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DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

Press Release

## Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy Press Conference to Mark the 28<sup>th</sup> AU Summit

**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 27th January 2017:** With the 28th Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union (AU) on the horizon — including the election of a new Chairperson of the Commission and a consideration of the bid by Morocco to regain its seat as a member state of the African Union among others - H.E. Dr. Elham Mahmoud Ibrahim, Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy at the AU Commission said today that ensuring the development of “robust, resilient and long lasting” economic transformation of Africa through the promotion of infrastructure and energy had taken on a truly paramount importance in the continent.

Speaking at the African Union Headquarters press conference, the Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy highlighted the success of specific infrastructure projects as key pillars for Agenda 2063, the African Union’s long-term vision and blueprint for transformation.

These include, among others according to the Commissioner, the launch of the Africa Renewable Energy Initiative (AREI), a landmark opportunity to move forward Africa’s sustainable energy development agenda, the Single Air Transport Market in Africa, whereby all African Airlines can fly to any member country, the coordination of the African Internet Exchange System (AXIS) project, which supports the establishment of a continental African internet infrastructure and the implementation of the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA), which has projects at an extremely advanced stage.

Responding to questions from the media, many of which focused on the setbacks and challenges facing infrastructure projects in Africa, the Commissioner explained that lack

of funding is often cited as the biggest reason behind Africa's infrastructure gap. However, she mentioned other bottlenecks including weak regulatory frameworks, uncondusive institutional environments, limited local capacity, inadequate preparation of projects towards bankability and tender. She noted that several interventions have since been put in place to address these challenges spearhead by the African Union Commission and its partners.

Asked about how the contentious Single African Air Transport Market could be launched with only 17 countries out of 54 on board, the Commissioner stated that the Market will stretch from Cairo to Johannesburg and from Freetown to Nairobi. She added that the AUC and its partners are trying to convince these governments that competition is good for everybody because it will eventually improve the innovativeness of the sector.

H.E. Dr. Elham Mahmoud Ibrahim, Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy at the AU Commission concluded her press briefing by addressing a question about the selection process of the Geothermal Risk Mitigation Facility (GRMF) projects for which the AUC serves as the Regional Coordination Unit. She revealed that the GRMF programme has had three successful Application rounds since its launch and is in the process of finalizing the Fourth Application Round. She stated that the GRMF will provide grants to Developers through a competitive, transparent and rigorous two-stage Application processes. This encompasses a pre-application (Expression of Interest) as well as a full application phase.