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STATEMENT BY

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**SECOND REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON HUMAN
TRAFFICKING AND SMUGGLING OF MIGRANTS IN THE
HORN OF AFRICA**

**SHARM EL-SHEIKH, EGYPT
JUNE 4, 2016**

PROTOCOL

Shall we please observe a minute silence for the victims of Egyptian airline flight MS 804 as well as the migrants who continue to drown in the Mediterranean.

Please allow me to start by expressing my sincere appreciation to the government and people of the Arab Republic of Egypt for their supreme hospitality hosting both the 2nd and 3rd Senior Officials Meeting and the 2nd Ministerial Conference.

I also want to thank the entire Member States present here and my deepest gratitude for the commitment shown by all of you to support and contribute to this process since November 2012.

We acknowledge that human trafficking is an issue that ought to concern every person because it debases common humanity and tears at our social fabric. This reality informed the establishment of the AU-Horn of Africa Initiative - and broadened the conceptual framework for this meeting within the framework of regional integration.

Following the launch of this initiative in Khartoum 2014, a lot of progress has been made at the continental, regional and member states level. Perhaps a better demonstration of this progress is the 25th Assembly Declaration on Migration (Doc.Assembly/AU/18(XXV) which endorsed the Horn of Africa Initiative and the outcomes of the First Regional Conference in Khartoum. This Declaration called on Member States to strengthen efforts to human trafficking and people smuggling through the implementation of relevant regional and international instruments, provision of victim support and enhanced international cooperation and training.

Furthermore, the Executive Council at its Third Ministerial Retreat in January 2016 (EX.CL/947(XXVIII) reaffirmed the commitment of the Heads of State and Government to expedite the issue of free movement of persons as a means of addressing the challenges of migration and maximizing its opportunities.

Interfacing migration and humanitarian action ahead of the World Humanitarian Summit, which took place in Istanbul on 23 and 24 May, the African Union adopted a

Common African Position on humanitarian effectiveness during the 2016 Ordinary Session of the Executive Council. The Common African Position lays emphasis on humanitarian effectiveness in Africa, and is a consolidation of Africa's aspiration in line with Agenda 2063.

EXCELLENCIES, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

There is no denying the role of AU-Horn of Africa Member States and the influence of the Horn of Africa Initiative on the parallel initiatives of the Khartoum Process and the Valletta Summit on Migration. Your contribution, guidance and support to the Commission in engaging with our EU counterparts have been sterling and I would like to encourage you to maintain the momentum.

On this note, I would like to thank our partners particularly the IOM and UNHCR who have been with us from the start of this journey. Together we ensured that we had successful preparatory activities both before and after the Valletta Summit. Similarly, we have established an Intra-Regional Forum of Regional Economic

Communities aimed at effective implementation of AU Decisions on Migration; culminating in the Accra Forum in September 2015, Post-Valletta Consultative Conference in Nairobi in December 2015, and the Lusaka Forum in May 2016.

These platforms provides a platform for the exchange of information, knowledge, sharing of experiences and good practices for cross-fertilization and to advocate for the implementation of AU policies, decisions and commitments made by African governments. They aim to promote and deepen inter-state dialogue and intra/inter-regional cooperation on migration.

Underpinning these engagements is the realization that the challenges of migration and the problems of human trafficking in particular should be addressed from a regional and global perspective and must be situated in the context of poverty eradication and sustainable development.

YOUR EXCELLENCY, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

On 19 September 2016, the UN General Assembly will convene a summit on Addressing Large Movements of

Refugees and Migrants. This will be followed by President Obama's Global Refugees Summit on Refugees on 20 September. Being the first time that both the UN and US Government will be organizing such high-level meetings, it is another opportunity for us to strengthen our cooperation.

Some of us are still behind in ratifying the Trafficking in Persons Protocol and or fully implement it with specific legislation in their respective domain, and today I urge all of us here to galvanise our commitments to this course, also by ratifying the mentioned Protocol and to join us in implementing the outcomes of this AU-Horn of Africa Initiative, in securing justice for victims on and from our continent, and in ending impunity for traffickers.

Finally, there is a renewed urgency to rethink our resource mobilization mechanism. Dependence on external assistance comes with conditionality or policy strings attached, and tends to be dictated by the interests of the partners. It would be difficult to achieve any sustained progress without the ability to mobilize our own resources. Significant domestic resource

mobilization is essential to solidify ownership over this initiative and would also help to strengthen the bonds of accountability between governments and their citizens.

As we discuss the best way to deal with this phenomenon we must be clear that with clear commitments we can save more lives and restore the dignity of those whose lives are already battered.

As the weather becomes warmer and the Mediterranean becomes calmer, the number of people crossing the Mediterranean is likely to climb and will culminate in preventable tragedies. The final outcome of this meeting must address the factors that push people to take the difficult decision to leave home.

We have a clear responsibility to help to save our people from criminals. Anything less will threaten the fundamentals of our very continental system we worked so hard to build.

I thank you.