

DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

NOTE TO THE EDITORS

10th Extraordinary Session of the Assembly of the AU on the African Continental Free Trade Area opens today in Kigali at the level of the Permanent Representative Committee

Kigali Rwanda, 17th March 2018: The Permanent Representatives Committee (PRC) meeting in preparation for the 18th Extraordinary Session of the Executive Council and the Assembly of the Heads of State and Government of the African Union (AU) kicked off on 17 March 2018 at the Kigali Convention Center (KCC), Republic of Rwanda.



“What path will Africa choose? That of maintaining the status quo, which means making cosmetic changes relating to borderline adjustments which have no real impact on the lives of our populations, or that of effecting a paradigm shift which requires us to look far into the horizon for a truly integrated Africa, which is structurally transformed economically, guaranteeing the freedom of movement and settlement to all her daughters and all her sons, as well as offering, in the final analysis, fulfilling and promising living conditions for her youth, in a bid to reverse the migratory flows?” these were the major interrogations highlighted in the speech delivered by H.E Thomas Kwesi Quartey, Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission (AUC), during the opening of the AU Permanent Representatives Committee, on behalf of H.E Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the AUC.

“Things are changing, things have to change. In this dynamic, the PRC remains an essential player in this desired change” noted Deputy Chairperson Kwartey.

“Indeed, whether it is the preliminary work on the establishment of the Continental Free Trade Area, the draft protocols finalized by the Specialized Technical Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs which you are called upon to consider, or the draft of the African Common Position, whose consideration is an item on your agenda, you have, during your respective sessions devoted to these issues, shown a convergence of views that largely transcends the hesitations, procrastination and concerns observed here and there” said AUC Deputy Chairperson (DCP) to the Ambassadors.

With regard to the Continental Free Trade Area, the DCP underlined that commended the efforts made by all the actors involved under the effective leadership of H.E. Mahamadou Issoufou, President of the Republic of Niger, the designated Champion of the Continental Free Trade Area, before calling on the PRC members to conduct their deliberations in the spirit of Pan-Africanism which has always guided their practice in the discharge of their noble duties.

“I would like, if I may, to dwell on the following three main points:

- The African Common Position must be inspired by Agenda 2063, which is hinged on the key principles of African unity, integration and sustainable development, among others, and the reconciliation of the interests of the three ACP blocs (Africa, Caribbean and Pacific). These principles will obviously have to be supplemented by appropriate financing and governance mechanisms that preserve the continent's major interests.
- The African Common Position should be understood as a general framework that outlines the scope within which negotiations will take place. It is such a general framework that we must decide here in Kigali.
- The negotiators will subsequently be responsible for ironing out with the European side all the details, relating not only to achievements, and in particular the specific agreements that some of our Member States have concluded with the European Union besides the Cotonou Convention, but also to the continuation of the objectives set out in Agenda 2063, in strict compliance with our basic principles, namely unity, integration, structural transformation of the African economies, sustainable development and shared prosperity.” Emphasised the AUC Deputy

Chairperson.



The Chairperson of the PRC, H.E Hope Tumukunde Gasatura, on her part, stated that, by establishing the CFTA through a commercially meaningful package of agreements, Africa is now posed to attract investments from both within Africa and the world at large. Through this Africa integration in terms of trade can commence. Jobs will be created, entrepreneurs' will expand their business, and Africa Value chains will be developed and linked then to the global value chain.

Amb. Tumukunde highlighted in her opening remarks that the legal text has gone through intense negotiation, and therefore, called on the PRC members to ensure that the AfCFTA agreements are ratify by their respective countries so that it enters into force without delay and begin implementation. She at the same time acknowledged the work done by the chief negotiators, and urged them to continue to negotiate in the spirit of solidarity and cooperation to enable us achieve the Africa we want.

In conclusion the PRC Chairperson underscored that “our people can no longer wait for economic fortunes to change, we are the change agents, and we have to create our own future because nobody will do it for us”.

Meanwhile, the PRC member will deliberate on the report of the Specialized Technical Committee (STC) on Justice and Legal Affairs on the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCTA) legal instruments and they will also consider the draft African Common Position on the Post 2020 Cotonou Agreement, among others.

The Cotonou Agreement is a treaty between the European Union and the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States. It was signed in June 2000 in Cotonou, Republic of Benin, by 78 ACP countries and fifteen Member States of the European Union. It entered into force in 2003 and was subsequently revised in 2005 and 2010. The African Continental Free Trade Area Summit is expected to bring together the fifty-five AU member countries.

Media contacts:

Esther Azaa Tankou, Head of Information Division, Tel: +250 78914032, / E-mail: yamboue@africa-union.org / Janet Faith Adhiambo Ochieng , E-mail: ochiengJ@africa-union.org

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