

**Conference on the institutional capacity of the Migration Dialogue for West Africa
(MIDWA)
July 9th 2012 Dakar**

The conference on the Institutional Capacity of the Migration Dialogue for West Africa (MIDWA) took place in Dakar, Senegal, hosted by the Government of Senegal. The conference was organized by ECOWAS in partnership with IOM and the Swiss government. It was attended by delegates of ECOWAS Member States and representatives of Civil Society and International Organizations.

Objectives of Meeting

The conference aimed to lay the groundwork for the strengthening of MIDWA as an action-oriented and sustainable regional consultative process on migration in the ECOWAS region.

The conference aimed to achieve the following concrete outcomes:

- Adoption of comprehensive operating modalities for MIDWA outlining all procedural and institutional aspects of the dialogue;
- Consultations on the priority issues to be addressed in the coming years of MIDWA;
- Identification of the MIDWA weaknesses as a process for dialogue and modalities for strengthening its operational framework to improve its efficiency and effectiveness;
- Adoption of a Communiqué to be submitted to the ECOWAS Council of Ministers for consideration and approval. This will ensure the necessary political recognition and support for MIDWA in the future.

Opening ceremony

The meeting was opened by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Republic of Senegal, the Director of the Department of Free Movement & Tourism at ECOWAS, the Director General of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Ambassador of Switzerland to Senegal.

In his welcoming remarks, the Minister of Foreign Affairs pointed out the active participation of his country in MIDWA since its inception, and the sustained interest and engagement of Senegal in regional cooperation on migration.

The Director General of IOM referred to the historical momentum of migration, and emphasized the importance of partnerships in promoting a common understanding of migration and a coherent migration policy. Regional partnerships facilitate a better understanding of migratory phenomena and are essential for improved migration management.

The Ambassador of Switzerland to Senegal illustrated how migration has been a leitmotif in the development of nation states and communities, citing the history of Switzerland as an example.

ECOWAS emphasized the importance of a dialogue on migration at the regional level in order to further cooperation and a common regional approach between ECOWAS Member States. Establishing institutional structures for MIDWA, including annual meetings, would help to achieve this.

Presentations

ECOWAS Presentation on MIDWA

Key points:

- overview of history of MIDWA presented (2000-2010), as well as its main objectives: the promotion of peace and stability in West Africa; the protection of migrants' rights; supporting the contribution of migrants to the development of their country of origin; poverty reduction in the areas of emigration; information, awareness-raising and research on various aspects of intra-regional, inter –regional and international migration in West Africa.
- The main challenge for countries in West Africa is to integrate migration into their national policies. New methodologies for migration management are needed which are more inclusive of different stakeholders and which establish open and constructive dialogue.

IOM Presentation on the RCP (Regional Consultative Process)

Key points:

- Definition, objectives and outcomes of the RCP presented; RCPs as an informal, non binding mechanism that brings together states, international organizations and other stakeholders to discuss and exchange information on migration issues of common interest.

-RCP good practices identified including association with regional institutions such as Regional Economic Communities (RECs) to enhance political engagement and follow up to recommendations and proposals of RCPs; data sharing; capacity building of migration stakeholders; creation of networks at intra-governmental and inter-governmental level; establishment of operational modalities for an RCP.

- Overview of different RCPs in Africa; role of African Union in supporting regional dialogue and policy frameworks on migration (eg. AU Migration Policy Framework); ECOWAS Ambassadors in Geneva also have a role to play in supporting regional coordination on migration management.

IGAD (Intergovernmental Authority on Development) Presentation on the IGAD RCP

Key points:

- IGAD RCP was established in 2009 with the support of IOM. The objective of the RCP is to facilitate dialogue and cooperation on migration between countries of IGAD.

- Overview and objectives of IGAD RCP
- Existence of a defined institutional framework including a Regional Coordination Committee, sectorial committees, and a secretariat
- IGAD has recently developed a migration policy framework, using the AU Migration Policy Framework as one of its reference points (and contextualizing the MPF to IGAD priorities). IGAD is now planning to develop a Free Movement Protocol, looking to ECOWAS as an example.
- Recent proposal to establish national dialogues that will feed into the IGAD RCP; this could serve to enhance the contribution of IGAD Member States to the RCP by strengthening reporting on national migration issues and priorities by Member States.

Presentation of MIDWA Draft Working Modalities & Discussion

- Member States welcomed the ECOWAS initiative to establish an institutional framework for MIDWA. The important role of ECOWAS within a strengthened MIDWA process was acknowledged by Member States. Member States made proposals relating to the funding structure for MIDWA and also emphasized the importance of maintaining flexibility and the option to organize ad hoc MIDWA meetings when necessary. Member States called for strengthened national dialogue

on migration to complement and contribute to MIDWA. Civil Society representatives called to be included in all migration topics addressed by MIDWA.

- Member States voiced concerns about weak national coordination structures on migration, with multiple organizations involved in the migration process, and foresaw challenges in identifying national focal points for MIDWA. There is a need to articulate the coordination functions and responsibilities between different partners and levels at national and regional level.
- Member States also identified priority issues for discussion in the MIDWA framework. These include: enhanced migration data collection and management; the creation of national policy frameworks on migration and the mainstreaming of migration into development frameworks; the establishment of institutional coordination/governance frameworks on migration; Pastoralists; border management and different immigration frameworks and practices in MS; irregular migration and travel documentation.
- ECOWAS response and clarifications:

MIDWA will be given financial support by ECOWAS, funding will be foreseen under the 2013 budget of the department for free movement and tourism. Donor funding can also constitute another avenue of financing for MIDWA, as for example the regional 10th EDF funds for support to free movement of persons and migration in West Africa.

ECOWAS welcomed Member States support for the establishment of an enhanced institutional framework for MIDWA, as well as the example of operating modalities illustrated by IGAD. Only ECOWAS Member States and the ECOWAS Commission will constitute members of MIDWA. Civil Society and other partners will be eligible as observers.

ECOWAS encouraged Member States to initiate strengthened national dialogues on migration as well as coordinated governance structures at state level. It is the responsibility of Member States to ensure proper “restitution” of regional meetings on migration to national counterparts, thus the importance of national focal points on migration. ECOWAS is starting to develop a regional migration policy and will support Member States in developing national migration policies.

Presentation of draft Communiqué of the conference and way forward

ECOWAS presented the draft MIDWA communiqué to participants and outlined its objectives and content. It was explained that the draft working modalities will constitute an annex to the communiqué, and that, following the finalization of these documents based on the comments and feedback received from Member States, the communiqué

will be submitted to the ECOWAS Council of Ministers for endorsement. The draft communiqué was reviewed together by all participants at the conclusion of the conference “Fostering the development impact of South-South Migration in West Africa through enhanced knowledge and cooperation”, in order to give participants sufficient time to review the draft document. Some amendments to the communiqué on form and content were proposed by participants. It was agreed that, prior to submission to the ECOWAS Council of Ministers, the communiqué would be modified by ECOWAS on the basis of agreed modifications, and that these modifications would also be reflected in the Working Modalities document.

Conclusion

ECOWAS, IOM and the Swiss Government made concluding remarks to the meeting, pledging their support for MIDWA, expressing satisfaction at its outcomes, and encouraging Member States to engage in enhanced dialogue and cooperation at both the national and regional level and to support the future implementation MIDWA.

The Government of Senegal thanked all participants for their contributions and active engagement in the conference and declared the conference closed.