Press Release

The African Union Executive Council adopts the African Common Position for Negotiations of a new cooperation agreement with the European Union

Addis Ababa, 27 March 2018:

March 21st, 2018 marked a historical day for Africa in its vision to build an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa with the signing of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) by 44 African Countries. This was a strong and loud message to the World that Africa is able to come together as One and speak in One Voice. In the same spirit, another highlight of the AfCFTA week was the Executive Council’s unanimous decision to adopt the African Common Position for Negotiations of a New Agreement of Cooperation with the European Union on the future of African Union/European Union relations Post 2020. As the expiry date of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement approaches in February 2020, reflections between Africa and the EU have been under way to determine the nature, outline and configuration of a more appropriate framework for future post-2020 relations. In this context, an adhoc working group composed of the Permanent Representatives' Committee (PRC) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; the African Group of Ambassadors in Brussels, Belgium; the African Group of Ambassadors in Geneva Switzerland and the African Union Commission’s technical Department of Economic Affairs was put in place by H.E. Moussa Mahamat Faki to lead efforts in drafting and presenting a Common African Position proposal to the Executive Council for the upcoming negotiations with the European Union.

The revision of the partnership with the European Union is an opportunity for Africa to capitalize on the experiences of the past and to define a single, strong and sustainable cooperation policy framework for continent to continent cooperation with Europe, based on values, interests and aspirations that unite us and actively participate together in global discussions. This new agreement must reaffirm the vision of the African continent to build an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, led by its own citizens and
representing a dynamic force on the international political scene through the effective implementation of Agenda 2063.

As such, the adopted African Common position recommends that the new agreement with the European Union should be separated from the ACP context and based on a strong and sustainable continent-to-continent partnership that revolves around the AU and the EU. The new agreement should also reaffirm the interdependence between Africa and Europe, as well as the development of modern political dialogue, based on equality, equity, mutual respect and the shared responsibility of both continents. It should be based on African priority development pillars and revolve around the following seven elements: structural transformation of economies and inclusive growth; people-centred development; migration and mobility; peace and security; science, technology and innovation; the environment and climate change; governance, human rights and natural resource management, while also not failing to consider the already existing bilateral agreements between the EU and Africa, including those of North Africa, South Africa and other African countries.

Africa has devoted to negotiate South-South partnership on a sovereign basis with the Caribbean and the Pacific based on existing partnership models.

Building on a longstanding cooperation and with a view of deepening high-level dialogue and cooperation on a citizen-driven pan-African agenda of integration and transformation, the adoption of the African Common Position for negotiations of a new Agreement with the European Union is the first step towards a win-win discussion with the European Union.

Following the adoption, it was convened by the meeting that the next steps will consist of establishing a Group of Negotiators; developing a negotiation strategy by the African Union Commission by May 2018. An official presentation of the African Common Position will be made at the 107th Session of the ACP Council of Ministers in Lomé, Togo on 29 May 2018.

Note to Editor
The ACP-EU Partnership Agreement, more commonly known as the Cotonou Partnership Agreement, is a partnership agreement between African, Caribbean and Pacific developing countries and the EU which was signed in Cotonou on 23 June 2000 for a 20-year period from 2000 to 2020. Since its adoption, it has been the framework for relations with 79 countries from Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP) and the European Union and was based on three development three pillars such as Development cooperation, Political cooperation, Economic and trade cooperation. In 2010, ACP-EU cooperation was adapted to new challenges such as climate change, food security, regional integration, State fragility and aid effectiveness.

Media Contact:
Djeinaba Kane | Department of Economic Affairs | African Union Commission | E-mail: KaneD@africa-union.org

Esther Azaa Tankou / Head of Information Division / E-mail: yamboue@africa-union.org / Tel: +251911361185

Directorate of Information and Communication | African Union Commission | E-mail: DIC@african-union.org | Website: www.au.int | Addis Ababa | Ethiopia

For further information: Directorate of Information and Communication | African Union Commission | E-mail: DIC@african-union.org | Website: www.au.int | Addis Ababa | Ethiopia

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