

SPEECH OF DR. ELHAM M.A. IBRAHIM, COMMISSIONER FOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENERGY OF THE AFRICAN UNION AT THE OPENING OF WORKSHOP ON MARITIME SECURITY 6-7 APRIL 2007, ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

- **Representatives of Regional Economic Communities;**
- **Representatives of African and International Specialised Technical Organisations;**
- **Invited Guests;**
- **Distinguished participants;**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen:**

1. I wish to begin by welcoming all of you to the Headquarters of the African Union and thank you for responding positively to the invitation to attend this important event. As key stakeholders, your role is essential in shaping up the agenda and plan of action of the African Union in the maritime sub-sector in Africa. As you have been informed, this particular workshop is aimed at strengthening the actions undertaken by the continent in the areas of maritime security, safety and protection of the marine environment.

Distinguished Participants

Ladies and Gentlemen

2. More specifically, this workshop is an opportunity for fruitful discussions on aspects of the policy and strategic framework adopted by the Heads of State and Government the African Union as well as other ongoing initiatives on maritime issues undertaken under the auspices of the African Union Commission.

3. In other words, the intention here is to determine ways and means of operationalising the outcome of the Conference of Ministers responsible for Maritime Transport held in Durban South Africa from 12 to 16 October 2009. During the conference, the sector Ministers adopted the African Maritime Transport Charter, a Resolution on strengthening Maritime Safety, Security and Protection of the Marine Environment and updated the continental Maritime Transport Action Plan.

Distinguished Participants

Ladies and Gentlemen

4. For years, African States have been mostly concerned by the declining capacity of their maritime industry. In that regard, they focused on mobilizing capacity for improving their maritime infrastructure and facilities to ensure adequate capacity for handling growing traffic and size of vessels composed of mainly container ships and tankers as well as for improving port operations and enhancing the competitiveness of African ports competitive by global standards.

5. Also, with the assistance of international organisations especially United Nations and the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), Africa has paid adequate attention to improvement of safety, security and protection of environment systems including navigation and search and rescue facilities. However, in recent years, the growing menace of unlawful activities on African waters has meant that more attention be also given to matters of maritime security. In particular, as you are well aware, incidents of piracy, armed robbery, illegal fishing and dumping of

toxic waste in African territorial waters reached alarming levels during the past decade.

6. It is obvious that the rapid escalation of piracy activity off the coast of Somalia and the Gulf of Guinea has alarmed African states and served as a wake-up call to the leadership in Africa to take concrete action to rid the continent of these scourges which are undermining economic activity and the image of the continent.

Honourable guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

7. As we move from talking to taking concrete action, our focus should now be on implementation of the decision of the African Union Summit of January 2010 [**EX.CL/Dec.542(XVI)**] which calls for:

- a. implementation African Maritime Transport Charter, the Durban Resolution on Maritime Safety, Maritime Security and Protection of the Environment, and the Revised and Updated Maritime Transport Plan of Action adopted by the Ministers in charge of Maritime Transport in Africa
- b. speeding up ratification of the African Maritime Transport Charter so as to enable it to enter into force as early as possible to facilitate accelerated development of maritime transport in the continent;
- c. the Commission, in collaboration with the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), specialised institutions, Member States

and other stakeholders to take all the necessary measures to speed up the implementation of the Maritime Transport Plan of Action with a view to developing a cost-effective, safe, secure and clean maritime transport industry in Africa;

- d. Member States, RECs and Specialised Agencies to participate effectively in the implementation of the African Maritime Transport Charter and the Durban Resolution on Maritime Safety, Maritime Security and Protection of the Environment; support the implementation of the African Union Maritime Transport Plan of Action
- e. development partners including the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa; the African Development Bank, the European Union, the World Bank and others to support the implementation of the African Union Maritime Transport Plan of Action.

8. As I said previously, this workshop should enable us to place all these elements in perspective and discuss ways and means for ensuring that they are addressed in an appropriate and timely manner within the framework of the ongoing initiatives of the African Union.

Honourable Ministers

Ladies and Gentlemen

9. I do not have to say much to professionals in their own field of expertise and experience lest I end up pre-empting important deliberations on the subject. My message has been one of underscoring on the necessity of putting in place practical measures that would lead us to achieve real milestones in addressing each and every issue related to the current maritime security situation in Africa in line with the policy and strategic direction already defined by our policy makers.

10. I believe we are going to have very interesting discussions and come up with very sound outcome of this workshop that will enable us to claim yet another significant and historic milestone since Abuja and Durban.

THANK YOU.