Declaration of Local Authorities of Africa on the occasion of the Europe/Africa Summit on migration
Valletta, Malta, 11-12 November 2015

The representatives of African Local Governments regrouped within the Pan-African organization of United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (UCLG-A) welcome the initiative to hold a Europe/Africa Summit of Heads of State and Government on the issue of migration. This Summit represents a major opportunity to launch at the highest political level a dialogue on all the ramifications of the issue of migrations. In order to attain the expected positive results, the Summit should confirm the political will of the two partners, Europeans and Africans, to cut across the approach limiting the issue of migration to the management and control of migratory flows, in order to fit in with a renewed vision embracing all development and cooperation policies having an impact on migration, and taking into account all stakeholders. The Summit should mark a stage in the transformation of the partnership relations between Europe and Africa in the area of migration, notably through the recognition and integration of the prime role that cooperation between local authorities should play in the efficient management of migration.

In this respect, the representatives of the local governments of Africa regrouped within the Pan-African organization of United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (UCLG-A):

Whereas the communication of the European Commission of 15 May 2013: "Empowering Local Authorities in partner countries for enhanced governance and more effective development outcomes";

Whereas the African Charter on the values and principles of decentralization, local governance and local development adopted by the Heads of State and Government of the African Union at the Conference of Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, in June 2014;

Whereas the expected setting up at the next Summit of the African Union, in January 2016, of a High Council of Local Governments as an Advisory Body of the African Union;
Whereas the position expressed by the High Representative of Foreign Affairs of the European Union on the role of local governments and the need to integrate these local stakeholders into the cooperation programs;

Taking into account the major challenge that the management of migrations represents for the development of Africa and the maintenance of good relations between Africa and Europe;

Given the fact that the local governments are often the points of departure and arrival of the flows of migration, and are consequently on the frontline when problems pertaining to migrations have to be addressed;

Whereas that the existing dialogue processes (Rabat, Khartoum) have so far failed to attain the expected concrete results, and that the joint Europe/Africa strategy still experiences ownership and implementation difficulties in spite of the triennial action plan adopted at the 2014 Europe/Africa Summit;

Whereas, with regard to migration, the difficulties often arise from the dilution of the dialogue in the processes and platforms whose legitimacy is not guaranteed;

Whereas the priority actions proposed in the action plan and aiming to address the fundamental causes of migrations have failed to generate a true impact in the field, likely due to their very general nature;

Whereas the adoption in September 2015 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the United Nations, implies the need to review this action plan in order to take into account the commitments of States vis-à-vis the SDGs and the long term action plans aiming to address the profound causes migration;

Recalling that the bulk of the migration and displacement movements of the people takes place within Africa, and it is the communities and the local governments that have so far offered the first accommodation structures to the migrants;

Considering the essential role to be played by the local authorities for the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals;

Whereas the need to promote a territorial approach in order to locate the aforesaid goals, and make them more concrete in the eyes of the people;

Considering the importance of cross-border cooperation between local governments in order to integrate these goals into the spaces and dynamics of integration of the continent, as well as into the experiences of the local societies and communities, thus contributing at the same time, to the management of the migration flows;
The representatives of the local governments of Africa, regrouped within UCLG-A:

Process of dialogue and integration of migration into development cooperation

- Call on the Heads of States and Governments to assess fully the role of migration in the development of Africa, and to integrate the associations representing the local authorities as rightful stakeholders in the Europe/Africa political dialogue on the issue of migration and in the definition and implementation of the strategic actions aiming to addressing the issue of migration.

Emergency Trust Fund to strengthen stability

- Welcome the setting up of an emergency trust fund to strengthen stability. They draw however the attention to the fact that the implementation of this fund should serve primarily to fund the humanitarian emergency actions and should not be transformed into an instrument for the funding of security actions. They also insist on the fact that this fund is inappropriate for long term structural actions contributing to the entrenchment of the people in the territories, what requires more appropriate funding instruments, including through the adaptation of current cooperation and dialogue instruments.

- Confirm the commitment of local authorities to be at the forefront for the mobilization of fund, the setting up of local basic services meeting the needs of the people, including the migrants.

Integration of migration into the cooperation and development actions

- Call on the European Commission and the member states to integrate migration as a development dimension to be taken into account in the mid-term review of the national and regional indicative programs of the 11th EDF as well as in the national plans set up in the African countries enjoying the neighborhood policy;

- Demand that the local governments of the concerned regions and countries be fully associated with the mid-term review exercise and that the review of the programming should integrate fully the responsibilities and the mandate of local authorities in the areas of delivery of basic services, sustainable local economic development and as prime stakeholders in the management of migrations.

Migration, local governments and territories

- Point out that the actions aiming to provide sustainable responses to the
fundamental causes of migration are generally the same as the ones aiming to set up local initiatives meeting the pressing needs of the resident and migrant people, and should be entrenched in the development of territories and should fit in with an African cross-border and regional integration cooperation perspective.

Sustainable development and integration of SDGs into the territories

- Suggest that the proposals of the action plan and the declaration should bring to the fore the sustainable development goals as a major condition to take on the challenges of migration and ensure the stabilization of the local people at the level of the different territories.

Conflicts and cross-border cooperation

- Propose that the action plan and the proposed priority interventions should be based more on the already existing initiatives which are set up by the local and national authorities, as well as by the African Union or international community, in response to the challenges that migrations pose.

- Demand for instance that the implementation of the Sahel action plan, which is supposed to provide solutions to the crisis that this especially strategic region for the management of migration flows has been experiencing, should serve as case study and example to integrate the role of local authorities into the management of migrations and the responses that should be provided to meet the needs of the local people, both resident and migrant.

Readmission, return and human rights

- Wish to draw especially the attention to the fact that some European initiatives relating to the return of migrants and the pressure exercised on the African states for the readmission of their migrants may produce a negative impact on the ongoing process of sub-regional integration and cross-border cooperation, notably within ECOWAS, for the promotion of mobility, free movement and free establishment of the nationals of the region within anyone of the member-states of ECOWAS, irrespective of their countries of origin.

- Demand a serious reconsideration of the intentions expressed by some European Union members, aiming to condition the granting of the official development assistance of the European Union on the implementation of the processes of return and readmission of migrants, and to externalize the management of migration flows, what may culminate in endangering the security and life of migrants. The prosperity of these intentions would constitute a calling into question of the shared values of partnership and equal dignity, and an unacceptable calling into question of the rights of migrants.
Cooperation and Pan-African integration

- Insist that a serious dialogue be launched on the issue of migration between the two Regions (African and European), associating in as much as possible all levels of governance, with as perspective not to cut the countries of the African Mediterranean façade from the rest of the continent, to ensure the conditions for a balanced dialogue are upheld. This recognition of the unity of Africa constitutes one of the major conditions for the realization of an authentic Europe/Africa partnership and for the implementation of a real action plan on migration within the framework of a support for the Pan-African integration project.

- In conclusion, the local authorities of Africa seize the opportunity to address the issue of migration to call on the Heads of State and Government for the Valletta Summit to open the way for the consideration of an overhaul of the partnership relations between Africa and Europe to cut across the relations between states, in order to promote and encourage relations between Peoples, notably through the integration of local authorities as rightful partners in the Europe/Africa political dialogue, and the monitoring of the action plan that will be adopted at Valletta.

For the Local Authorities of Africa

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And as directed by the President of UCLG-A

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