



STATEMENT

BY

THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSIONER FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS
ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF DEMOCRACY

Addis Ababa, 15 September 2020: This year we celebrate the International Day of Democracy under the theme “COVID-19: A Spotlight on Democracy”. This theme is pertinent given that COVID-19 is an unprecedented public health emergency in contemporary times.

In the context of the theme for this day, H.E. Minata SAMATE CESSOUMA, Commissioner for Political Affairs, reaffirms the unwavering commitment of the African Union and its 55 Member States to the noble goals of Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want. Aspiration 3 of Agenda 2063 envisions “an Africa of good governance, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law”. Aspiration 4 envisages “A Peaceful and Secure Africa”. Both aspirations 3 & 4 resonate with the 2030 global agenda on sustainable development. In particular, they dovetail neatly into the SDG No. 16 which aims to “promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels”.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, many African countries have adopted emergency measures that have resulted in the curtailment of human rights, rule of law, justice and constitutionalism. While justified, these measures should be legal, non-discriminatory and proportionate to the magnitude of the threat. They should also be temporary and not permanent. They should not threaten democracy. Without democracy, there cannot be durable peace.

The African leaders declared 2020 as the year of ***Silencing the Guns: Creating Conducive Conditions for Africa’s Development***. The African Union has invested immensely in preventing, managing and resolving a plethora of conflicts including terrorism and violent extremism. It was within the context of the 2020 AU theme that the United Nations Secretary General and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission called for a global ceasefire in all conflict hot-spots around the globe in order to allow more effort and resources to be earmarked towards fighting the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the past decades, the African continent has been making significant stride in building sustainable democracies and striving for a conflict-free Africa. Indeed, democracies built in peaceful societies are the bedrock of a meaningful socio-economic development. That is why more efforts have to be invested to end the on-going war in Libya with devastating ramifications for the Sahel region. Over and above wars and conflicts, COVID-19 is an invisible enemy that threatens democracy, peace and development in Africa. AU Member States, Regional Economic Communities and the international community have to join hands to combat COVID-19, advance democracy and inculcate the culture of peace.

-----**15 September 2020**-----