

To be printed on your organisation's letterhead

[Place, Date]

Your Excellency, Mr or Madam or Dr... (Name of the President of the Republic)

President of the Republic of... (Name of the country)

(Name of the Capital, Country)

Subject : Support for the adoption of a Protocol on Free Movement in Africa

Your Excellency, Mr/Madam/Dr the President of the Republic,

Please accept sincere greetings from the members of the Campaign for Free Movement in Africa.

African civil society organisations wish to express their satisfaction with the current consultations for the adoption of a Protocol on Free Movement of Persons in Africa in connection with the resolutions adopted during the summits of the Heads of State of the African Union (AU) in Johannesburg in 2015 and Kigali in 2016. The current consultation process provides African civil society with the opportunity to speak out in support of the protocol that will bring important change to the lives of populations on our continent.

With this letter, we wish to most respectfully reaffirm our support for the resolution passed by the Heads of State during the meeting of the African Union in Kigali in July 2016 which requires that the African Union:

“Put in place an implementation roadmap for the development of a Protocol on Free Movement of Persons in Africa by January 2018, which should come into effect immediately in Member States upon its adoption.” (Decision of the 27th Assembly of Heads of State of the African Union).

Today, free movement of Africans on the continent is one of the concerns of its populations. Since, for the most part, African mobility mainly takes place within the continent, the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons will be of great importance in facilitating regional integration. Although populations already have the possibility to move freely within the sub-regions of West Africa and East Africa, African civil society considers that this is not enough to ensure effective political integration at the continental level. Moreover, African civil society organisations believe that it is high time to put an end to the colonial heritage embodied by African borders. These borders are artificial borders established by the European States who, conversely, have removed their own internal borders to facilitate the free movement of European citizens.

Your Excellency, Mr/Madam/Dr the President of the Republic,

As has been highlighted by many economists, Africa is not yet benefiting sufficiently from the multiple advantages that the free of movement of its populations could generate. This is due to the strict immigration policies and restrictions imposed by African States that prevent African migrants establishing themselves in other African countries. Africans wishing to travel to another African country are also victims of strict visa requirements prior to departure, greatly limiting mobility on the continent. Since African countries do not always have diplomatic representation in all other countries on the continent, it can be difficult for many countries to find an embassy that can issue a visa. In addition to this problem, visa requirements, prior to departure, are costly both in time, money, and administrative formalities, and can often dampen individuals' motivation to travel. Finally, excessive border controls of which African migrants are the victims likens them to criminals and increases the risk of xenophobic attacks.

This regrettable situation is prejudicial to our African entrepreneurs who find it difficult to take full advantage of the opportunities that our continent offers compared to their European counterparts. Contrary to Africans, European entrepreneurs are able to obtain a visa directly at the airport on their arrival in many African countries. Another paradox is that, in many African countries, Europeans pay less for their visas than African travellers.

African civil society organisations are confident that the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons in Africa will be warmly welcomed by all of our continent's citizens and are, therefore, launching the continental "Campaign for Free Movement in Africa". By initiating this campaign, we hope to ensure that the protocol to be adopted at the next meeting of the Heads of State of the African Union will reflect the expectations of the populations. We also hope that your government will constructively contribute towards the protocol during the current consultations taking place at African Union level. Finally, we hope that your government will support greater inclusion of African civil society in the consultation process.

We thank you sincerely for taking time to consider this letter and for all your efforts in seeking to bring about effective African integration built on solidarity and mutual sharing between the peoples of our continent.

Yours sincerely,

[Name of the organisation]

[Name of the head of the organisation]

[Position of the head of the organisation]

[Signature of the head of the organisation]

Copy : Minister for Foreign Affairs
Campaign for Free Movement in Africa