

**REMARKS BY AMBASSADOR JEAN-BAPTISTE NATAMA, AU  
COMMISSION CHIEF OF STAFF ON THE OCCASION OF  
THE JOINT AFRICA - EU TASK FORCE MEETING**

*14 February 2013, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*

**Mr. Nick Westcott, Managing Director, European External Action  
Service (EEAS);**

**Mr. Marcus Cornaro, Deputy Director General for Development and  
Cooperation - EuropeAid (DEVCO)**

**Chairperson of the PRC;**

**Excellences Ambassadors;**

**Distinguished Participants;**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

Let me begin by warmly welcoming all participants, especially our European colleagues from Brussels, to the 15th AUC-EC Joint Task Force Meeting taking place here in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Since this is my first engagement in this process, I would like to renew the Commission's unflinching commitment to the success of the partnership. I would also like to thank, most sincerely, all those that have continuously worked tirelessly over the past few years to nurture this partnership.

The 15<sup>th</sup> AUC-EC Joint Task Force Meeting provides yet another excellent opportunity for us to take stock and to focus more on concrete, relevant and feasible actions. More importantly, it affords another opportunity for the two sides to review progress and address implementation difficulties and to chart the way forward towards achieving deliverables.

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Since the **first EU-Africa Summit** held in 2000 in Cairo, Egypt, our cooperation has evolved towards deeper policy dialogue that is yielding impressive results such as the development of an innovative African Peace Facility, the implementation of a flexible support programme that has been focusing on institutional development and empowerment of the AU Commission.

The EU Support Programme, which will end in December 2013, has provided an integrated and comprehensive support to AU institutions towards consolidating the institutional transformation of the AU Commission. The implementation of the support programme has achieved good results. Our two Commissions are presently working to develop the framework of the second phase which will run from 2014 to 2017. The expectation from the Commission's side is that this framework aligns with the priorities of the next AU Commission's Strategic Plan 2014 -2017.

While we recognize the considerable achievements that have been recorded in the implementation of the Joint Africa-European Union Strategy (JAES) that was adopted at the Lisbon Summit in December 2007, some work still needs to be done to improve on the efficiency of some of the partnerships, in the context of both operational and technical dimensions. 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 in view of the large number of operational and technical implementation activities agreed in the Action Plan 2011-2013.

It is important to note that lack of specific and direct accessible funding for the JAES architecture and activities has continued to undermine the implementation rate of the Second Action Plan, as it was the case with the First Action Plan. That is perhaps, the most daunting challenge we are now facing as partners. We therefore need to jointly find short, medium and long-term solutions to the resource issue, which is a joint responsibility.

The Commission welcomes the establishment of the Joint Africa-European Union Strategy (JAES) Support Mechanism which has a total financing of 8 million Euros. The Mechanism aims at providing a flexible and demand-driven technical support mechanism for enhancing the implementation of the current Action Plan. This Mechanism would avail technical, operational and administrative support to the thematic partnerships as well as to cross-cutting issues such as communication and outreach activities, and improve the follow-up and reporting of the Action Plan.

There is a need to improve the functioning of the implementation architecture of our partnership. In this regard, one of the areas, which need to be addressed, is the performance of the Joint Expert Groups (JEGs). This is a shared responsibility as well. Africa recognizes the need for better preparation and improved engagement between co-chairs and JEG members in between JEG meetings. The Joint Africa – EU Strategy (JAES) structures should be adapted and to focus the work of experts and informal Joint Expert Groups (iJEGs) towards more visible results that demonstrate the added value of the JAES and its working arrangements.

Some other critical issues would require clarification, such as the role, mandate and possible rotation of the co-chairs, as well as the need for sound preparation and follow up of JEG meetings and systematic reporting of formal structures on both sides. The inadequate linkage between the JAES and other processes at national and regional levels remain a concern. And the advocacy for the mainstreaming of the JAES in national and regional frameworks for maximum impact remains a concern that should be addressed.

## **Co-Chairs**

### **Distinguished Participants**

The political dialogue in terms of the Annual College to College and half yearly Ministerial Political Dialogue meetings have been useful in providing political guidance to experts at the technical level. The recent changes in the follow-up mechanism on both sides greatly affected the process and it is hoped that we both continue to use the Ministerial Political Dialogue as a platform to discuss JAES implementation issues, among others.

We recognize the circumstance that led to the postponement of the Commission to Commission that was to have taken place late last year and should now begin to prepare for that important meeting at this forum. In the same vein, we should begin to prepare for the 4<sup>th</sup> Africa-EU Summit that will take place in Brussels.

## **Co-Chairs**

### **Distinguished Participants**

Let me use this occasion to inform our European Partners that indeed, this is the watershed year for Africa, which marks 50 years of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) as well as the 10 years since the launch of the African Union. These anniversaries will be observed and organized under the theme; "Pan Africanism and African Renaissance". This provides us with an important opportunity for stock-taking of the achievements and key milestones that have been recorded over the past 50 years and to project to the future towards an African wide Agenda 2063. In this regard, we expect all our partners to join hands with us to make occasion a huge success.

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Before I end my remarks, let me re-affirm, once again, that the AU Commission is totally committed to directing energies towards achieving sustainable results in all key areas of our mandate. We are also committed to move the agenda forward in critical areas including all the eight Africa-EU Partnerships. The structure of the agenda for this meeting reflects our desire to interrogate these issues head-on. It is therefore important that during our discussions, we maintain the spirit of frankness, and take into account the conclusions drawn from the last AUC-EC Joint Task Force Meeting as well as those that have emerged from consultations and exchanges between our experts on several priority issues.

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Once again, let me warmly welcome our colleagues from the EC for finding

time to attend this meeting. We look forward to interacting with you over the next two days and I am quite confident that our deliberations will gestate into concrete deliverables.

I thank you.