

AFRICAN UNION

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ADDRESS OF THE AU COMMISSIONER FOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENERGY

**FIRST MEETING OF THE BUREAU OF THE SPECIALISED
TECHNICAL COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT,
TRANSREGIONAL AND INTERREGIONAL
INFRASTRUCTURE, ENERGY AND TOURISM (STC-TTIET)**

**25th July 2017
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

**Dr. Amani ABOU-ZEID
Commissioner, Infrastructure and Energy
African Union Commission**

July 2017

Address of Dr. Amani ABOU-ZEID, African Union Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy at the First Meeting of the Bureau of the Specialised Technical Committee on Transport, Transregional and Interregional Infrastructure, Energy and Tourism (STC-TTIET)

- ➔ **Your Excellency, Mr. Ninsao Gnofam, Minister of Infrastructure and Transport of the Republic of Togo and Chairman of the Bureau of the STC on Transport, Trans-regional and Interregional Infrastructure, Energy and Tourism;**
- ➔ **Excellencies Ministers, Members of the Bureau of the STC**
- ➔ **Honourable Representatives of the Members of the Bureau;**
- ➔ **Distinguished Senior Officials and Invited Guests**
- ➔ **Ladies and Gentlemen:**

1. Welcome to the African Union and to the first meeting of the Bureau of the STC on Transport, Trans-regional and Interregional Infrastructure, Energy and Tourism. This is your home located in the heart of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, the beautiful capital of Africa. As we begin our meeting, I would like, first and foremost, to thank Your Excellency, Minister Ninsao Gnofam, Chairman of the STC, for the personal support you have provided to enable this meeting to take place. It's also an opportunity to renew our deep gratitude to Government of Togo which offered and soundly hosted the STC. Despite contacting you on a relatively short notice, you took immediate action to communicate with your colleagues and assured us of your personal attendance. We are really inspired by your enthusiasm for action in this important mission.

2. I am equally happy to see the Ministers, Members of the Bureau and Representatives as well invited guests and senior officials. I would like to thank all of you for honouring our invitation and coming to Addis Ababa for this inaugural meeting of the Bureau.

3. We decided to convene the Bureau meeting soon after the AU Summit in order to inform you of the decisions taken by the African leaders regarding the outcome of the First Meeting of your STC held in Lomé, Togo in March this year (2017). Most importantly, we considered it essential to seek your valuable guidance at the very outset of implementation of the Lomé Declaration, Decisions and Plans of Action, in order to ensure that all the concerned stakeholders, including the AUC, accomplish their responsibilities effectively, efficiently and expeditiously.

4. As you would note, this STC started its work as major change of leadership was taking place at the AUC. We now have a new Commission which assumed duty officially in March (2017). For me, as part of the new Commission, the outcome of the STC defines the priorities that I am expected to accomplish in the areas of transport, energy, tourism and infrastructure in general. Therefore this meeting is a special opportunity to share with you the aspirations of the new Commission in the implementation of outcome of the STC in the context of the AU Agenda 2063, the long-term vision of the African Union.

5. The Bureau is expected to be the driving force of the vision that will ensure Africa's success in the bid to acquire extensive and modern transport, energy and tourism infrastructure as well as in provision of efficient related services. To that end, success of the vision will depend on the commitment of the Members of the Bureau in overseeing and guiding the AUC, RECs, Member States and other key stakeholders in the implementation of their responsibilities.

**Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen:**

In the deliberations of the first meeting the STC in Lomé this March, you would have noted that the AUC is pursuing a very comprehensive programme in the fields of transport, energy, tourism and infrastructure. The main objectives of the Union in these sectors is to speed up integration and socio-economic development of Africa through enhanced intra-African trade and cross-border investments. In that regard, a number of continental policy and strategic frameworks have been adopted and some are under preparation. Also, under implementation, there are various programmes including the cross-cutting Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA) and others which are sector specific.

At this point, I wish to highlight some of the major priority programmes including the flagship projects of the Agenda 2063 over which your Bureau will provide oversight, guidance and facilitation.

In the field of Transport, the AUC is working on the establishment of a Single African Air Transport Market through liberalisation of air services in Africa. The main objective is to enhance air direct connectivity between African cities and reduce the cost of air travel in the continent. Launching of the single market is scheduled in January 2018 during the next AU Summit. In order to improve transport efficiency, reduce cost and enhance the competitiveness of the international and internal trade of Africa, a project to convert major transport corridors into Smart Corridors has been initiated whereby two pilot corridors have already been designed for implementation.

The AUC is also pursuing projects for making Africa self-sufficient in sustainable energy that will support industrialisation and propel the continent to middle income status by 2063. In that regard, plans are under elaboration to develop the Grand Inga hydropower station in Congo DRC with a view to provide the entire continent with clean energy, ultimately. Likewise, other important renewable energy projects are under implementation notably the East African Geothermal exploration that is supported by the AUC through its Risk Mitigation Facility (GRMF). Africa has now established the African Renewable Energy Initiative (AREI) to drive the continent's comprehensive renewable energy strategy.

Information and Communications Technology (ICT) is also a crucial component in the integrated infrastructure programme of the Union. The ICT sector is not in the package of the activities of your STC but, certainly, the functioning of modern transport, tourism and energy systems and facilities depend on high-technology provided by ICT networks. For that reason the AUC is working to improve internet connectivity within the continent through its AXIS project and establishing a continental network for distance learning and online medical services known as Pan-African Electronic Network for Telemedicine and Tele-education.

The AUC has also elaborated an action plan for developing and promoting the continent's huge tourism industry as a common resource under the Agenda 2063. The main objective is to "Make Africa the Preferred Destination" through creation of a unique "Brand Africa" that will resonate across the world and attract more visits to cross-border tour packages in the continent.

**Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen:**

I have mentioned some of the major activities whose implementation the AUC is facilitating in order to appreciate the enormous work that is ahead of us and the need to ensure we spare no efforts in addressing the inherent constraints. We will discuss these in detail during the meeting.

Your Bureau is expected to address the key challenges that limit the achievement of set goals in these important programmes of the continent, among others. In particular, the support of the Bureau will be required to champion efforts for mobilisation of resources from public and private sector for implementation of infrastructure projects of the Agenda 2063 flagship projects including those under the Priority Action Plan of PIDA.

Another concern is the lack or slow adherence of Member States to AU's policy, strategic and legal frameworks. These documents adopted by the Summit remain provisionally in force or ineffective for decades simply because they cannot obtain the minimum number of instruments of ratification by the Member States. Their contents which are essential for ensuring execution of the Union programmes are neither incorporated into national frameworks nor implemented. Hence, minimal progress is achieved in most of the AU programmes.

**Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen:**

There will be more opportunities for sharing the specific frameworks and programmes that would require more impetus from the Bureau to ensure that the Member States, RECs, specialised institutions, partners and the AUC itself accomplish their responsibilities as expected. At times, the Bureau will be called upon to lead the advocacy drive for prioritisation of the activities of the STC sectors at all levels in the continent (national, regional, continental) as well as for championing Africa's interests in those sectors on the global stage.

I am glad that I am starting my work at the AUC knowing well that I will have your full support. It is my intention to establish strong links with your offices in order to ensure existence of efficient communication channels for smooth and constant sharing of information as well as for engaging in taking timely actions when required.

Once again, thank you for coming and I wish this meeting of the STC Bureau effective deliberations and a very fruitful outcome.

Thank you for your kind attention.