



MIGRATION DIALOGUE FOR WEST AFRICA (MIDWA) MINISTERIAL AND EXPERTS MEETING

The Impact of Free Movement and the Challenges of Migration

**August 23-25, 2016
Abidjan, Ivory Coast**

- CONCEPT NOTE-



EUROPEAN UNION



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International Centre for
Migration Policy Development



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FMM West Africa
Support to Free Movement of Persons & Migration in West Africa

CONTEXT

The Migration Dialogue for West Africa (MIDWA) was inaugurated by ECOWAS, in cooperation with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), in December 2000, and with the support of the Swiss Government through the Swiss Development Cooperation from 2012. It is specifically designed to encourage ECOWAS Member States to discuss common migration issues and concerns in a regional context for which immediate solutions may not be forthcoming on a national level.

The objectives of the Migration Dialogue for West Africa (MIDWA)

- Strengthen the capacities of ECOWAS Member States and other stakeholders to fully understand the potential inherent to regular migration in the process of integration and regional and continental development;
- Foster a common understanding by policy-makers, senior officials and partners involved, the stakeholders and the civil society organizations working for the cause, the dimensions, models, future trends and the impacts of migration in the ECOWAS sub-region;
- Promote the conceptualization more of coherent, factual and comprehensive migration policies, at national and regional level;
- Promote the impacts of concretely implementable project and initiatives, thus ensuring tangible results of the dialogue;
- Foster a mutually beneficial inter-State dialogue and an intra-regional cooperation on free movement of people and migration at national, regional and international levels;
- Identify some of the legal, administrative and technical difficulties that hinder the smooth implementation of the ECOWAS protocols on free movement of persons.

MIDWA Meeting

To strengthen MIDWA as a regional, sustainable and action-oriented consultative process, a conference on the MIDWA institutional capacity was held in Dakar in July 2012. The meeting welcomed the ECOWAS initiative to establish an institutional framework for MIDWA. One of the outcomes of this conference was the adoption of Working Modalities for MIDWA, which were submitted to the ECOWAS Ministers of Security and Regional Integration for approval.

MIDWA 2014 focused on free movement of persons with the objective of regional integration and economic cooperation and produced a series of policy recommendations in this area. The main recommendations called for the launch of the ECOWAS Biometric Identity Card; the creation of equal conditions for all ECOWAS citizens in terms of entry and settlement in the ECOWAS host countries; improvement of awareness among citizens of the community about their rights and responsibilities under the Protocols on free movement; the monitoring mechanism for the implementation of the principles of free movement and the institutionalization of MIDWA.

MIDWA 2015, which took place in October in Nouakchott, Mauritania, focused on the theme of "Irregular Migration: Challenges and Solutions". Experts and ministers gathered to discuss to identify political and operational solutions in these priority areas for strengthening border management; the fight against the root causes of irregular migration; the protection of migrants' rights; the increased support to efforts against trafficking and the intra and inter-regional cooperation.

On February 18, 2016 was held the first meeting of the MIDWA Steering Committee in Dakar. The main objective of the meeting was to set up the MIDWA Steering Committee and its implementing bodies (the Permanent Secretariat, the National Secretariats and the thematic groups). The theme of MIDWA 2016 was also included in the agenda.

MIDWA 2016: The Impact of Free Movement and the Challenges of Migration

The ECOWAS region is characterized by intense migration movements. Countries and peoples share common sociocultural and economic links that fit into the historical and contemporary dynamics within which mobility is central. The creation of ECOWAS has raised many hopes of the populations driven by their common desire to break the physical and language barriers. The way to get there lies in the willingness and good faith to share not only their geographical territories but also their potentialities in a unified and harmonized legal space. The Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Establishment is the instrument that enables them to realize these wishes.

Thus, on May 20, 1979, the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Establishment was adopted. On May 29, 1982 the Protocol establishing a Code of Community Citizens was adopted. Three years later, that is to say in July 1985 was also adopted the Additional Protocol establishing the Code of Conduct for the implementation of the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Establishment. The outcomes of all these efforts were the introduction of harmonized and simplified travel documents including the Travel Certificate, the ECOWAS passport and biometric identity card. That is to say the legal framework set up by ECOWAS to ensure that free movement of persons is a great achievement. Most of the ECOWAS Member States have already adopted the institutional frameworks for implementation laws, decrees and by-laws of the protocols on free movement of persons. While it is true that progress has been made the fact remains that today the legal mechanism is still more undermined by the escalation of terrorist threats.

Moreover, the impact of environmental degradation on migration raises questions about the causes of the intense migratory movements observed in the region. 76% of migrants who cross national borders head to an ECOWAS Member State. Free movement of citizens facilitated this vast movement. However, it caused adverse effects with community conflicts observed in some Member States. The effects of climate change, desertification and land degradation must be taken into account in the definition of a comprehensive migration management strategy in West Africa. The cooperation with international technical partners such as the UN Convention to combat Desertification and Land Degradation will enable to strengthen resilience and prevent conflicts caused by internal and intra-regional migration.

The main objective of this MIDWA is to identify the various pitfalls that delay the effective implementation of texts relating to free movement of persons to propose alternative solutions. It will also be an opportunity for exchange and discussion between experts from Member States and international partners around the following key themes:

- 1- Session 1: Analyze the relation between free movement of persons and the escalation of security problems, including terrorist attacks: How to maintain the balance and preserve the community acquis?
- 2- Session 2: Assess the impacts of free movement of persons: Political, social and economic plan after 41 years of existence of the ECOWAS. What are the achievements of Member States in the field of free movement? Are reforms necessary in the field of free movement?
- 3- Session 3: Analyze the consequences of desertification, land degradation and climate change on internal and intra-regional migratory movements: How the populations react to the phenomenon and which intervention strategy is adopted by ECOWAS

4- Session 4: Discuss the opportunities and operational modalities for a better contribution of the partners to a proper management of migration. Which mechanism to strengthen cooperation exists between the partners and the MIDWA.

Development and participation in the meeting

The MIDWA experts meeting will be organized from 23 to 24 August, 2016 in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, and will bring together high-level technical experts from ECOWAS Member States, Mauritania, the EU, the Swiss Government, the International Organization for migration (IOM), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) and other UN agencies and international agencies.

Following the MIDWA experts meeting, a ministerial meeting will be held on 25 August, 2016 in Abidjan, Ivory Coast. This meeting will bring together Ministers in charge of Interior Affairs of the 15 ECOWAS Member States and Mauritania. The meeting will result in the presentation and formal adoption at ministerial level of policy recommendations formulated by the MIDWA experts meeting.