



## Federal Government cooperates with ECOWAS and IOM to return 150 migrants voluntarily back to Nigeria;

**Abuja** – On the 20 February the Federal Government of Nigeria, in close coordination with International Organization for Migration (IOM) and with the support from Economic Commission of West African States (ECOWAS) have assisted the safe return of 150 Nigerians stranded in Niger.

The findings of a high-level study visit to Niger in late 2022 indicated that there was an influx of stranded migrants in Niger from Algeria. These migrants were living in difficult conditions as the transit centers hosting them were overcrowded, with the overall number oscillating around 4,300 persons for a capacity of 4,000. While the migrants from Guinea-Conakry, Mali, and Nigeria make up the highest numbers, their protracted stay in the transit centers is compounded by overall socio-political and security situation in the sub-region, as well as issues related to their travel documents.

Recognizing the urgent need of assistance, ECOWAS coordinated with the national governments of Nigeria and Guinea and is currently cooperating with IOM to support the urgent return of at least 250 stranded Guinean and Nigerian migrants hosted in transit centers all around Niger.

“This is a clear demonstration of the Economic Community of West African States’ commitment to support assisted voluntary return and reintegration of migrants, many of whom are ECOWAS citizens, vulnerable and include unaccompanied and separated children”, said Dr. Sintiki Tarfa Ugbe, Director, Humanitarian and Social Affairs, ECOWAS Commission.

Among the 150 migrants that have arrived to Kano on February 20, 2023 in a charter flight coming from Niamey, 89% are men and 11% women. This includes 13 minors coming with their family members. The top five states of origin of those returned are Kano, Jigawa, Kaduna, Katsina, and Borno: taken together these five states account for 91% of the total returns and the remaining 9% from other six states.



Upon their arrival, IOM works closely with The Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development (FMHADMSD), leading relevant Ministries, Departments and Agencies like National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and Internally Displaced Persons (NCRFMI), Nigerian Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS), Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN), as well as Kano State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA), Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), Department of State Services (DSS), Special Adviser to the Governor and Nigerian Red Cross Society (NRCS) in close collaboration with IOM conducts an initial screening to assess primary needs, provides emergency mental health and psychosocial support services, offer immediate assistance such as food, medical screening, overnight accommodation, orientation for further in-kind reintegration assistance to follow, and delivers assistance for onward transportation to their homes. All these actions are done in alignment with Standard Operating Procedures put in place by the Federal Government of Nigeria to coordinate Return, Readmission and Reintegration of Nigerian returning migrants effectively and efficiently. Before departure, IOM provided them with counselling services and tailored support for the most vulnerable and transportation to their respective states.

In subsequent months, thanks to the support of European Union and in partnership with governmental agencies and Civil Society Organizations (CSO) partners, the returnees will receive in-kind reintegration assistance, including vocational education and training to help them start an income-generating activity of their choice for their sustainable reintegration In Nigeria.

“The Voluntary Return safeguards the human rights and preserves the integrity of migrants, while upholding international principles and standards”, said Laurent de Boek, IOM Chief of Mission in Nigeria.

For more information, please contact:

ECOWAS: [XX](#)

IOM Nigeria: Nigeria Media and Communications Unit, Email: [iomnigeria@iom.int](mailto:iomnigeria@iom.int) and Victor Lutenco, Senior Coordinator for Migration Management, [vlutenco@iom.int](mailto:vlutenco@iom.int)