



Diaspora Technical Expert Working Group

A good number of diaspora representatives attended the Post-Valletta consultation meeting organized by the African Union Commission in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). The consultation meeting was held in Nairobi from 14 to 15 December 2015. The aim of the meeting was to discuss the Valletta outcomes and to come up with practical proposals that contribute to its implementation within the framework of existing AU initiatives on migration related matters in the short and medium term. At the end of the meeting, the AUC presented a roadmap for action in 2016 and 2017.

Within the Valletta Action Plan, the potential and strategic role of the diaspora in the implementation of agreed priority initiatives was clearly specified. During the discussion, the importance of the diaspora as a critical stakeholder in the efforts of addressing the challenges of the current migration and mobility dynamics between Africa and Europe was repeatedly mentioned. However, the most appropriate ways that the diaspora can make their knowledge, skills and accumulated expertise available to the institutions on the continent in the field of migration and development were not clearly spelled out. Fortunately, the diaspora representatives in the consultation meeting presented a proposal concerning the creation of a 'Diaspora technical expert working group' (DTEWG) towards this objective. Accordingly, the creation of such a mechanism will provide a reliable channel and an 'organized entity' through which diaspora professionals and experts can actively engage in the development of robust migration governance in the continent. It will also enable diaspora development practitioners to support the translation of the African Migration Agenda into projects and programmes on the ground. More concretely, the Diaspora technical advisory working group will be tasked with supporting the AUC, regional bodies, as well as the member states to devise and put in place implementation mechanisms of the Valletta Action Plan at different levels. The diaspora delegates agreed that the Diaspora technical advisory working group should operate under the Africa - Europe Diaspora Development Platform (ADEPT). ADEPT is already serving as an effective institutional mechanism and valuable interlocutor in development policy circles in Europe, and can also contribute to the AUC policy framework on diaspora engagement. In other words, the Diaspora technical advisory working group will serve as an outfit or an arm of ADEPT that will be tasked with supporting and liaising with the institutions on the continent. In principal, the proposal was endorsed by the AUC, and was therefore included in the roadmap for action in 2016 and 2017, which was indeed a great achievement for the diaspora representatives in the consultation meeting. The diaspora representatives eventually agreed to organize a follow up expert meeting with the

Department of Social Affairs of the AUC in Addis Ababa in January to discuss the mandate, structure, composition, size of the core group, focus, scope and funding mechanisms of the proposed Diaspora technical expert working group.

The setting up of a standing Diaspora technical expert working group will make it easy for the diaspora experts on migration and development related issues to work as a collective entity with institutions and agencies active in this area within the context of Africa. It will also provide an institutional structure through which diaspora experts can operate on a par with their counterparts in other development agencies supporting the institutions in Africa dealing with migration related matters. Generally, mainstream and established international development agencies such as the IOM and UNDP would like to work with the diaspora, but they prefer to engage them through a formal structure or a mechanism representing the diaspora. It is a given fact that institutions largely work with other institutions and not with individuals. It is therefore in the interests of the institutions on the continent and particularly the AUC to facilitate and support the creation of a standing Diaspora technical expert working group. Having a reliable diaspora agency in place will help the continent to benefit from the expertise and professional experience of the diaspora for the effective implementation of migration and development related activities and programmes on the ground.

It is foreseen that the Diaspora technical expert working group will undertake the following key tasks among others:

- a) Supporting the AUC, regional bodies, as well as the member states to devise and put in place implementation mechanisms of the Action Plan at different levels;
- b) Proposing and presenting priority areas for action;
- c) Developing multi-year projects and programmes in certain priority areas within a period of 3 months;
- d) Mapping out potential strategic partners, key stakeholders and agencies for the implementation of selected activities; and,
- e) Organizing expert meetings and commissioning evidence-based studies in certain areas, etc.