

36th ORDINARY SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL COMMENCES

DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION

Press Release No: 03/2020

Date: 06/02/2020

Venue: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia



The 36th Ordinary Session of the African Union (AU) Executive Council officially opened today, at the AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa. The meeting is being held under the AU Theme of the Year 2020, ***“Silencing the Guns: Creating Conducive Conditions for Africa’s Development”***. The initiative of Silencing the Guns is a flagship project of Africa’s Agenda 2063 and aims to achieve a conflict-free Africa, prevent genocide, make peace a reality for all and rid the continent of wars, civil conflicts, gender-based violence, violent conflicts and preventing genocide.

The meeting which was attended by Foreign Ministers of AU member states, leadership of the AU Commission and AU organs, the diplomatic corps, representatives of partner organisations and invited guests was highly solemn as the key speakers in line with the Theme, delivered powerful statements to strongly condemn and denounce the devastating effect of war on the continent’s socio-economic development, among others.

The speakers stressed on the need to accelerate action on “silencing the guns” with a view to mobilise all stakeholders to prioritise efforts on peace and effective socio-economic development in the continent. The speakers underlined some of the challenges that lead people to violent conflicts, including poverty, historical injustices, inequality, unemployment, climate change, illegal financial flows, and corruption, bad governance, and post electoral disputes leading to political instability and reminded delegates of the panafrican dream and determination to silence the guns by 2020 as enshrined in the Africa Agenda 2063.

H.E. Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the AU Commission (AUC) in his speech, set the scene for the ambitions of 2020 stating; “I would like to hope that during this year, and more than in the past, your tireless efforts to build an Africa on solid economic and political foundations will continue with determination, always nourished by the spirit of Pan-Africanism.”

On the issue of peace and security situation in Africa, Mr. Mahamat said the efforts to maintain peace in the continent is stifled by security threats and challenges such as the jihadist threat, terrorism and extremism leading to repeated deadly attacks that puts the lives of African citizens in danger, causing forced displacement of people and youths risking their lives in the Mediterranean in search for greener pasture abroad. Hence the need to reinforce the AU commitment to implement the theme of the year on “Silencing the Guns” To that effect, he urged the Member States to reflect on the important question of maintaining peace among other related issues.

On the issue of human rights, Mr. Mahamat congratulated the efforts of the Republic of Chad which is working with the AU Commission for the effective implementation of the decisions of the Extraordinary African Chambers within the framework of the trial of former President Hissein Habré. He said measures have been taken with the signing of the Headquarters Agreement and the provision of a building to host the secretariat intended to implement the Compensation Fund for the benefit of victims.

On humanitarian and health issues, Mr. Mahamat, underlined the new threats posed by the Ebola virus which is creating havoc in the Great Lakes region and the worrying prevalence of the coronavirus, which requires the sustained attention of our public health institutions, alongside the efforts of the AU’s Africa Centre for Disease Control (Africa CDC) .The AUC Chairperson stated that the AU Commission in collaboration with member states has initiated several actions aimed at improving the living conditions of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Africa. He congratulated the Republic of Rwanda for supporting measures to repatriate migrants from Libya and the reception of some of them in its territory. He also expressed gratitude for the action undertaken by President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, Champion on the issue of refugees and IDPs.

Mr. Mahamat noted the collective pride for Africa following the launch of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and called on the member states to actively take part in the negotiation meetings for the successful implementation of “this important flagship project of the African Union in order to realise the dream long cherished by the founding fathers of our continental organisation.” He called on Member States to stick the principle of Africa speaking with one voice and ensuring that in the undertaking of meetings and summits with development partners, Member States need to be strategic during their participation to ensure Africa’s agenda is prioritised.

Mrs. Vera Songwe, the United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) emphasized on the challenges which Africa must overcome as a continent in order to promote peace and mitigate arm conflicts. She stressed that, for a strategy on silencing the guns to be successful, there is need to build more inclusive societies and therefore the AU has an important role to play in this quest. “A strategy to silence the guns, must be strategy to improve the governance of our societies, to build more transparent decision making process, to demand more inclusive and strong institutions underpinned by the rule of law”, among others. She further stated that, “today, our task is to raise a clarion call for the voiceless.. “for those maimed by the tools of war.. those scarred by the violence it envelops humankind in, the cruelty it engenders in otherwise peaceful nations,

but more than anything else, it is the savagery and senselessness of these very acts, rape, murder, burning down of innocent villages and the deprivation of whole communities to engage in active and constructive chores”.

H.E Sameh Hassan Shoukry, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Arab Republic of Egypt and Chairperson of the Executive Council welcomed and thanked his peers for pushing on the agenda of the Union with the view to achieving “The Africa We Want”. He indicated that many positive achievements were noted throughout the year 2019 in different socio-economic and political areas. But there are still many challenges that needed to be overcome. The Executive Council Chair highlighted the need to ensure collaboration by all stakeholders in addressing and finding solutions to the key issues to be discussed at the meeting especially those related to “silencing the guns”, IDPs, economic integration, the implementation of the AfCFTA, with the view to seek African solutions to Africa’s problem on the one hand and project Africa as a key player in the world arena, on the other hand.

The outcomes of the Executive Council meeting will be presented to the 33rd Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government which will take place from 9-10 February 2020 in Addis Ababa.

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