



**Draft 1: 28<sup>th</sup> October, 2025**

**Concept Note:**

**THE 9<sup>TH</sup> PAN AFRICAN FORUM ON MIGRATION (PAFoM IX)**

**Theme: “*Smart, Integrated and Secure Border Management: Leveraging Technology for Efficient Human Mobility and Trade in Africa*”**

**16<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> December, 2025**

**Cape Town, Republic of South Africa**

## 1. BACKGROUND & OVERVIEW

Africa's borders are critical gateways for trade, migration, and regional integration. However, many border posts remain constrained by outdated infrastructure, fragmented systems, and inefficient processes. As the continent advances toward the goals of the **African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)** and the **Protocol on Free Movement of Persons**, there is an urgent need to modernize border management through **smart, secure, and integrated technological solutions**.

Notably, Africa stands at a pivotal moment in its journey toward deeper regional integration, economic transformation, and inclusive development. Border posts, once seen primarily as security checkpoints must now evolve into strategic enablers of **continental trade, human mobility, and cooperation** by harnessing the power of **digital innovation and intergovernmental coordination**.

Consequently, to foster and unlock Africa's economic and human potential, border posts must transition from being bottlenecks to becoming **facilitators of migration and human mobility and commerce**. This requires a coordinated policy approach that leverages **digital innovation**, promotes **interoperability**, and strengthens **security and resilience** across Member States.

### ***Migration and Development***

Literature attesting to recognition of the growing importance of migration and mobility as critical enablers of development abounds. Congruently, migration is a fundamental component of development discourse, acting as both a driver and an indicator of developmental progress and failures. Furthermore, migration has been crucial for economic growth, providing labour for emerging industries and facilitating the transfer of knowledge and remittances. Taken together, if migration is seen as a process of development in its own right and a vehicle through which development can be achieved, migration should be embraced within development planning, with laws and policies designed to facilitate and optimize its benefits.

Congruently, the policy and practice discourse surrounding border control, humanitarian interventions, and the securitization of migration underscore how states leverage or are challenged by migratory flows to assert sovereignty, manage resources, and project influence. There is a discussion on how migration contributes to the development of receiving and sending countries through the exchange of new skills and ideas; and that migration can act as an economic stimulus. For instance, in context of Intra-Trade and

regional integration, labour migration can create substantial economic and other benefits for migrants, their families, and their countries of origin

### ***Mobility, Immigration Services and Border Management***

Human history is intertwined with mobility and migrating since time immemorial and this dates back to pre-colonial times. The long-term and growing body of evidence on migration and mobility shows that migration is in large part related to the broader global economic, social, political and technological transformations that are affecting a wide range of high-priority policy issues. Evidently, the border management transformations, to large extent manifest evolution along with technological advancement.

The right to mobility and migration is established in human-rights instruments (including the Charter of the United Nations and the Declaration on Human Rights). These rights must then be promoted, respected and protected during the facilitation of Immigration Services. These include:

- managing the arrival and exit of migrants
- setting up suitable migrant reception facilities and migrant resource centres (MRC)
- carrying out relocations and other transfer mechanisms
- ensuring quick and efficient asylum and return procedures
- improving border governance and border management
- protecting unaccompanied minors and other vulnerable groups
- promoting integration and reintegration policies for legally residing migrants
- developing legal pathways to migration through labour mobility
- creating partnerships against migrant smuggling and human trafficking networks.

This indicates the important role that Immigration Policy and Services play in migration and human mobility. Given the fact that international migration is a transnational phenomenon, it becomes imperative to ensure cooperation, collaboration and coordination of Immigration Departments across jurisdictions in order to facilitate safe, orderly, regular and dignified migration.

Within the African context, Agenda 2063 aspires for a continent characterized by well managed borders, and management and the collaborative governance of cross-border resources. Achieving this vision required robust and effective border governance<sup>1</sup> underpinned by dialogue, cooperation, and mutual trust among Member States.

---

<sup>1</sup> **African Union Commission (AUC) (2020).** *Africa Union Strategy for a Better Integrated Border Governance.* <https://www.peaceau.org/uploads/2020-english-au-border-governance-strategy-final.pdf>

To achieve this goal, and to advance facilitation of movement of persons, there is greater need to promote robust border management through among other things, the improvement of national travel documents and establish border management information systems (BMIS) , fully implement a visa-free or visa-on-arrival policy. , All these actions are needed to realize regional integration and achieve the goals of AfCFTA and similar regional agreements<sup>2</sup> (Strasbourg, 2006). Notably, facilitated movement of people has the potential to boost trade, ensure labour mobility, skills transfer, promote employment opportunities, enhance regional integration and development over the continent, and further stimulate the improvement of air transportation and transborder route infrastructure<sup>3</sup>. The effectiveness of facilitation of human mobility and migration is premised on the institutional set up of the organizations administering entry and exit of persons across borders. In this respect, the Department of Immigration plays a critical role in ensuring the immigration, emigration and regularization of stay people across the African continent.

Borrowing a leaf from the forum of Heads of Police in Africa and that of Intelligence Chiefs, the African Union Commission saw it critically important for Directors General/Heads/Chiefs of Immigration to meet and share experiences and exchange information on border governance and management, visa administration, entry and exit administration, addressing irregular migration, inclusive of trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants, administration of asylum seekers and refugees, facilitating trade, handling of children on the move, promotion of free movement and facilitation of regional integration. Accordingly, to ensure efficient immigration services, particularly in the area of border management, there is a pressing need for enhanced cooperation and coordination among African Union Member States. Strengthening collaborative frameworks will be essential to harmonize policies, share intelligence, and build interoperable systems that support secure, responsive, and integrated border governance across the continent.

## **Security Concerns and Risks**

While advancements in digital technologies offer promising tools for enhancing border management, recent studies have highlighted significant security concerns and risks. These include limitations in the capacity of African border systems to effectively detect and respond to transnational threats such as Trafficking in Persons (TiP), Smuggling of

---

<sup>2</sup> **Strasbourg (2006)**. *Towards a Migration Management Strategy: Challenges for Countries of Origin*. [https://www.coe.int/t/dg3/migration/archives/documentation/Migration%20management/CDMG\\_2006\\_11e%20Final%20Report%20\\_MG-R-PE\\_en.pdf](https://www.coe.int/t/dg3/migration/archives/documentation/Migration%20management/CDMG_2006_11e%20Final%20Report%20_MG-R-PE_en.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> **International Organization for Migration (IOM) (2020)**. *Africa Migration Report: Challenging the Narrative*. <https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/africa-migration-report.pdf>

Migrants (SoM), and irregular migration—particularly through the use of predictive analytics and digital intelligence.

Underlying these security challenges is the critical issue of weak border governance, which poses a direct threat to the African Union’s vision for regional integration. Ineffective border management not only undermines the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) but also hampers the operationalization of the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, thereby impeding socio-economic development and continental cohesion.

Echoing Agenda 2063’s vision of an integrated, prosperous, and people-centred Africa, this 9<sup>th</sup> PAFOM is intended to be an inaugural meeting of Director Generals/Heads/Chiefs of Immigration convened to take stock of migration issue across the continent, proffer and shape migration and immigration policies and practices.

## 2. OVERVIEW OF PAN AFRICAN FORUM ON MIGRATION (PAFOM)

The Pan African Forum on Migration (PAFoM) came into existence in 2006 following the 2006 AU Executive Council Decision (EX.CL/276(IX)) on the Migration Policy Framework for Africa which requested the AU Commission to work with IOM and other relevant partners to assist Member States to strengthen their migration governance. The PAFoM is a continental interstate dialogue platform for AU Member States and relevant stakeholders to deliberate on topical and emerging issues on migration and mobility in Africa. The Forum brings together AU Member States and Regional Economic Communities (RECs), UN agencies and intergovernmental organizations, CSOs, Academia, as well as other relevant stakeholders to shape and inform policy development, share experiences and learn from each other on ways to improve migration governance and management in Africa.

Since its inception in 2006, PAFoM has held 8 sessions across the continent with various pressing themes whose outcomes have assisted in bringing consensus on migration governance in Africa and shaped national, regional and continental migration policies. The outcome of each Forum feeds into AU Decision making process. Preceded by the 7<sup>th</sup> PAFoM in Kigali that explored the nexus between Migration and Climate Change, the 8<sup>th</sup> PAFoM was held in Gaborone, Botswana under the theme: “*Bolstering Free Movement and Trade Nexus in AfCFTA: Optimizing Benefits of Migration, Labour Migration for Development*”. The Conference sought to promote an improved understanding of the nexus between migration/labour migration, free movement and trade by unpacking socio-economic benefits and positive multiplier effects of this relationship.

### 3. THE 2025 NINETH PAN AFRICAN FORUM ON MIGRATION (PAFoM IX)

The migration dynamics within the continent are evolving at a faster pace necessitated by global, continental, regional and national changes within the socio-economic, geopolitical, cultural and scientific spheres. The COVID-19, the advent of Artificial Intelligence (AI), effects of globalization, regional and continental integration pursuits i.e. AfCFTA, demographic and economic discrepancies among other factors have given rise to increased mobility and migration across the continent. With this movement, comes the need for enhanced coordination and collaboration of immigration services to ensure smooth, and efficient movement of people in a safe, secure, dignified and regular manner.

The 2025 – Nineth edition of PAFoM will thus run under the theme: “***Smart, Integrated and Secure Border Management: Leveraging Technology for Efficient Human Mobility and Trade in Africa***”. The theme is timely as it seeks to advance border collaboration, a balance of migration and national security, free movement and dignified migration and mobility. Juxtapositioned against the 4<sup>th</sup> industrial revolution characterized by the proliferation of technology and digital platforms, the automation of border systems is growing.

#### **Constitution of Migration Advisory Council (MAC)**

In accordance with Articles 14 to 16 of the Constitutive Act of the African Union and Article 25 of the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community (Abuja Treaty), which provide for the establishment and functioning of Specialized Technical Committees (STCs) and their Sub-Committees, and recognizing the strategic importance of migration and mobility within Africa and globally, the African Union Commission is facilitating the establishment of the Migration Advisory Council (MAC) as a Sub-Committee under the STC on Migration, Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons. The MAC shall serve as a dedicated working group to advise and advance policy and operational matters related to migration and mobility, in alignment with the Migration Policy Framework for Africa and the AU Free Movement Protocol.

The Directors General, Heads, and Chiefs of Immigration of AU Member States play a pivotal role in advancing the discourse on migration and mobility across the continent. At this critical juncture—marked by intensified global geopolitical debates on migration and the urgent need for cross-sectoral efforts to accelerate regional integration and implement the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), the 9<sup>th</sup> PAFoM provides a timely and strategic platform. By convening high-level experts and practitioners in migration policy implementation, PAFoM-9 offers a conducive environment for formally establishing the Migration Advisory Council (MAC) as working group for migration and mobility in Africa.

The 9th PAFoM session will focus on refining policy propositions, recommendations, best practices and practical approaches for border governance and management across Africa. A key emphasis will be placed on the operational dimensions, integration and harnessing of technological innovations to enhance efficiency of border data processing and overall border operations.

### **Key Areas of Focus:**

- **Legal Identity and Border Management**
  - Effective Identity management for safe migration
- **Effective Institutional Mechanism for Border Management**
  - Inter and Intra Border Coordination Structures
- **Regional Integration and Africa Visa Openness**
  - Opportunities and challenges for efficiently facilitated cross border movement in Africa
  - liberalizing visa policies and advancing reciprocity principle
  - Harmonizing Entry and Exit Procedures and Processes incl. OSBP
- **Digitization of Immigration Services**
  - Integrated Border Management (IBM)
  - Border Management Information System
  - Traveller Identification Management

## **4. OBJECTIVES OF PAFOM IX**

The Forum will to:

- Provide a platform for the establishment of a consultative and engagement forum for Directors General/Chiefs/Heads of Immigration from AU Member States to discuss migration-related challenges and developments.
- Promote sustained cooperation and collaboration in immigration, emigration and migration management policies, frameworks, laws and regulations and practices in Africa.
- Provide a forum for sharing Africa context specific issues on immigration practices and border management in order to harmonize policies and practices across the continent.
- Interrogate the impact of legal identity and border management in facilitating smooth flow of persons across borders in Africa.

- Deliberate on benefits for leveraging technology towards automation of border systems in order to streamline procedures and improve migration data collection and analysis.
- Promote an integrated Africa by actively championing visa openness as a strategic enabler for easing mobility restrictions across RECs and Member States.
- Popularise the AU's new policies to reduce incidences of TiP and SoM in all RECs while supporting the implementation of the AU Horn of Africa Initiative (AUHOAI).

## 5. EXPECTED OUTPUTS/ OUTCOMES

It is expected that the Forum will yield the following outcomes, among others:

- Directors General/Chief/Heads of Immigration constitute a dedicated Migration Advisory Council (MAC) platform focused on addressing migration-related challenges across the continent.
- Improved cooperation and coordination of immigration services for better facilitation of movement of persons.
- Enhanced appreciation and knowledge of digitization of border systems and increased uptake of the same for improved efficiency in border governance.
- Enhanced knowledge on the positive impact of liberalizing the visa regime in RECs and Member States in Africa.
- Strengthened regional cooperation and coordination in addressing TiP and SoM.

## 6. MEETING DATES AND LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION

The three-working day meeting will be held from 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> of December 2025, in Cape Town, Republic of South Africa.

The meeting will be structured as follows:

- Directors General, Chiefs, Heads of Immigration Session: 16 - 17<sup>th</sup> December, 2025
- Accountability Session: Academia & Parliamentary Session: 17<sup>th</sup> December, 2025
- International Migrants Day Extravaganza: 18<sup>th</sup> December, 2025.

The Forum will gather Directors General, Chiefs, Heads of Immigration of AU MS, Chairs of Academia/Institutes, Parliamentary Portfolio Committees on Migration, Chiefs of Civil Registry Departments in Africa, Senior Experts and Officials from Immigration Departments and Ministry of Home Affairs/ Homeland Security/ Internal Affairs, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), AU Commission departments, independent offices and

institutions dealing with migration, UN Agencies under the Network on Migration, relevant International Organizations. Participants from partner organizations and countries will be invited as observers.

## 7. MEETING MODALITIES

The meeting will be a physical meeting comprising of plenary sessions, panel discussions as well as experience sharing engagements. The meeting will be guided and structured as follows:

- AU Rules and Procedures and ToRs adopted by Executive Council to guide the Forum
- Meeting will be in person
- PAFoM Chair to lead the proceedings assisted by Session Chairs from AU MS
- Agenda is structured under theme-based sessions
- Outcome Document to be adopted on the final day
- Have a Session to Commemorate International **Migrants Day**

## 8. MEETING TECHNICAL DOCUMENTS

Key documents for reference will include:

- Migration Policy Framework for Africa (MPFA)
- Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration
- Global Compact for Migration Plan of Action for Africa.
- Africa Visa Openness Index Reports.
- AU Policy on Prevention of TiP and SoM.