to the Zimbabwean Diaspora all over the world.

The Government through the Ministry of Labour and Social Services, has concluded a number of bilateral labour agreements with countries in the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) in order to create and facilitate conditions for safe migration, as well as put measures to extend labour rights to migrant workers. In this regard, Zimbabwe has signed

cooperation agreements with Namibia and South Africa. Similar agreements are under negotiation with Botswana, Mozambique and Zambia. The pursuit of active labour migration management is in recognition of the contribution that labour migration can make towards development, particularly when the positive development impact of remittances is considered.

Mr Chairman

With these words, my government wishes to declare its readiness to work with all IOM members in enabling the participation of Diasporas in order to facilitate development in our countries. My government therefore looks forward to the conclusion of this debate.

I thank you!