



Remarks

by

**Ambassador John K. Shinkaiye,
Chief of Staff to the Chairperson of the
African Union Commission**

on the occasion of the

**AU Commission-European Commission
Joint Task Force Meeting**

Brussels, Belgium

8 March 2012

The Co-Chair(s)
AU and EU Presidencies;
Excellencies Ambassadors;
The AU and EU Ambassadors;
Distinguished Participants;
Ladies and Gentlemen

I would like to begin by expressing, on behalf of the African Union Commission, and the entire African side, our appreciation to our host for the warm welcome and the excellent facilities provided for our meeting. Many people from both the African and European Union sides have worked hard to ensure the success of this meeting, and indeed, the partnership between us and we thank them for this.

2. The 14th AUC-EC Joint Task Force meeting is taking place at a crucial moment in the lives of our two Unions. On the AU side, the process of electing a new Commission began last January as was expected. You are all of course aware of the outcome of the election process and the fact that the mandate of the Commission was extended till the next Summit which will take place in the first week of July 2012 in Lilongwe, Malawi. The 8-member Ad Hoc Committee of Heads of State and Government which is to make proposals for the next election, has scheduled a meeting for 18 March 2012. The outcome of the work of the Ad

Hoc Committee will be very important to the future of the African Union, and its Commission.

3. On the EU side, the new arrangements that have been put in place as a result of the coming into force of the Lisbon Treaty are gradually being firmed up. The External Action Service is already in place and a re-structured Development Directorate General is also functioning, (which is why I am sandwiched between the two here!) Our EU colleagues have been kind enough to explain to us in Addis Ababa, (as much as they understand the new arrangements themselves!), what these imply in terms of EU's interaction with us, what effects they could have on funding programmes with us and who executes what programme from the EU side. This has been very helpful and I use this opportunity to thank both DG Dev and EEAS for trying to explain to us the new arrangements.

4. Let me add that these changes and the application of EC work policies, have inevitably, led to changes in the personnel who work with the African Union from the EU side. Firstly, some turn around has occurred in DG-Dev while the personnel in the EEAS are, in some cases, new to us. Furthermore, the EU Representative to the AU has changed with the departure of our friend and amiable colleague Koen Vervaeke, and the arrival of our new friend, and I am sure, equally amiable Gary Quince. I use this opportunity to express, on behalf of all my African colleagues from both the Commission and Member States, our sincere appreciation to you all in both DG-Dev and the Mission in

Addis Ababa for the excellent work we did together in the last few years. We sometimes had difficult moments and did not always agree on everything. However, my experience in general, has been that the EU now listens more to Africa than it did when the process all began in Cairo in 2000. From the discussions we had in the African consultation meeting yesterday, it seem there is still more rooms for the EU. I would like to single out just a few to say a special thank you. These include Stephano Manservisi, the DG who did a lot of good work with us; his Director Klaus Rudischhauser and Koen Vervaeke, as well as Phillipe Darmuzey and others. If the relationship between the AU and EU in general and the AUC and EC in particular, has grown deeper and more mutually beneficial, it is partly due to the work these colleagues and friends did with us. Koen did an excellent work as the pioneer EU Ambassador to the AU and contributed immensely to strengthening the good relations between the two institutions. We are glad that we have not lost him entirely as he will continue to be engaged with Africa in his new position.

5. We are of course glad to have new friends on board as we too have a new Representative here, Ambassador Ajay Bramdeo who has taken over the headship of the AU Mission in Brussels. He is an old Addis Ababa hand and we do hope you will give him the fullest cooperation he needs. Since this is his first Joint Task Force meeting, I like to welcome him and to wish him the very best in the important assignment that he has.

6. One last point I want to raise on the issue of the importance of what we are going through relates to the current situation in the Euro Zone and the economic crisis many nations in the world are facing. In the kind of globalized world that we have, it is not possible for Africa to be insulated from what is going on elsewhere in the world. It is therefore to the credit of the EU as an institution and many individual EU Member States that the situation they currently face, economically, has not significantly adversely affected their commitment to work with and assist Africa in its development agenda. We do appreciate this in the Commission and we use this opportunity to request our EU colleagues to convey this appreciation to all concerned.

7. It is in this respect that I refer to the EU Support Program, which ended last year and is being extended until December 2013. This has provided an integrated and comprehensive support to AU institutions towards consolidating the institutional transformation of the AU Commission. The program has also contributed to the strengthening of the African Union Commission and others Organs of the Union. Specifically, the implementation of the support program has achieved good results despite some setbacks, which we have both strived to deal with.

8. It is also appropriate for me to express our appreciation to the EU for the various proposals it is processing through its approving organs. I am thinking here of the proposal to establish a pan-Africa envelope which will facilitate the funding of activities in our partnership. Apart from helping to ensure regular and

predictable funding for these activities, this pan-Africa envelope, when it takes off, will also be a clear illustration of an issue I raised before – namely that the EU is now listening more to Africa than it used to do in the past! The fact is that the African side has promoted this for quite sometime now, both in the context of having predictable funding, but also in implementation of our joint decision in Lisbon to treat Africa as one. Of course, it is early days yet and whether the EU will get all the funding it has requested for is still to be seen. Africa is of course optimistic that the envelope will soon become operational and the approving bodies will provide more than, what I will call, in a light mood, the conservative figures the EEAS thought it should start with! I am glad that we will hear more about this in the next plenary session.

Co-Chair,

Excellencies and Colleagues,

9. Let me say a few about the Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES) that was adopted during the second Africa-EU Summit in Lisbon in December 2007, which has seen important improvement in implementation, and has the potential to place our relations on a higher strategic level. Some successes have confirmed the importance and relevance of the JAES, but progress in the 8 partnerships has been unequal, in particular at operational and technical levels. The experience during the implementation of the Action Plan 2008-2010 has demonstrated that specific technical support arrangements were beneficial to the implementation process of the Migration and Energy Partnerships, among others,

in view of the large number of operational and technical implementation activities agreed upon in the Action Plan 2011-2013.

10. The compilation of the key results of the JAES strategy implementation looks quite impressive. However, from our first reading of the paper as provided by the EU side, we need to look at the document closely so that we can both be on the same wavelength. In addition, direct access to funding of the strategy will achieve even better results. Furthermore, a better functioning of the Joint Experts Groups will equally improve implementation. This is why the African side agrees with the proposal to see how to make the JIEGs, work better. It is our hope that this JTF meeting will have some reflection on this and the proposal to have a workshop, as discussed with us before this meeting, should be fully explored. My main request is that the timing for such a reflection should take full account of the heavy schedule of activities that the AU has in fixing the date for this activity.

**Co-Chair,
Excellencies and Colleagues,**

11. One area where I have not seen much action in the report of the implementation of the JAES is the youth dimension. The African Union remains committed to youth issues towards achieving an effective human capacity development that can guarantee and sustain the changes for today and for the growing generation. This was aptly captured through the Decision and

Declaration on Sustainable Development adopted at the AU Summit that took place in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, in July 2011. Conscious of this, the Commission is engaged in relevant actions that would accelerate response to the need for capacity and skills development for young people, who are getting poorer and poorer on the continent. In light of this, Africa and its partners must invest more than ever in young people because unemployment strengthens poverty which can threaten social stability and lead to conflict, war and migration.

Co-Chair,

Excellencies and Colleagues,

12. I should conclude my remarks by pointing out that the structure of the agenda for this meeting reflects our desire to interrogate most of these issues head-on. It is therefore important that our discussions at this session, as in previous meetings, be held in a congenial atmosphere, with openness and frankness aimed at achieving quick wins, and taking into account the conclusions of our 13th Session as well as those that have emerged from consultations and exchanges by our experts on several priority issues.

13. I like to particularly salute the representatives of our Member States, some of who came from Addis Ababa and their headquarters and our colleagues who are based in Brussels, for being here and for the immense contributions they will make to the success of our work.

14. Similarly, I want to thank representatives of other stakeholders – the Parliaments, RECs, the regional Development Banks, the Private Sector and Civil society. Your participation in the meeting for the JTF enriches its outcome and deepens the relationship between Africa and Europe. We thank you for your participation and contribution.

15. We constantly introduce innovations in the work of the JTF. One today is the introduction of a Guest Speaker. It was agreed that as host the EC will invite the speaker and we do thank them for doing so. When the AUC hosts the JTF later in the year, we would also invite an eminent person to address us. I am sure that we will benefit from the wisdom of our Guest Speakers.

16. Change is good and that is why we are happy that other stakeholders have joined us and Guest Speakers will soon be enriching our work. One such change, if I could call it that, which is not so welcome, is the introduction of a tripartite meeting with the UN joining the AUC and EC to discuss issues in the area of administration. That process itself is good but it has tended to be a substitute for the work done in this area at the JTF level. I am saying that this cannot continue as it disenfranchises some of the Units in the Group as they do not get to participate in the JTF or the AUC-EC-UN Tripartite meeting. We want the original process to be resumed and the UN can continue its work with both Commissions as it may wish. Alternatively, the tripartite meeting with the UN could take place back to back with the JTF so that it

could report like other events that take place before the JTF meeting.

17. Let me conclude, these remarks (I almost said brief remarks!) by once again, expressing appreciation to our host for the warm reception and hospitality as well as for the excellent facilities provided for the success of this meeting. I have no doubt that, as it has now become our tradition, this meeting will be frank, constructive and result-oriented. We look forward to interacting with you over these two days and I am quite confident that our deliberations will be productive.

18. I thank you.