



PRESS RELEASE NO. 10/ 19th AU SUMMIT

NINETEENTH AFRICAN UNION SUMMIT OPENS WITH A CALL FOR UNITY AND SOLIDARITY FOR A STRONG AND PROSPEROUS AFRICA



Addis Ababa, 15 July 2012 – “United and together we are successful” was the message given to the African Union today by its Chairperson, Dr. Boni Yayi, President of the Republic of Benin. The Chairperson was speaking while presiding, on Sunday 15 July 2012, at the official opening ceremony of the 19th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union (AU) in the plenary hall of the New AU Conference Center in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The Assembly meeting is being held under the theme: “Boosting

Intra-African Trade”. It will assess the successes and challenges during the last six months, since the 18th Summit.

Chairperson Yayi regretted the inconclusive elections of the leadership of the African Union Commission (AUC) during its last meeting in January, adding that the elections did not paint a very good image for the continental organization. He appealed to his peers to explore all possible avenues during this Summit to find a solution so that a new Chairperson of the AU Commission is elected. “Six months later, we should have the ability to unify the continent through this election”, he noted

President Yayi deplored the deteriorating situation in Mali and the security problems caused by the escalation of the Libyan crisis, which is presenting a challenge to the restoration of border security in the region.

However, the President was positive about the continent’s economic prospects. “Africa is fast becoming a pole of economic growth”, he said. President Yayi explained that this is an opportunity to lift Africa from poverty and help in the efforts to attain the MDGs.



AUC Chairperson emphasizes importance of intra African trade and reports on other activities of the Commission

In his address, Dr. Jean Ping, Chairperson of the AU Commission, recalled the importance and choice of the theme of the 19th AU Summit. He said the summit is an opportunity to sensitize the Heads of State on the importance of boosting intra-African trade, given that intra African trade currently stands at only 10%. He underscored the need to strengthen unity and African solidarity on the continent. “We have to work very closely so as to consolidate the values and vision of the AU”, he emphasized. “United, the AU can play a determining role in the fulfillment of its aspirations”.

Chairperson Ping expressed satisfaction on the resilience of the continent in the face of the global economic crisis. He said peace is very important for the development of Africa, this explains why the AU is implementing its continental peace and security architecture and post conflict resolutions.

On a different note, Dr. Ping highlighted the other AU development programs including the launch in September 2012, of courses in three of the five pan-African Universities; the implementation of the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA) and the progress in the efforts to ensure food security and nutrition, whereby 32 Member States have joined the Comprehensive African Agriculture program (CAADP).

The Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Jan Eliasson highlights cooperation with the AU

UN Deputy SG Mr. Eliasson highlighted the joint efforts and achievements under UN/AU cooperation. He said the UN has committed itself to work with the AU to help Guinea-Bissau resolve its crisis and ensure an immediate return to constitutional rule. The two organizations are working to address the issue of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. Efforts by both organization were underlined by the Deputy SG of the UN in fighting poverty, diseases, natural disasters, environmental degradation, conflict and violations of human rights as well as promoting fundamental freedoms. The “Rio+20 conference moved the world forward on critical issues-including water, energy, food and women’s empowerment”, he underscored.

Three new Heads of State introduced to the summit

On the other hand, three newly elected African Heads of State were introduced and welcomed by their peers during the opening of the Summit. They are: Messrs. Macky Sall, President of Senegal, Motsoahae Thomas Thabane, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho and Mohamed Morsy, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt. Meanwhile His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Emir of Kuwait, was presented as the guest of honour at the 19th AU Summit.

President Sall commits to reduce Presidential terms from 7 to 5 years

President Macky Sall, in his speech, commended the people of Senegal for the confidence entrusted in him by electing him with a 65% majority vote, adding that the “free, fair and transparent” manner in which the elections were conducted showed the

maturity of democracy. The President committed himself in front of his peers to reduce the duration of the presidential term from 7 to 5 years, renewable only once. He invited his peers to take part in the “Africités” Summit scheduled for December 2012 in Dakar.



Emir of Kuwait announces financial assistance for the AUC

His Highness the Amir of Kuwait commended Africa for organizing such Summits to discuss crucial issues of the continent, with the aim of advancing the development agenda of the continent and meeting the economic expectations. “There is no doubt that the promotion of intra-African trade represents a major economic force that can only promote strategic partnerships with stakeholders” he noted. Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah announced that his country will provide financial assistance to equip the African Union new conference center. He announced that Kuwait will host the next Arabo-African summit with a view to reinforce the relationship between the Arab world and Africa.

Lesotho PM calls for strengthening of the AU

The Right Honourable Thabane of Lesotho highlighted the urgent need for Africa to address the issue of poverty, insecurity, and underdevelopment on the continent while promoting intra-African trade as a consolidation factor of peace and good governance. He emphasized the need to strengthen the organization and its organs, calling on the Member States to accept their collective responsibility and adhere to the realization of the AU's vision of Shared Values and continental integration.

Egyptian President commits to promoting intra African trade

Dr. Mohamed Morsi of Egypt said in his opening remarks that his country is committed to promote trade and investment cooperation in Africa "Promoting intra-African trade has become indispensable for realizing regional economic integration in Africa vis-à-vis the challenges facing our continent within the world economic system" he stressed.

League of Arab State satisfied with partnership with Africa

Mr. Nabil Al-Arabi, Secretary General of the League of Arab States on his part expressed satisfaction with the existing strategic partnership between the AU and the Afro-Arab in different areas of development.

A minute of silence in memory of the late President Bingu Wa Mutharika was observed before the opening ceremony of the Summit.

The 19th Ordinary Session of the summit of the AU ends tomorrow, 16 July.

For more information, consult the African Union website: www.au.int and visit the 19th Summit web page of the AU at the following link: <http://au.int/en/summit/19thsummit>

Journalists are invited to cover the official closing ceremony of the 19th AU Summit on 16 July 2012.