AFRICAN UNION SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES DISCUSSED AT 33RD SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Nouakchott, Mauritania 28 June 2018- The 33rd Ordinary session of the African Union (AU) Executive Council opened today with key speakers highlighting progress made in several fronts as the continent seeks to achieve peace, development and unity. The Executive Council meeting which is the second statutory meeting of the 31st AU Summit, was attended by Ministers of Foreign Affairs of AU Member States brought up many challenges still afflicting the continent’s one billion plus inhabitants and heard calls for concerted action to achieve the Africa we want, as guided by Agenda 2063.

Speaking at the opening ceremony of the Executive Council in Nouakchott, Mauritania, the Chairperson of the AU Commission Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat paid tribute to the Ethiopian Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed and Sudan’s President Omar Al Bashir for their efforts to bring about the recently signed peace agreement between President Salva Kirr and Dr Riek Machar in South Sudan. South Sudan descended into conflict in 2013, a few years after attaining its independence. He also praised the ongoing initiatives between Ethiopia and Eritrea to normalize their relations.

Mr. Moussa Faki emphasized the need for member states to commit to dialogue to resolve conflicts in places such as the Central African Republic, Western Cameroon Western Sahara and Central Mali where he said people are “paying the price for violence”. He also called for democratic elections.

In reference to the AU Theme of The Year 2018 “Wining The Fight Against Corruption” the Chairperson urged the African Union Commission to “lead by example” when it comes to upholding good governance practices. This call was linked to the ongoing efforts to bring about institutional reforms within the entire body of the African Union, which includes the Commission and its organs and institutions operating in several countries across the continent.

The Chairperson also remined the delegates that ensuring sustainable self-financing of the Union was a core aspect of the ongoing institutional reforms and Chairperson reported that 33 member states have either implemented, or are working towards implementing the agreed 0.2 percent levy on eligible goods. A comprehensive report on the institutional reforms process is expected to be presented to the Assembly of Heads of State and Government who are due to meet from the 1st to 2nd of July at the summit.
Progress made in the implementation of Agenda 2063 was noted in the signing and ratification of key Flagship Projects of Agenda 2063 such as the African Continental Free Trade Area, The Free Movement of People, and the launch of the Single African Air Transport Market.

Speaking on the issue of corruption, the Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Africa Dr Vera Songwe noted that Africa loses 50 billion dollars a year to illicit financial flows and the African Development Bank estimates that corruption adds 25 percent to the cost of contracts and deals. Dr. Songwe spoke about the impact of corruption on Africa’s women and children, calling for more access to finance and extension services, to women. She noted that corruption impacted women in relation to land rights thus negatively impacting the agricultural sector of which women are the key contributors. However, she also noted improvements being made in the fight against corruption; commending the African Union for its efforts to strengthen its governance systems. “The systems are more transparent, and the budgeting is more effective”, she said.

The opening session of the Executive Council was also addressed by its Chairperson, Mrs Louise Mushikiwabo, who is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Rwanda; and the Mauritanian Foreign Minister Mr Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed. Ms Mushikiwabo emphasized the need for “every African to have the African passport without delay” in order to realize the Agenda 2063 goal of free movement of people. She picked up on the anti-corruption issue, indicating that the resources being lost to the practice could be better utilized for programmes that benefit the people. This sentiment was echoed by Mr. Cheikh Ahmed who said that corruption is an impediment to Africa’s development.

During the two day meeting of the Executive Council, the foreign ministers will consider the draft 2019 AU budget, appoint the AU Board of External Auditors, and prepare the draft agenda for the meeting of Heads of State and Government, among other business.

For more information:
Wynne Musabayana | Head of Communication | African Union Commission | E-mail: MusabayanaW@africa-union.org

Media and interview contacts:
Mr. Molalet Tsedeke, Directorate of Information and Communication, AU Commission; E-mail: molalett@africa-union.org;

Directorate of Information and Communication | African Union Commission | E-mail: DIC@african-union.org
I 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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