



Statement of the Chairperson of African Union Commission on the occasion of Africa Refugee Day

Addis Ababa, 20 June 2018: The Chairperson of the African Union Commission joins all concerned stakeholders around the world to mark the Africa Refugee Day on 20 June 2018. He is concerned that we commemorate this day this year at a time of unprecedented level of forced displacement, irregular migration and protracted humanitarian crises. A total of 6.2 million refugees and asylum seekers in Africa have sought protection outside of their countries, while more than 12 million people are internally displaced. In these situations, it is often the most vulnerable such as women, children, the elderly, people with disability and minority groups who face immense risks. Organized under the theme **“The World We Want: Inclusion, Empowerment and Access to Services for Refugees,”** this year’s Africa Refugee Day will highlight the importance of inclusion of refugees and solutions to their plight through empowerment and access.

The Chairperson reaffirms African Union Commission’s strong commitment to the protection of refugees, IDPs and vulnerable migrants in all

circumstances. The continent has developed pioneering legal and policy instruments as reflected in the 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa and the 2009 Convention on the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa. Many African countries have demonstrated remarkably high level of solidarity providing asylum to refugees at a time of greater anxiety, xenophobia, closure of borders and denial of asylum in many parts of the world.

The Chairperson observes that many refugees in protracted situations have suffered for too long without solution in sight, often located in isolated and neglected camps. In the face of this dire situation, the African Union calls on a concerted global effort and solidarity to refugees and countries in Africa that host them. The Chairperson recalls that the AU Policy Organs have declared 2019 as the African Year of Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons: Towards Durable Solutions to Forced Displacement in Africa. He notes that 2019 will mark the 50th anniversary of the 1969 OAU Convention, presenting the continent with immense opportunities to chart a better future for forcibly displaced persons.