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**Message of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission  
H.E. Mousa Faki Mahamat  
on the occasion of  
International Women's Day  
Under the theme**

**“I am generation equality: realising women's rights  
- African Union scales up actions towards gender parity”.**

**Addis Ababa, 08 March, 2020:** Today, the African Union Commission joins the global community to celebrate and honour African women for their contributions in the development and well-being of this beautiful continent.

This International Women's Day (IWD) marks important milestones in the continental and global calendar for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. At the continental level, this year marks the end of the African Women's Decade 2010 – 2020 on Grassroots Approach to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. Globally, 2020 commemorates the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 20th anniversary of the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

This year is also the fifth anniversaries of Africa's Agenda 2063's First Ten Year Implementation Plan and the United Nations Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development Goals. Furthermore it marks the beginning of the United Nations - led multigenerational campaign captioned “Generation Equality: Realizing women's rights for an equal future”, which the African Union is supporting. In light of this the AU is celebrating the 2020 International Women Day under the theme “I am generation equality: realising women's rights - African Union scales up actions towards gender parity”.

All these milestones provide an opportunity to take stock of women's achievements, and reflect on how action can be accelerated to fully achieve the goals of gender equality and women's empowerment in Africa.

I am pleased to announce that in an effort to maintain momentum and scale-up actions towards empowering women in the continent, African Union Heads of State and Government during their recently concluded 33<sup>rd</sup> Ordinary Assembly held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, declared 2020 to 2030 as the African Women's Decade on Financial and Economic Inclusion. In addition, in collaboration with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the Commission launched the African Women Leadership Fund (AWLF) with the aim of mobilizing resources from the global private sector to fund women initiatives and promote an enabling environment for the increased participation of women across the continent

Furthermore, the Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) promises to benefit women in business, especially women cross-border traders across the Continent. Indeed Africa is on a good trajectory to provide expanded opportunities for women to realize their financial and economic freedom. We are also working hard to scale-up action towards achieving gender parity and ensuring that women and men have access to equal opportunities.

While we celebrate this day, we are also mindful of the ongoing global health challenge relating to the Novel Coronavirus 2019 (COVID - 19). The African Union Commission stands in solidarity with all countries affected. I therefore wish to affirm our preparedness, through the Africa Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), which has already activated its Emergency Operation Centre, to support Member States with the necessary surveillance and responses.

The AU remains committed to eradicating violence against Women and Girls in all its ramifications as well as protecting the girl child from all forms of abuse including early marriage and other harmful traditional practices. I also reaffirm our commitment to work with all Member States, Regional Economic Communities, Civil Society Organisations and all stakeholders to ensure that guns are indeed silenced, so that Africa can be at peace and its women can live prosperous lives free from fear.

The International Women Day is therefore a call to action for all of us to work together towards enhancing the rights and opportunities of women and girls to attain their full potentials.

I wish you all a memorable International Women's Day and assure you that the African Union Commission will continue to be your partner, ally and friend in realizing full gender equality and women's empowerment in the continent.

Happy International Women's Day to all!