**Opening Remarks**

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**IGAD Executive Secretary,**

**IGAD Technical Working Group on Migration**

**Wednesday 14th July 2021**

Good morning my dear colleagues representing the different IGAD departments and divisions.

I am also very pleased to address you this morning at the first physical meeting of the technical working group on migration this year. The last meeting had to be held virtually in May last year as a result of the strictures imposed upon us by covid-19 pandemic.

I am also very gratified to observe that this technical working group has fully embraced and taken our collective vision of "one IGAD" deep into its heart. Our gathering today in this inter-disciplinary technical and coordination platform plays a critical role in promoting linkages and synergies across the IGAD divisions, institutions and programs on migration and is in keeping with the holistic spirit and approach of the IGAD Regional Migration Policy Framework.

The focus of this meeting on the implementation of the IGAD Protocols on free movement of persons and transhumance is both timely and important. It comes at a most auspicious moment when we at IGAD are gearing up to redouble our efforts towards actualizing the regional integration agenda through the IGAD strategy 2021 – 2015.

These two protocols were endorsed by IGAD ministries of Interior and Labor last February 2020 in Khartoum and further adopted 3 weeks ago by the 72nd Extraordinary Session of the IGAD Council of Ministers.

The Technical Working Group on Migration single-mindedly drove the drafting of the Protocols and now that we are on the cusp of embarking on implementation phase, the role of this group is will be more important than ever.

This is therefore an invitation to review and sharpen the terms of reference of this group to be more fit-for-purpose as we begin to animate the provisions of the two Protocols and translate them into practical realities for our Communities, Member States and the African Continent as a whole.

The AU Agenda 2063 presents free movement as a key component for a unified Africa. In 2018, the AU adopted the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment which is the progenitor of the IGAD protocols.

In the same year the AU also developed the Migration Policy Framework for Africa, which recommends the harmonization and strengthened implementation of AU and REC free movement provisions related to residence and establishment, as well as enhanced cooperation among Member States to facilitate free movement.

These mother documents provide that the policy and practice of implementing free movement rationally must begin with Africa's regional economic communities (RECs).

Looking to our IGAD region, our ambitions for regional integration are reflected in our own efforts to establish a regional free movement regime through these protocols.

In this regard, IGAD was once again a policy direction trailblazer by becoming the first regional organisation in Africa to arrive at a regional migration policy framework and a Migration Action Plan.

The IGAD migration policy and the accompanying action plan provide strategic recommendations on various aspects of migration in a more comprehensive and holistic manner while building the capacity of our member states to develop national migration policies.

The strategic priorities of the Action Plan include *inter alia;* the facilitation of labour mobility, the facilitation of mobility for pastoralist communities and most critically for this meeting, the establishment of a free movement regime in the region. We are all in agreement that such a regime is the linchpin for regional economic integration and meaningful driver of growth and development.

The adoption of the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons put in place the underpinnings for greater regional integration and implementation of the Global Compact for Migration to ensure safe, orderly and regular migration.

Specifically, Article 4 of the IGAD Protocol on free movement of persons includes the following overarching provisions that are laid out in a phased manner for gradual implementation and realization:

- Phase I: The rights of entry and abolition of visa requirements;
- Phase II, The rights of movement of workers;
- Phase III, The rights of residence;
- Phase IV, The rights of establishment.

I am looking forward to the detailed updates over the next 3 days from the technical bench that has been shepherding these protocols on their current status and respective roadmaps for implementation.

I call upon all of us here to recognize that migration is not the province of the Health and Social Division alone but an issue that affects and is affected by all the work we do here in the IGAD region.

I therefore urge you to work together in harmony to identify opportunities for synergy, take on a broader interpretation of our respective roles and functions, as well as come up with concrete technical planning and coordination mechanisms that cut across our respective IGAD Divisions, Programs and Specialized Institutions for the implementation of the two Protocols.

Realizing free movement in transnational settings undoubtedly elicits a certain degree of resistance that is linked to linked to security, social and economic concerns.

Throughout this process, our Member States have consistently highlighted the capacity shortages they face that act as an obstacle to implementing these protocols. We need to listen to these concerns very carefully and find innovative methods of circumventing them.

One of the quickest avenues lies in strengthening national policy frameworks and institutional structures, investing in human capacity and critical infrastructure such as the now famous One-Stop-Border Posts. It will also require the generation of evidence, data and analysis to logically define the priorities and inform the sequencing of implementation activities.

However, in the absence of Member State ratification and long-term fiscal and technical support for national level implementation of the two Protocols, the progress we have recorded so far is likely to grind to a halt or even be reversed altogether.

It is important therefore, that we support the capacity of our Member States to implement the free movement and transhumance regimes by building upon on the current momentum and seek to mobilize the political will necessary to push ahead with the ratification of the two protocols.

Concluding with this advisory note in mind, I would like to lay emphasis on those tasks that can effectively bring about this scenario for instance, identifying activities in the protocols and accompanying roadmaps that can be supported through concrete resource mobilisation and technical assistance by our member states.

I wish you all successful deliberations and look forward to playing an active role in supporting and implementing the concrete outcomes that will result from this meeting moving forward.

Thank you.