

**DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION**

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**AU Heads of State at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Mid-Year Coordination Meeting call on political and social actors to respect human rights and the rule of law**



Five years after the adoption of the Africa Agenda 2063 and its vision for greater African economic and political integration, and taking into consideration that next year marks three decades since the adoption of the Abuja Treaty establishing the African Economic Community, Heads of State and Government from the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and the Regional Mechanisms (RMs) together with the African Union Commission, held a virtual meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2020 to take stock of the progress made in the area of integration and different aspect of development in the continent. The main objective of this meeting is to enhance effective collaboration between the AU, RECs, RMs, the Member States, and other continental institutions, in line with the principle of subsidiarity.

The coordination meeting which is holding against the backdrop of the COVID19 pandemic was also expected to formalize the framework that will help to strengthen the collaboration between the African Union, the RECs / RMs and the Member States with the view to advance the implementation of the continental development agenda, through a well-established division of labor in accordance with the Heads of State meeting held in Niamey, Niger, in July 2019. These entities are expected to better serve the goal of rapid continental integration and the overall objectives of Agenda 2063. To that effect, the meeting emphasized on the need for continued consultations with Member States on the institutional reform process with the respective RECs playing a facilitating role.

H.E Cyril Matamala Ramaphosa, President of the Republic of South Africa and Chairperson of the African Union (AU) in his opening remarks urged all member states to join the Chairperson of the AU Commission in calling on all political and social actors to reject the use of violence and respect human rights and the rule of law. He noted that, even though COVID19 has tremendously affected the developmental and economic plans of every single country, and caused a set back to the progress in implementing key integration projects, the response to this grave public health emergency has been swift and commendable.

The AU Chair also underlined that the Africa Joint-Continental Strategy for COVID-19 Outbreak has guided the continental effort to mitigate the pandemic. “We established a COVID-19 Response Fund to assist with boosting the capacity of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention – the Africa CDC – and to assist African countries in combating and containing the spread of the virus”. He stated. Chairperson Ramaphosa further recalled that Special Envoys were appointed to mobilise international support for a comprehensive economic stimulus package for Africa. Adding that, through cooperation at a continental level, the African Task Force for Coronavirus was formed, and that the Partnership for Accelerated Covid-19 Testing campaign was established,. The AU Chairperson also highlighted that the innovative Africa Medical Supplies Platform was launched to ensure that all African countries have access to affordable medical equipment, diagnostics and other essential supplies.

President Ramaphosa commended the joint efforts to address the pandemic saying that the continent was able to respond proactively to the COVID-19 threat due to the great work of the AU Commission and the Member States. “As a continent we remain united in our call for equitable access to a COVID-19 vaccine once it is developed.”. The Chairperson of the AU further pointed out that, while some Regional Economic Communities have made significant progress in key areas of

integration, others have struggled to achieve the goals set out in their respective treaties and conventions and in meeting the milestones set out in the Abuja Treaty. “We welcome the fact that all the Regional Economic Communities affirm the importance of trade in advancing economic integration. Once the African Continental Free Trade Area comes into operation next year, economic integration will be given added momentum”, emphasised the AU Chairperson.



Similarly, the Chairperson of the AU Commission (AUC), Moussa Faki Mahamat, recalled in his opening speech that this meeting is being held in a unique context, deeply marked by the COVID-19 pandemic that has affected the continent negatively. This, he said “has presented a huge challenge for our continent that needs a new dynamics of

solidarity, resilience and development.” The AUC Chairperson applauded the outstanding leadership of H.E Cyril Ramaphosa, President of the Republic of South Africa, who in his capacity as Chairperson of the AU has multiplied initiatives and provided guidance with the support from member of the Bureau of the Assembly of the AU and leaders of the RECs, to enable the continent achieve considerable development milestone, despite the obstacles caused by the covid-19 pandemic. “This pandemic, has taught us several lessons, one of them is the strength and efficiency of the coordination...The efficiency in the fight against COVID-19 was attested by the international honorary distinction awarded to Dr John Nkengasong , the director of Africa CDC”, said Mr Moussa Faki Mahamat

Mr Moussa Faki Mahamat underscored the purpose of the coordination meeting, which is to include, in a formalized framework, the relations between the African Union, the RECs/ RMs and the Member States so that all these entities cooperate in the development of the continent, without interference or overlap on the skills of each other.

The AUC Chairperson recalled that a general framework for the division of labor has been approved by the Assembly of the Union, at its February 2020 session. “The

document on the division of labor between the AU, the RECs / RMs and the Member States which will be presented to you is therefore the result of collective work which was intended to be as detailed as possible, and which adopted a progressive approach, by limiting itself to only three areas, namely Peace and Security, Political Affairs and Trade”, said Mr Moussa Faki Mahamat.

Regarding the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which offers the continent a great opportunity for job creation, industrial linkages, economic diversification and structural transformation, the AUC Chairperson urged Member States to proceed with the ratification of all legal instruments whose entry into force will facilitate the optimal functioning of the AfCFTA. The AUC Chairperson concluded by emphasizing the need to sign the revised Protocol on relations between the African Union and the RECs / RMs, which will take place in December 2020.

The AUC Commissioner for Social Affairs, Amira Elfadil Mohammed Elfadil , then presented the Progress Report on COVID-19 Pandemic in Africa for adoption by the Heads of States. The meeting commended Member States that have made pledges to support the AU COVID-19 Response Fund and the Africa CDC in an effort to pull together continental resources to support the AU fight against the pandemic. Other development reports were also tabled for consideration and adoption by the Heads of State.

Worth noting that, the African Union (AU) Reforms proposed that the Mid-Year Extra-Ordinary AU Summit be converted into a Coordination Meeting between the AU and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) to better coordinate the African integration agenda as well as to re-enforce the position of the RECs as the building blocks of the Continental integration process. The Mid-Year Coordination Meeting is the principal forum for the AU, RECs, and RMs to harmonise their work and coordinate implementation of the continental integration agenda.

The virtual meeting was attended by Members of the Bureau of the Assembly of the AU and the Chairpersons of the RECs; the African Union Commission (AUC); Chairpersons of the RECs; Regional Mechanisms; the Chief Executives of the African Union Development Agency (AUDA/NEPAD); UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA); African Development Bank (AfDB), the President of Niger as the Champion of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Agreement and the Secretary-General of the AfCFTA.

A summary of the key decisions of the Assembly will be posted on [www.au.int](http://www.au.int) soon after the close of the summit.

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