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DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

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### African Continental Free Trade Area gathers Strong Impetus to boost Economic Growth



**Kigali, Rwanda, 15 March 2018:** “I am once again honoured to address the Permanent Representatives’ Committee, the linchpin of the African Union, on the occasion of preparations for the Extraordinary Session of the AU Assembly convened for the purpose of executing the decision taken by our Heads of State and Government to lend a strong impetus to the implementation of one of our flagship projects, the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)”, said H.E Thomas Kwesi Quartey, Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission (AUC), during the opening ceremony of the Permanent Representative Committee (PRC) meeting today at the Kigali Convention Center.

Hosted by the Republic of Rwanda, the event is holding within the framework of the Extraordinary Session of the AU Assembly on the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) in the presence of the AU Commissioners, Representatives of the AU Organs and partner Organisations, the RECs, the UN Agencies and invited guests.

Speaking on behalf of the H. E. Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the AU Commission, Deputy Chairperson, Kwesi Quartey, began by expressing his admiration for the city of Kigali, which he described as “a welcoming beautiful and resplendent city.... This time, however, it has enhanced its splendour in a bid to provide us with a suitable working environment, commensurate with the issues that bring us here”.



“This therefore is an opportunity for me to express the gratitude of the African Union Commission to H.E. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda and Chairperson of the African Union, for his commitment and determination to contribute, with his peers, to placing Africa on a path of greater self-assertion on the international stage. I would also like to thank the Government and the Rwandan people for their fraternal

welcome”, reiterated H.E Kweisi Quartey.

The AUC Deputy Chairperson stressed that, the Extraordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union on the AfCFTA is timely as it is a strong political symbolism that, “Africa is taking charge of itself and her voice should resonate, from a position of strength that is rooted in the effective implementation of projects of continental dimension that contribute to its development and especially to the consolidation of its integration and unity”. He underlined that, as a key organ responsible for starting the decision-making process within the African Union, the PRC has the heavy duty of laying the groundwork, through the preliminary consideration of all working documents so as to provide the Executive Council with guidance on the way forward in the consideration of matters to be submitted to the Heads of State and Government.

“With the launch of the Continental Free Trade Area, one of the African integration flagship projects, alongside the Single Air Transport Market and the Free Movement of People and Goods, we are also challenged by the urgent need to develop an African Common Position on the Cotonou Agreement after it expires... Our continent is at a crossroads”. Underscored Deputy Chairperson Quartey. (See Complete Speech

delivered by the AUC Deputy Chairperson on the AU website: [www.au.africa](http://www.au.africa) ).



Speaking earlier, H.E Hope Tumukunde Gasatura, Chairperson of the PRC and Ambassador of the Republic of Rwanda to Ethiopia, welcomed the participants to Kigali and reminded them that “the establishment of the AfCFTA is a critical political priority of our African Union leadership. It is

also a flagship project of the African Union Agenda 2063”.

The PRC Chairperson recalled in her speech that, at the founding of the Organization of African Unity, Kwame Nkrumah made a clarion call that ‘Africa Must Unite’. “His vision and that of other founding fathers of our organization were very instrumental in the creation of regional economic communities like the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in 1975, Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) in 1980 which later became the Southern African Development Community (SADC), as well as the Preferential Trade Area for Eastern and Southern African States (PTA) in 1982 which later became the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA); among several other regional economic communities on the Continent”. Noted Amb. Tumukunde Gasatura.

Meanwhile, the PRC Chairperson thanked the African Ministers of Trade “for their excellent work over the past two and a half years since the start of the Phase 1 negotiations of the AfCFTA which has made it possible to gather in Kigali to launch this important flagship project of AU’s Agenda 2063.... I would like to equally commend the work of the Specialized Technical Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs for the excellent work accomplished at their extraordinary session held here in Kigali last week for the legal cleaning of the texts”. She said (See complete speech of the AUC Chairperson on the AU website: [www.au.africa](http://www.au.africa) ).

Worth noting that, the Eighteenth Extraordinary Session of the Executive Council will hold on the 19<sup>th</sup> of March 2018, followed by a Business Forum scheduled for the 20<sup>th</sup> of March 2018 and the Extraordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the AU, on the 21<sup>th</sup> of March 2018.

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