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Brain Drain and Development Support Policy Coherence

*Comments on the Draft Issues Paper on Research and Development**

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Mehari Taddele Maru†

Programme Coordinator-Migration

The Commission of the African Union

* The comments and opinions expressed in this paper do not necessarily represent the position the African Union.

† **Mehari Taddele Maru** is Programme Coordinator-Migration at *African Union Commission*. He is a fellow of three prestigious programs at Harvard University: the Eleanor Roosevelt at Harvard Law School, the Global Advocacy Fellow at Human Rights Program and Mason Fellow at John F. Kennedy School of Government. He is also serves as Executive Director of *African Rally for Peace and Development*. He holds **MPA** from *Harvard University* and **MSc** from the *University of Oxford* and **LLB** from *Addis Ababa University*. He has Postgraduate Diplomas in international human rights law including *International Protection of Human Rights, Ethno-Political Conflict Studies*. Prior to joining Harvard University, Mehari served as Legal Expert at African Union Commission and as Director of the Addis Ababa University Office for University Reform.

Dear Colleagues

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- 1 Indeed it is my delight to participate in the Preparatory Workshop for Policy Coherence for Development and forward comments of the AU Commission on the Draft Issue Paper on Research and Development. On behalf of the African Union Commission, I would like to thank the EU Commission for organizing this workshop and inviting us to forward our views. The focus area of my discussion will be on the impact of EU Research Policy on brain drain particularly on the development of Africa. The comment is thin in terms of detailed research but attempt is made to include issues related to policy coherence particularly the contradictory nature of development aid and brain drain due to unethical recruitment. The adverse impact of unethical recruitment on socio-economic development of developing countries is seen as policy incoherence on the side of donor countries and partnership.
 - 1.1 In a simple outline form, the main comment of AU is that the problem of brain drain is a binding constraint to the achievement of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and is undoing the efforts of both donors and aid receiving countries. Brain drain is, and will be, a serious policy coherence challenge to EU where as for developing countries it will be another additional development challenge in the efforts of getting out of the vicious cycle of poverty and conflicts. In order to ensure policy coherence, I suggest that the central *object and purpose* of EU policy coherence exercise should be poverty reduction through the achievement of the MDGs. In other words, any policy that may have a direct or indirect adverse effect to the achievement of MDGs should be reconsidered. To explain my comments, I shall limit myself mainly to the case of brain drain and its detrimental impact on the achievement of MDGs. To elaborate more, the case of EU Blue Card is taken as incompatible to the EU policies and efforts towards the achievement of MDGs in Africa unless strict counteracting actions are taken.
 - 1.2 **Coherence of Research Policy with Development Objectives**

Ensuring coherence of two or more projects entails huge task of analysis of both the intended and unintended consequences of policies. It requires a clear understanding of the objectives of both the research policy on the one hand and the development objectives and sees what incompatible results they may have. As many development economists point out, disparity in the development of countries is mainly attributable to education, science and technology—a factor that determines their product as ‘rich or poor country good’ (Hausmann 2006). Human resource development is considered as main reform agenda and capacity building programmes of many African countries. The MDGs heavily banks on trained professionals particularly in sectors which are facing a critical shortage of trained human resource such as health and education. If this is true, then how could least developed countries grown fast while their human resource (that is needed for the expansion and utilization of education, science and technological advancement) is depleted by migration of their most skilled professionals? Moreover, if trained professionals of poor countries are actively recruited by the developed countries like EU, then how

could public investment in education have the expected return to accelerated development efforts? Is this a tension between several policies with different objectives?

2 Brain Drain

2.1 With regard to *brain drain* the *Draft Issue Paper on Research and Development* points that as “attracting researchers from third countries, **may** be a matter of concern for some developing countries”(emphasis mine). The Council in its conclusions on PCD of 19/20 November 2007 has noted the possibility of negative impact of its research and migration policies on development. Indeed the brain drain is a cause of serious concern for the African Union and its MS as it affect the achievement of MDGs.

2.2 Facts about brain drain

2.2.1 A binding impediment to measuring the impact of ‘brain drain’ on African development efforts is the inadequate statistics on trained professionals and immigration.

2.2.2 However, there are some estimates. The World Bank average estimates 70,000 skilled Africans migrate to EU and USA every year (AfricaFocus Bulletin July 17, 2006; Carrington and Enrica 1999). The main feature of immigration to the USA, Canada and EU could be characterized as overwhelmingly a case of brain drain. Only .71% of the total migrants to USA are with school of less than 12th grade (Carrington and Detragiache 1999). Of the total African migrants to USA, 74% are highly educated professionals. Indeed this fact makes it abundantly clear that uneducated Africans migrants to USA are insignificant.

“It is noteworthy, however, that immigrants from Africa consist primarily of highly educated individuals (about 95,000 of the 128,000 African migrants)” (Carrington and Detragiache 1999).

2.2.3 Ten years ago there were 1600 medical doctors in Zambia, only 400 are left now this includes newly trained physicians. In average 160 physicians leave Zambia per year. In Kenya, 90% of the nurses and doctors migrate to Europe and USA per year. Ethiopia has lost 75% of its skilled professionals within 10 years in 1980-1991. Exodus of medical and health service professionals have increased at alarming rate denying governments to maintain their efforts to meet the MDGs in health programmes. Brain drain is a threat to the quality of medical care and drains the capacity for medical education and research.

2.2.4 This should be seen against the background that Africa with its 10% of World population is a victim of 25% of the World diseases. However, it has only 3% of the global health workforce (Africa Health Strategy 2007:5). According the Africa Health Strategy, brain drain has a ‘devastating impact’ on health systems in Africa (Africa Health Strategy 2007:12).

2.3 Hence, more than 30% of the highly educated Africans leave Africa for better opportunity and security. Most the African migrants are the most educated ones in their country of origin and those capable of spending some amount of money for their travel. As there are *push factors* such as lack of security (war,

persecution and poverty) in Africa that facilitate brain drain, there are also *pull factors* from side of the EU such as better opportunities, quality of life and policies that devoid of principles of ethical recruitment. The UK, for example, is notoriously known for its pull factor-unethical recruitment schemes that attract highly skilled personnel in critical sectors such as health services (ICMPD 2007: 19). Well-to do Africans travel to EU and USA for treatment by African physicians.

- 2.4 De facto the medical universities and health care training institutions of Africa sub-serve the demands of developed countries (Carrington and Enrica 1999).
- 2.5 What is more, the adverse impact of brain drain is not only limited to shortage of highly skilled professionals in sectors essential for the attainment of MDGs, but it also constrains developing countries financially too. Africa pays about 4 billion USD per year for expatriate consultants and advisors (UNDP 2008). Huge consultancy fee for expatriates do enhance brain drain and migration of professionals by favouring and preferring returnees to locals, and international consultants to national experts. In Tanzania, expatriate consultant would cost between 170000-200000 USD as this includes cost of living, hardship allowance, travel, and child and school allowance. The most expensive cost for highly skilled local consultant would be less than half of the cost for international consultant. Such pay encouraged may professional to leave Africa and return back after while as international consultant or returnees. This is an example of unintended consequence of incoherent policies.

3 **Migration and Development: *Inherent contradiction?***

Is there an inherent contradiction between EU Development Policies (AU-EU partnership) particularly Capacity Building Programmes and EU Economic competition and migration related policies?

3.1 **AU-EU Tripoli Joint Déclaration**

With regard to the brain drain, the Tripoli Joint AU-EU Declaration which is restated in the Lisbon Declaration, under paragraph 8, provides for:

- 3.1.1 Promoting concrete and tailor-made policies and reforms to address skills shortages caused by brain drain;
- 3.1.2 Supporting programmes which foster the mobility and temporary return of members of the diasporas with the necessary skills in their countries of origin, in order to contribute to capacity building;
- 3.1.3 Encouraging common innovative instruments to enable countries of origin to benefit fully from skilled African workers based in host countries;
- 3.1.4 Strengthening African educational systems and adapting them to the needs of each African country;
- 3.1.5 Improving the working conditions of researchers (and other teachers) and encouraging the use of local consultants for different development projects;
- 3.1.6 Encouraging the movement of skilled African labour between host countries and countries of origin through the creation of centres of excellence and partnerships between EU and African institutions;
- 3.1.7 Exploring options to mitigate the effects of large scale departures of highly skilled African professionals in critical sectors.

3.2 Brain drain plays a negative role in the efforts toward sustainability and capacity building. What is given by one hand through capacity building programmes is taken away by the other hand due to unethical recruitment or recruitment of expatriate consultants. This is indeed an example of lack of policy coherence on the international donor community. If professionals trained through aid and national budget migrate to the donor countries, then in effect African countries and their institutions of higher learning are reduced to training institutions catering the demand of developed countries for highly skilled professionals.

3.3 On the other hand enhanced securitization of immigration and increased restrictions to the mobility of semi and low skilled Africans to EU and other migration destination countries negatively impacts on poverty reduction.

3.4 **Brain drain and the EU Blue Card**

To show lack of policy coherence, I shall take the EU *Blue Card* scheme and its potential exacerbating impact on the problems of brain drain.

3.4.1 EU Blue Card is a mechanism to meet the growing need for skilled labour. It provides for fast processing migration by removing barriers in visa process and freedom of mobility within EU. The Blue Card provides attractive conditions for the admission and residence of highly qualified immigrants needed for the EU economy. This is a legislative measure aimed at

1. Laying down simplified admission procedures and conditions for specific categories of migrants (highly qualified workers, seasonal workers, remunerated trainees and intra-corporate transferees);
2. Enhancing freedom of mobility within EU MS through a single application procedure for a single permit for third-country nationals to reside and work in any EU MS; and
3. providing a common set of rights for third-country workers legally residing in a Member State
4. Treating the holders of an EU Blue Card like EU nationals as regards tax benefits, social assistance, payment of pensions, access to public housing and study grants.

3.4.2 The factors behind the EU Blue Card initiative have mainly to do with the global economic competition, demand of multinational companies for non-EU cheaper labour and simplification of work visa processing and plans of EU to establish *knowledge based economy*[‡], demographic crisis[§] in the forms of aging, more demanded on the health care and welfare system.

[‡] The EU Justice and Home Affairs Commissioner Franco Frattini did confirm the main drive for the Blue Card is economic competition for labour market. He said: "The EU as a whole ... seems not to be considered attractive by highly qualified professionals in a context of very high international competition. The statistics showed that the percentage of the EU's highly qualified workforce was made up of 0.9 percent non-EU workers, as opposed to 9.9 percent for Australia, 7.3 percent for Canada and 3.5 percent in the US. These figures show very clearly that, for the highly skilled workers, Europe is not very attractive and this is the reason why we have decided to launch this proposal,"

3.4.3 Reading between the lines, the Directives makes it abundantly clear that Blue Card will necessarily lead to brain drain, especially in sectors that are critically short of human resources such as the health sector. Hence, even if one can not expect the Africa's interest to be taken as the vital factor in the formulation of an EU Directive and the Blue Card arrangement however does not put the ethical recruitment principle into actionable and enforceable provision.

3.5 **On the positive note, the Blue Card Scheme**

3.5.1 Under article 19 allows transfer their pension entitlements and accumulated welfare rights acquired as a result of their employment and for which they were required to pay contributions. It encourages "brain circulation" through circular migration and possibility of a "time out" for return to Africa, Cooperation with countries of origin. Under article 45, it points out the need for an active co-development policy; supports the objective of concluding agreements with third countries to enable both legal and illegal immigration to be managed effectively.

3.6 **Ethical Recruitment Policies, Brian Circulation and Welfare**

3.6.1 Even if the Directive mentions the issues of ethical recruitment policy, brain circulation, welfare; nonetheless, it does not provide specific provisions and mechanisms to this effect. Indeed on Page 17, the Directive stipulates that the EU MS to refrain from recruiting particularly from sectors that the developing countries suffer from critical lack of trained human resources and it provides for guidelines and mechanisms to "minimise negative and maximise positive impacts" such migration. On the same page, the Directive calls for harmonization of the provisions of the Directive with Joint AU-EU Declaration on Migration and Development. Moreover, it also specifies for monitoring and reporting on brain drain and calls for data collection and transmission.

3.6.2 It is commendable that the Directives mentions the issue of the negative 'brain drain' effects of the Blue Card on developing countries, especially on Africa through promotion of ethical recruitment standards to limit active recruitments by Member States in developing countries already suffering from serious brain drain. Nonetheless the Directive has no specific provision or concrete measures on how to counteract the brain drain. The Directive does not stipulate specific actions in the form of article in order to give effect to this spirit of ethnical recruitment policy. Implementation mechanisms are left for bilateral agreement and this is always a gap that allows black hole in the whole arrangement leading any thing to happen.

3.6.3 The Blue Card Scheme clearly targets to attract mainly: Medical professionals, engineers, IT specialists and other highly qualified workers; Professionals with university degree plus three years of relevant experience. Without specific achievable measures, these targets are almost unethical as the sectors in

§ The current population projections show that Europe will have an average 1 million decline of the working population per year for the next 50 years.

target 1 are sectors that are critically demanded in Africa for its development; and as target 2 means in average Africans professionally trained for 18-20 years will be recruited by EU MS. In effect, the Blue Card could lead to a fast-track “brain picking” from developing countries including from African countries. These are professionals that Africa is trying mainly to produce with its meagre resource.

- 3.7 To be precise, the Blue Card Scheme is a filter for recruiting highly skilled and professionals to EU. It could also lead to discrimination among migrants based on skill and profession, and could be violation of the Tripoli Joint AU-EU Declaration in “protecting the human rights of all migrants, particularly of women and children”. As the percentage of highly trained women in developing countries is very low compared to men, the research and other EU policies such as EU Blue Card may perpetuate the existing gap between men and women in education. For this reason the EU Blue Card is in many aspects incompatible with the Tripoli Joint Declaration which also emphasises the need to focus on temporary migration of low and semi-skilled Africans and action counteracting brain drain. Of course another issue of policy coherence is the need for compatibility of such research policy and discrimination against women.
- 3.8 Brain drain and the EU Blue Card exhibit the mismatch between EU’s own interest to remain at the top of the competitive global economy and its policy to assist Africa in its endeavour to attain the MDGs. This will certainly be the cause of the policy incoherence.

3.9 **Remittance and Migration**

- 3.9.1 Under article 47, the Directive encourages funds which immigrants send back to their country of origin contribute to the development of those countries; and calls for the cost of transferring remits to countries of origin should be reduced in order to assist development.
- 3.9.2 The frequently cited positive link between migration and development is remittance. It is dubbed as “an important and stable source of development finance” by World Bank (ILO 2006: 3). Estimates are that remittances are of equal amount to FDI which is about 250 Billion USD (ILO 2006). The question with remittance is: could remittances be seen as counter balancing the negative impact of brain drain? A Nigerian ICT expert sends 300 USD per month to his relatives in Nigeria but contributes 40 times more to the UK economy. On comparative scale for every 300 USD remittance send to Africa by African in Diaspora per month, the same person produces (in service) 120000 USD to the EU market. On comparative marginal contribution of a doctor in Africa is much higher than in EU. Remittance could have negative impacts in the form of inflation on local market and dependence of families in Africa on family member abroad. Moreover, most highly skilled professionals do not transfer money as low-skilled or semi-skilled migrants do, as high skilled migrants reside permanently in the country of destination (ILO 2006, Carrington and Detragiache 1999: 2).

4 Suggestions to Counteract the Impact of Brain Drain

4.1 True as the Draft Issue Paper stipulates “the best way to address brain drain is of course the socio-economic development of a country.” However, socio-economic development requires highly skilled professionals. Hence, there is a need to look at additional measures to counter act brain drain and speed up the socio-economic development of developing countries.

4.2 Focus on institutional capacity building

4.2.1 It is laudable that the EU Seventh Research Framework Programme (FP7), and EU-AU partnership provides funds to assist the efforts of developing countries in meeting the MDGs particularly in Health, Food, Agriculture and Fisheries, and Biotechnology, Energy, Environment (including Climate Change), Sciences and ICT. INCO-NET provides for setting priority areas of cooperation and in mapping research needs, but how can one ensure such priorities and needs indeed reflect the genuine needs of that specific region or country? Without ensuring that public institutions of higher learning and research in developing countries have the capacity even to know the priority and needs of their population, it would be very difficult to warrant the success of INCO-NET or ERA-NET. Specific International Cooperation Actions (SICAs) should again focus on sustainability of capacity of the developing countries as brain drain itself could be an impediment to the success of SICAs. Hence, Capacity Building of Institutions of Higher Learning, in training of professionals of sectors particularly critically affected by brain drain and shortage of skilled professionals is vital to the development of Africa. Areas of shortage vary from country to country and from region to region. The identification of such areas of shortage could be conducted through consultation with Regional Economic Communities (RECs). Capacity building in this area will be more sustainable than exchange programmes for individual researchers.

4.3 Capacity Building for Excellence and Relevance in Research

4.3.1 In many African countries research tends to be motivated in ad hoc ways. Research is mainly externally initiated and, for that reason, donor-driven or driven by interests of academic institutions of donor countries. This is a longstanding weakness of the research arrangements in Africa, hence need reform. Such reform of institution of higher learning and research helps to enhance faculty interest and capacity in planning a research agenda for Universities and in the disbursement of research funds by creating effective decision-making bodies with powers of support and oversight on research and research dissemination. It is also necessary to enhance capacity to assess and reward measurable progress in the innovation and execution of research projects. Such capacity building should also enable institutions to retain professionals and researchers by paying better salary and assign professionals to teach, conduct research. Moreover, improving capacity for disseminating information on research projects and findings to the wider society is necessary. This is inline to the Tripoli Joint Declaration (as pointed out on page 4, 3.1.6).

4.3.2 Specific measures in this direction could include such initiatives as proposed by EU on developing national, regional and continental networks of researchers, establishment of regional and national centres of excellence. For

this reason priority and needs of research may be identified by triangulation of information from the public, CSOs and governments including public institutions of higher learning and research. This is inline to the Tripoli Joint Declaration (as pointed out on page 4, 3.1.6).

4.4 **Technical Assistance**

4.4.1 Another yet important issue of policy coherence is the need for reconsideration of technical assistance to be tied to return migration and 'brain circulation'. It would be of high benefit for both donors and countries affected by brain drain to prioritize in hiring local experts, highly skilled migrants as technical consultants to expatriates. This would also help in removing the heavy reliance of projects in developing on expatriates; and is more sustainable. This is specific measure, as provided on page 4 above under 3.1.5, that was agreed upon on the Tripoli Joint Declaration (Tripoli Declaration 2006). Donor agencies should develop policies that encourage hiring from local institutions or consultant from migrant as means to enhance brain circulation and transfer of skill and know how.

4.5 **Capacity Building for International Cooperation, Attracting, Recruitment, Retention Professionals**

4.5.1 Without database on professionals in developing countries and their migration, the migration-development nexus is very hard to know and ascertain, to assess impact of brain drain and develop intervention policies. The first measure in this regard is creating appropriate institutional mechanisms to facilitate data collection on brain drain. Such Data base should include the Diaspora both to determine the extent and magnitude and to promote networking and collaboration between experts.

4.5.2 Encouraging nationals abroad to contribute to the development of their country of origin through financial and human capital transfers such as short and long term return migration, the transfer of skills, knowledge and technology including in the context of programmes. This is clearly provided in the Migration Policy Framework for Africa (2006).

4.5.3 Implementation of circular migration or 'brain circulation' and 'time out' return migration of professional Africa with a special financial assistance to the returnee. This should include putting incentives and conscious effort to reach out to Diasporas and create channels of communication with them.

4.5.4 However care should be taken as preferential treatment of returnees to local experts encourages migration of highly skilled persons. Hence donors should assist the governments of developing countries to pay more in salary to highly skilled national professionals.

4.5.5 One of these mechanisms to counter act brain drain could be international cooperation to establish links with universities and the recruitment of overseas staff. Establishment of Office for International Cooperation (OIA) at Institutions of higher learning and research and centres of excellence could be very helpful. Such offices for international cooperation could have the following core functions:

- 4.5.5.1 Coordinate and monitor the various activities relating to international cooperation;
- 4.5.5.2 Recruit of staff from Diaspora and encourage short and long term return
- 4.5.5.3 Develop global partnerships with different international institutions for exchange programs, such as research, teaching conferences and others;
- 4.5.5.4 Coordinate and facilitating the multiple demands for funds, partnerships and scholarships by various faculties, offices and other university bodies;
- 4.5.5.5 Enhance the capacity of institutions of research and higher education as a priority in the agenda of governmental and inter-governmental agencies such as African Union and other sub-regional organs.
- 4.5.5.6 Encourage intra-African employment schemes to maximize the contribution of skilled professionals in the Africa, by facilitating mobility and deployment of professionals in a continental and regional framework and employment networks.

5 Establishment of the African Migration Fund

Such fund might the most achievable measure to counteract brain drain. This Fund could be used to implement measures set out in Tripoli Joint AU-EU Declaration (Tripoli Declaration 2006) and the Migration Policy Framework. Africa Health Strategy (2007:12) also suggests the establishment of endowment fund to reduce the draining, and development, of human resource in the health sector. This fund could be used to reverse the brain drain by facilitating the return of qualified nationals, residents in developed States through appropriate re-settlement incentives and supporting MS to establish policies for the replacement of qualified persons who have left the countries of origin and implement retention policies and related strategies.

6 Ethical Recruitment

6.1 The Africa Health Strategy Strategy calls AU to work towards ensuring ethical recruitment within and outside Africa (Africa Health Strategy 2007: 12). Organs such as the UN agencies such as WHO and UNESCO, Global Health Workforce Alliance, CSOs, professional associations should develop code of conduct for ethical recruitment with a mechanism for implementation and follow-up. Such mechanism could be a coming-together of all sector ministries, UN agencies, AU and its relevant organs, and other multilateral organs as well as CSOs. Unless ethical recruitment policies are developed and observed at the EU and MS level, the EU Blue Card may on the contrary exacerbate the problem of brain drain. Ethical Recruitment Practices including recruitment of low or semi-skilled professionals to be trained.

6.2 Sole initiatives by some African countries not to recruit health and education professionals from specific countries could be emulated and refined to be applied by other. The dilemma is similar to that of prisoner; if South Africa recruits doctors from Zimbabwe, then it is unethical, however on the other hand other countries in out side Africa will take these doctors. This is a real policy dilemma that can be removed only through concerted commitment of all countries.

6.3 It is clear from the statistics that EU and other developed countries have labour demands yet to be met (ILO 2006: 3). While developed countries are facing shortage of semi and low skilled labour, there is surplus of same labour in developing countries. This matching of supply and demand could prove more win-win scenario through facilitation of temporary labour migration. Facilitating temporary labour migration will also have positive impact on the fight against trafficking in, and smuggling of, persons by expanding opportunities legal migration.

I thank you

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