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Press Release N°25/27th AU SUMMIT

Summary of 27th AU Summit Decisions: tax imports to finance AU; establish Protocol to issue African passports to citizens; and extend mandate of Chairperson and Commission

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia – 25 July 2016: The Twenty-Seventh Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union (AU) in Kigali, Rwanda, ended on an extremely high note. It was hailed by many, including the Chairperson of the AU Commission, Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma as the best Summit ever.

“This is the best Summit we’ve had, we must maintain it, while striving to get better and better.” Dr. Dlamini Zuma remarked in a tweet that has been retweeted several times. The Chairperson also expressed gratitude to the current Chairperson of the Union, President Idriss Deby Itno of Chad, host President Paul Kagame of Rwanda, Heads of State and Government, AU Commissioners, the people of Rwanda, AU Commission Staff and Service Providers for delivering a successful Summit.

The richness of the 27th AU Summit was as a result of both a streamlined programme focusing on strategic areas and their outcomes, as well as the smooth organisation by the host country and the AU Commission.

Over Thirty-five (35) Heads of State and Government personally attended the Summit, with a few others represented by Vice Presidents and Foreign Affairs Ministers. Burundi attended the Permanent Representative Committee, but was absent from both the Executive Council and the Summit.

An historic and landmark decision on financing the Union, was taken by the Heads of State and Government, who met in a retreat together with their Finance and Foreign Affairs Ministers. They had decided to convene the retreat during the 26th Summit in January 2016.

Some countries were awarded for the progress made in promoting women's right and gender equality, according to the recently introduced Gender Scorecard. The three main categories awarded were: social, economic and political. Winners in the various categories included: in the social category were: Algeria and Tunisia; economic category was South Africa; and Rwanda topped the political category. Algeria was awarded for being the overall winner in categories pulled together, though not having featured topmost on the economic and political categories.

Following is the summary of key Decisions taken at the 27th AU Summit:

- 1) Extension of the current Commission's mandate**
- 2) Financing the Union through import Levy**
- 3) African Union Passports to African citizenry**
- 4) Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA)**
- 5) Peace and Security Decisions on South Sudan, Burundi, Libya and Terrorism**
- 6) Appointment of Judges of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights**
- 7) Theme, date and venue of next Summit**
- 8) Declarations**

- 1) Extension of the current Commission's mandate**

The much-anticipated elections of new members of the AU Commission took place on 18 July 2016, but none of the three candidates, running for the position of the Chairperson of the Commission, received the required two-thirds of Member States' vote. After seven

(7) rounds of voting, the last of the three candidates obtained 23 votes, with 28 Member States abstaining.

Of the fifty-four (54) Members States eligible to vote, fifty-three (53) were present and voted. Only Burundi did not vote since they were absent from the Summit.

Therefore, the Summit decided, as it had done in 2012, to extend the mandate of the current Commission leadership comprising the Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson and the eight Commissioners, until the next elections, which will take place in January 2017, at the Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. During this period, the process will be reopened new candidates, as well as the current contenders, to apply.

2) Financing the Union through import Levy

In an unprecedented decision, the Summit has decided to institute and implement a 0.2 percent Levy, with effect from 2017, on all eligible imported goods into the continent to finance the AU's operational projects, programmes and peace and security operations budget.

While the specific mechanisms are being worked out, the amounts collected will automatically be paid by Member States into an account opened for the AU within the Central Bank of each Member States for transmission to the AU in accordance with the assessed contribution.

The Summit also appointed President Paul Kagame of Rwanda to lead the ongoing institutional reform of the Union, (the AU Commission and the Organs) to ensure that the AU structures and *modus operandi* are aligned with the demands of integration and implementation of Agenda 2063, and to enable more effective and efficient use of resources and business-oriented delivery. President Paul Kagame is expected to present a report during the January 2017 AU Summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

3) African Union Passports to African citizenry

Following the launch of the African Union Passport and the overwhelming enthusiasm that greeted it, the Assembly also decided to encourage all Member States to adopt the African Passport and to work closely with the AU Commission to facilitate the processes towards its issuance at the national level, based on international and continental policy provisions.

The Commission will provide technical support to Member States to enable them to produce and issue the African Passport to their citizens. The Commission has to put in place an implementation roadmap for the development of a Protocol on the Free Movement of persons in Africa by January 2018, which should come into immediate effect in Member States, in line with the continental transformation framework, Agenda 2063.

4) Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA)

The Heads of State and Government decided to establish a High Level Panel of five eminent persons (one from each region) to champion the fast tracking of the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA), ahead of its proposed launch in 2017. They also called on Member States to speak with one voice on all issues related to trade negotiations with third parties.

5) Peace and Security Decisions on South Sudan, Burundi, Libya and Terrorism

Following the Report of the Chairperson of the Commission on the state of peace and security in Africa, the following Decisions were taken on: i) South Sudan, ii) Burundi, iii) Libya, and iv) Terrorism.

i) South Sudan

The Assembly strongly condemns the outbreak of fighting that took place on 7 July 2016 in Juba, resulting in loss of lives and other tragic impacts on civilians, as well as the cowardly attacks against diplomatic missions; It expresses deep concern at the slow pace and recurring setbacks on the implementation of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan signed in August 2015, and reiterates its disappointment at the lack of its implementation.

The Assembly endorses the communique of the Summit meeting of the Heads of State and Government of the IGAD-Plus, in particular with respect to the reinforcement of UNMISS as proposed by the UN Secretary-General and the call to the UN Security Council to extend the Mission of UNMISS with a revised mandate, including the deployment of a regional protection force to separate the warring parties, protect major installations and civilian population and demilitarize Juba; looks forward to the plan Peace and Security Council visit to South Sudan and stresses the critical importance of convening a pledging conference in support of South Sudan.

ii) Burundi

The Assembly expresses deep concern over the continued targeted killings and other acts of violence in Burundi and deplores the recent assassinations. It reaffirms the determination of the AU to spare no effort to help Burundi restore and rebuild peace, security and stability, reiterating the need for a truly inclusive dialogue, involving all the Burundian stakeholders, led by the East African Community Mediator, President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, with the Support of the Facilitator, former President Benjamin Mkapa of Tanzania.

The Assembly urges the Burundian Government to fully honour the commitment to facilitate the speedy deployment, including issuance of visa and other requirements, of the 200 AU human rights observers and military experts.

iii) Libya

The Assembly reiterates the commitment of the AU to assist the Libyan parties in finding lasting solution to the crisis facing Libya. The Assembly comments the Chairperson of the AU, President Idriss Deby Itno, for his initiatives and support provided towards reconciliation in Libya. It reiterates its support to the Libyan stakeholders and encourages the efforts of the AU High Representative for Libya, former President Jakaya Kikwete of Tanzania.

The Assembly reaffirms that only political dialogue can bring a durable solution to the crisis facing Libya and that military intervention can further escalate and complicate the situation. It calls on AU Member States to provide the necessary political and moral support to the Government of National Accord of Libya.

iv) Terrorism

The Assembly Decides to establish an AU Special Fund for Prevention and Combating of Terrorism and Violent Extremism, to be funded through voluntary contributions. It requested the AU Commission to work out the modalities for its establishment and functioning mechanism.

6) Appointment of Judges of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights

The Summit appointed two Judges of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (AfCHPR) for a six (6)-year term. They are: Marie-Theresa MUKAMULISA from Rwanda and Ntyam ONDO MENGUE from Cameroon. The remaining two Judges shall be elected in January 2017 only from among female candidates from the Northern and Southern regions, in respect of equitable geographical and gender representation in AU Organs.

7) Theme, date and venue of next Summit

The Twenty-Eighth Ordinary Session of the Assembly will be held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 24th to 31st January 2017, under the theme of 2017: Harnessing Demographic Dividend through investments in the Youth”.

8) Declarations:

The 27th AU Summit also made declarations on the Summit theme, ‘The African Year of Human Rights with Particular Focus on the Rights of Women’; a Declaration on the “Commemoration of the 10th Anniversary of the Operationalization of the African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights;” and on the situation in the Middle East and Palestine.

The complete and final decisions will be officially released once they have been signed by the Chairperson of the AU Commission, usually within 15 days after the Summit.

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