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**COMMON AFRICAN POSITION (CAP) FOR THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY
SPECIAL SESSION ON THE WORLD DRUG PROBLEM, APRIL 19-21 2016**

Common African Position (CAP) for the UN General Assembly Special Session on the World Drug Problem, 19-21 April 2016

We, Heads of State and Governments of the African Union,

Welcoming the decision of the United Nations General Assembly in its resolution 67/193 titled “International Cooperation against the World Drug Problem”, in which it decided to convene, early in 2016, a special session of the General Assembly on the World Drug Problem;

Recalling that the world drug problem remains a common and shared responsibility that requires effective and increased international cooperation and demands an integrated, multidisciplinary, mutually reinforcing and balanced approach to drug supply, demand reduction and harm reduction strategies, as well as ensuring the availability of controlled substances for medical and scientific use, while reducing the illicit use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances;

Recognizes the efforts made by Member States to comply with the provisions of the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961 as amended by the 1972 Protocol, the Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971, and the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988;

Reaffirming the Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem, as adopted by the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session, and calling upon States to take the measures necessary to fully implement the actions set out therein, with a view to attaining, in a timely manner, their goals and targets;

Recognizing the efforts undertaken by the Bureau of the 57th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs in addressing all the organizational and substantive matters for the preparation of the special session, and welcoming the decision adopted by the Commission of Narcotic Drugs to elect a Board tasked by the Commission with the preparations for the special session;

Welcoming also the progress made in Africa to combat illicit crop cultivation and the illicit drug production, manufacture, transit, trafficking, distribution and use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, among others, and the adoption and implementation of the AU Plan of Action on Drug Control (2013-2017);

Reaffirming that, at its special session on the World Drug Problem in 2016, Member States will address substantive issues on the basis of the principle of common and shared responsibility and in full conformity with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, International Law and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;

Mindful of the trends in illicit crop cultivation and the illicit production, manufacture, transit, trafficking, distribution and use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances in many African countries, and that such activity continues to constitute a serious threat to public health, public safety and human rights, in particular for all people who use drugs, i.e. children, young people and their families, and to the national security and sovereignty of States, and that it undermines socio-economic and political stability and sustainable development;

Recalling that alternative development is an important, lawful, viable and sustainable alternative to the illicit cultivation of drug crops and an effective measure for countering the world drug problem and other drug-related crime challenges, and is one of the key components of policies and programmes for reducing illicit drug production and an integral part of efforts by Governments to achieve sustainable development within their societies;

Restating our goal to achieve sustainable development within our societies, and that alternative development programmes must be properly sequenced, with alternative livelihoods already in place prior to the eradication of illicit crops, and integrated into local, regional and national development plans;

Reiterating our goal to achieve the targets of the 2011 Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS, in particular the target to reduce HIV transmission among people who inject drugs by 50 per cent by 2015, considering that and that risky injecting and sexual behaviour among drug users are major public health concerns owing to the high risk of infection with HIV, Hepatitis B and C, and Tuberculosis;

Concerned that approximately 80 per cent of the world's population has either no, or insufficient, access to controlled drugs for the treatment of moderate to severe pain, as recommended in the African Common Position on Controlled Substances and Access to Pain Management Drugs;

Convinced that the UN General Assembly special session in April 2016 provides a unique opportunity for Africa to reach consensus on common challenges, priorities and aspirations, and to actively participate in the global debate on how to counter the World Drug Problem in the most effective, cost-effective and humane way, and to help shape the outcome;

Recall that the Addis Ababa Declaration on Scaling up Balanced and Integrated Responses Towards, Drug Control in Africa (2014) requested the AU Commission to facilitate consultation and engagements towards a common position for the UN General Assembly Special Session;

Therefore urge that Africa's voice is heard and is fully integrated into the global debate on the World Drug Problem, to speak with one voice and to act in unity in keeping with Addis Ababa Declaration and Plan of Action on Drug Control (2013-2017) and the 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action;

We hereby, commit to the following;

1. Seize the opportunity of the ongoing discussions to take place during the General Assembly special session and its preparatory process as well as in the elaboration of the Post-2015 Development Agenda, to highlight the importance of enhancing developmental assistance, without conditionalities, in particular Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) and Official Developmental Assistance (ODA), to complement the efforts of African countries in uprooting extreme poverty, unemployment and inequality and to improve the quality of life through education, skills and technology transfer.
2. That the main objective of drug policies should be to improve the health, safety, welfare and socio-economic well-being of people and societies by adopting appropriate measures to combat illicit crop cultivation and the illicit production, manufacture, transit, trafficking, distribution and use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, as well as its associated crimes, as outlined in the AU Plan of Action on Drug Control (2013-2017).
3. That effective drug policies are those that achieve a balanced and integrated approach between supply reduction, demand reduction, harm reduction and international cooperation as outlined in the 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action, with appropriate and proportional focus on the four priority areas of the AU Plan of Action on Drug Control, which is based on:
 - a) Continental, regional and national management, oversight, reporting and evaluation of the AUPA enhanced.
 - b) Evidence-based services scaled up to address health and social impact of drug use in Member States.
 - c) Countering drug trafficking and related challenges to human security through supporting Member States and RECs to reduce trends of illicit drug trafficking and supply reduction in accordance with fundamental human rights principles and the rule of law.
 - d) Capacity building in research and data collection enhanced through strengthening of institutions to respond effectively to challenges posed by illicit drugs, and to facilitate licit movement of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for medical and scientific purposes.
4. To making every effort to ensure balanced and proportionality in both drug demand and drug supply reduction, at local, national, regional and international levels, including the harmonization of legislation. We are also committed to provide employment to the youth, who are the main, unemployed in Africa and therefore vulnerable to becoming involved in drug markets.
5. That the consumption of drugs and drug addiction must be considered as public health problems that have socio-economic root causes and consequences. Drug

education should be prioritized in education curricula. People who use drugs must be given support, and must benefit from treatment, health services and protection. Resources should be allocated towards treatment programmes, including in prisons. In this regard, the integration of the drug treatment and prevention services within broader health programs should become an imperative for all Member States.

6. We hereby call for greater support to ensure the provision of opiates and other essential and controlled medicines for palliative care and pain relief, as enshrined in the international drug conventions, to remove barriers that prevent the import, distribution and use of these essential medicines. This includes ensuring functioning and effective supply systems through regulation, data management, access and reporting, and capacity building, in line with the African Common Position on Controlled Substances and Access to Pain Management Drugs.
7. That we stress the urgent need to respond to the serious challenges posed by the increasing links between drug trafficking, corruption and other forms of organized crime, including trafficking in persons, trafficking in firearms, cybercrime and, in some cases, terrorism and money-laundering, including money-laundering in connection with the financing of terrorism, and to the significant challenges faced by law enforcement and judicial authorities in responding to the ever-changing means used by transnational criminal organizations to avoid detection and prosecution.
8. To support the collaboration of public health and justice authorities in pursuing alternative measures to conviction or punishment for appropriate drug-related offences of a minor non-violent nature, in accordance with the international drug conventions.
9. That we urge the Commission on Narcotic Drugs to propose a short, substantive, concise and action-oriented outcome document for the Special Session comprising a set of operational recommendations to assist Member States in implementing the targets and goals set up in the 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of action by 2019.
10. That, finally, we emphasize the importance that the Special Session should enhance the capacities of the regional and sub-regional organizations in assisting Member States to fulfill the targets and goals set up in the 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action to reflect our collective efforts, concerns and goals.