

Statement Delivered by Mr. Tony Elumelu on behalf of ECOWAS Commission at the 103rd Council Session of the International Organization for Migration (IOM)

Mr. Chairman, IOM Director General Ambassador William Lacy Swing, Excellences, Heads of Delegations, Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,

Firstly, on behalf of the President of the ECOWAS Commission, His Excellency, Kadre Desire OUEDRAOGO I would like to express our profound gratitude to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) for the invitation extended to our organization to assume the status of observer in your esteemed Organization and to participate in the deliberations of this august gathering. We feel greatly honoured by this invitation, especially given the esteemed status of the International Organization for Migration as a leading intergovernmental organization in the field of migration, with vast experiences in migration management.

Migration remains a part of human way of life. Migrants are agents of change, although in the past, the social impact of migration was measured from a negative perspective. In Africa, the age-long practice of people migrating from across the continent to Europe and America for economic reasons has not changed much. Today as in the past, conflicts and boundary realignments, climate change and environment are major determinants of migration within and across the continent. Indeed, no region is immune from the wave of migration.

However, the risks associated with increased wave of migration across the globe present far greater challenges than ever before to governments and security agencies across the globe. Migration is no longer the usual southwards movement of people from Africa to Europe and America. It is now a continuous cycle of movement of people

across the continents for economic, social, political and technological reasons with far greater security challenges than previously imagined.

To address these challenges the ECOWAS Commission is continually working with partners including IOM to curb irregular migration, while promoting regular migration, by encouraging Member States to adhere to the precepts of the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of Persons and the Regional Common Approach on Migration and Development. The Free Movement Protocol has evolved into one of the key pillars of our regional integration agenda, making the ECOWAS space as the only region with a free-visa regime in Africa.

To assist the region in reining in irregular migration, the European Union has made available a grant of 25 million Euros, for a programme to be implemented by ECOWAS in partnership with IOM and a consortium. Part of this grant is earmarked for capacity building and enlightenment campaigns against irregular migration while encouraging regular migration. Also, the International Organization for Migration continues to work with a number of ECOWAS Member States on human trafficking, labour migration, the protection of children, and general migration and development issues. It is our fervent hope and prayer that this mutually beneficial collaboration between our two organizations will be stepped up for the benefits of the people of our region and the international community at large.

We trust that the experiences and lessons learnt from information sharing and building of synergy between our two organizations would be to the overall benefit of human kind.

Thank you for your attention.