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DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

## PRESS RELEASE

### 3<sup>RD</sup> EXTRAORDINARY SESSION OF THE SPECIALIZED TECHNICAL COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE AND LEGAL AFFAIRS CONSIDERS DRAFT ANNEXES TO THE PROTOCOLS TO THE AFCFTA AGREEMENT.

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**Addis Ababa, 31 May 2018** - Ministers of Justice of African Union Member States met for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Extraordinary Session of the Specialized Technical Committee (STC) on Justice and Legal Affairs from 8 to 9 June 2018 in Dakar, Senegal following the Meeting of Government Legal Experts which took place from 5 to 7 June 2018.

The Session, which was coordinated by the Office of the Legal Counsel of the Commission, was convened in the implementation of Assembly Decision Ext/Assembly/AU/Dec.1(X), to consider the Draft Annexes to the Protocols on Trade in Goods and on the Rules and Procedures on the Settlement of Disputes to the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) for submission to the Thirty-First Ordinary Session of the Assembly in July 2018.

Addressing the STC at the opening ceremony, Amb. Dr. Namira Negm, the Legal Counsel of the African Union Commission, welcomed the Ministers and delegations on behalf of H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat, the Chairperson of the AU Commission and noted that “*our Heads of State and Government in Decision Assembly/AU/Dec.394 (XVIII) called for the establishment of an African Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) by an indicative date of 2017, which saw the Member States negotiate and agree upon the provisions of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area and its three Protocols on Trade in Goods, Services and the Rules and Procedures on the Settlement of Disputes.*” She noted that the meeting of Government Legal Experts preceding the Ministerial Session, had extensively considered and made necessary revisions to the Draft Annexes and therefore recommended their adoption by the STC on Justice and Legal Affairs.

Hon. Mokhele Moletsane, Chairperson of the STC and Minister of Justice, Human Rights and Correctional Services from the Kingdom of Lesotho, in his statement, expressed appreciation to the Government and people of Senegal for the warm welcome and hospitality extended to the participants and to the African Ministers of Trade, Negotiators and Legal Experts for making the work of this Ministerial Session easier. He encouraged delegations to work enthusiastically and engage in robust deliberations with a view to “*extricating our Africa from the Abyss of abject poverty and place it on a new pedestal of hope for the future*”.

H.E. Ismaïla Madior Fall, Keeper of the Seals and Minister of Justice of the Republic of Senegal, who officially opened and closed the Session as the representative of the Host Country, expressed gratitude to the Meeting for choosing Senegal as the venue of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Extraordinary Session of the STC and made known his optimism for Africa’s integration through the establishment of the AfCFTA.

At the conclusion of the Session on 9 June 2018, the STC on Justice and Legal Affairs adopted the amended Draft Annexes to the Protocols on Trade in Goods and on the Rules and Procedures on the Settlement of Disputes to the AfCFTA and recommended the same to the Executive Council for consideration at its Session in July 2018 which will be held in Nouakchott, Mauritania.

#### NOTE TO EDITOR

The STC on Justice and Legal Affairs comprises Ministers of Justice and Attorneys General or Keepers of the Seals, Ministers responsible for Human Rights, Constitutionalism and the Rule of Law or such other Ministers or authorities duly accredited by the Governments of Member States.

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