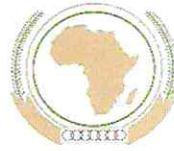


AFRICAN UNION

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### Vision statement:

At this stage of the implementation of the Agenda 2063 and prior to a strategic planning exercise, is to take stock of the progress made during the first decade since the adoption of the Agenda. My vision is therefore based on the lessons learned in order to repolarize collective actions for the coming years towards achievable objectives taking into account geopolitics and of the evolving context of international relations. The Conference of Heads of State and Government, the first organ of the African Union, and the Executive Committee must be in tune to assess the geopolitical issues which risk weakening Africa's positioning in the world. The role of the African Union Commission is to provide technical and managerial impetus necessary to maintain 2015 momentum, without losing sight of the diplomatic and political aspects linked to the exercise of this institutional leadership.

The most pressing issues vary from one region to another on the Continent. Political and security issues are the most obvious and call for greater vigilance and dexterity from the AU to develop sensitive and strategic issues through dialogue in order to alleviate border tensions. The establishment of peace between border countries at war requires the maintenance of permanent dialogue and relational diplomacy that the AU must maintain and promote. The AU must learn from its mediation experiences. These have not always been conclusive. The Commission must establish real strategic monitoring by renewing the mechanisms for exchanging information through permanent representations which play a role of intermediation and transmission of diplomatic messages. We must therefore review their mode of operation and missions, country by country, where tensions present risks of an explosion in the relational context between neighboring states. This is a delicate exercise and African missions, like everywhere in the world, are suffering the setbacks of disinformation and propaganda. The rise of nationalism and the promotion of extremist ideas increasingly risk weakening the effectiveness of supranational institutions. The AU as much as the European Union but also the UN are criticized for the effectiveness of their missions. This new approach to informational and strategic monitoring will serve both to feed institutional communications and to anticipate urgent actions to be carried out and which require a decision by the organs of the Union.

A differentiated but balanced approach with Africa's strategic development partners must also be established. Africa is today present in major international conferences and economic interest groups (G7, G20, BRICS). The AU is approached as a continental organization, and sometimes through the countries that have joined these groupings. Positional solidarity must be ensured and strengthened to better defend the interests of Africa. Africa, like everywhere in the world where the interests of great powers are the subject of strategic covetousness, must ensure that its own interests do not suffer the setbacks of global competition, particularly on mining resources and positioning of influence. There is also the question of ideological terrorism which remains a sensitive subject. The AU must revitalize the structures enabling a climate of tolerance between peoples to be established.

Urgent economic issues are linked to the technologies of the future. Digital technologies are there before our eyes, available, to name only artificial intelligence and the unlimited applications that digital technologies can bring to humanity. Digital skills exist on technologies of the future but it remains insufficient. Of the world's 20 countries with the weakest digital skills, 12 are in Africa (World Bank, 2022). Yet, Africa's digital and technology sectors are poised for growth. According to projections, Africa's digital economy will reach US\$180 billion by 2025, and US\$712 billion by 2050. Therefore, it is urgent to develop human capital capable of facing digital technology challenges. Over the past ten years, African companies have taken initiatives to adapt to the



digital market. Initiatives are multiplying. SMEs as well as large continental companies no longer wait for political “agendas” to innovate. The AU must nevertheless remain at the forefront of public initiatives in the digital market. The AfCFTA has endorsed this track of digital development to boost continental trade. The establishment of a customs union has the potential to increase the continent's trade by more than 50% (source IMF 2023). The AU must also consolidate its achievements from the first years of adoption of the AfCFTA already ratified by 44 African countries.

Africa still faces serious infrastructure shortcomings across all sectors, both in terms of access and quality. Yet, infrastructure development is a key driver for progress across the African continent and a critical enabler for productivity and sustainable economic growth. AU should not leave the infrastructure project to the states alone. AU must continue to hammer the implementation of the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa, a 30-year strategy by NEPAD. Jointly coordinated by the African Union Commission and African Development Bank (AfDB), PIDA provides the strategic framework for priority projects to transform Africa through the construction of modern infrastructure into an interconnected and integrated continent

Urgent issues are at the level of cooperation with Africa's strategic partners be it on continent to continent partnerships or continent to country partnerships. One of the AU's objectives is to encourage international cooperation with external partners to meet the Agenda 2063 vision of Africa. The Partnerships Strategy and Policy Framework was aimed to support reform process and it must be revisited.

Revisiting progress made on the role of regional and sub-regional organizations is also important undertakings for the coming year. The RECs are the backbones of continental integration. They are living bodies with sometimes setbacks in carrying out their missions defined in the Abuja Treaty. The Protocol between RECs and AU is a source of inspiration to boost integration agenda. It must be renewed if necessary in the spirit of continental integration.

Last but not least, there are the urgent issues at the managerial level. Major institutions such AU face the challenges of digital technology to modernize administrative and management processes. However, the rapid development of digital tools could dangerously change human relations if measures are not put in place to avoid hierarchical arbitrations. We must deal with internal turbulences caused by misinformation within offices. With generative AI gaining rapid momentum, its growing popularity is yet a reason to develop and deploy AI in an ethical manner. The Commission should take it as a top concern for AU management looking to use it or protect its organs against any misuse or abuse.