

Increasing regional integration is key for Africa's prosperity, but reducing barriers to trade is not enough for achieving this objective. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) has been labeled as an historic agreement that sets the stage for the creation of one a single African market for goods and services. However, without free mobility of people, achieving this goal will remain an elusive dream, as described in an [article](#) published on the Horn of Africa Bulletin of the Life & Peace Institute (at page 11). In other words, elimination of non-tariff barriers hampering trade in Africa needs to be supported by the free movement of people.

In 2018, AU Heads of State adopted the Protocol to the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community Relating to Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment ([Free Movement Protocol](#)). This tool was introduced with the expectation that, by 2023, all Africans will be able to move freely among the African Union member countries, by, among others, eliminating visa requirements for intra-African travel.

Unfortunately, the reality is that so far, African States have been reluctant to adopt the AU Free Movement Protocol, as to date only 33 countries have signed it and only 4 have completed its ratification process. The consequence is that free movement of persons in Africa is currently encapsulated in a network of regional and (more often) bilateral agreements concluded among individual African countries, most of which take the form of visa abolition agreements. In many cases, it is easier to enter an African State with a EU or US passport, than with a passport issued by another African State. As

[stated](#)

by the African Development Bank President, Akinwumi Adesina,

"We cannot say we have borderless trade when we put up barriers for people to travel."

A new [post](#) published by the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) on the Peace and Security Council Report explores the main reasons for this unwillingness to adopt visa-free policies for intra-African travel. All of them show a truly obsession by African policymakers with security concerns, especially at external borders, due to the persistence of key threats such as terrorism, violent extremism, human trafficking and money-laundering, which are still

enduring challenges with which many African states are grappling today. More specifically, the main reasons of the restrictive circulation of persons policies in Africa are two: 1) a widespread concern that such policies would cause mass migration from less developed countries into more developed ones, and 2) the risk that free movement of people can foster insecurity.