

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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The 42nd Ordinary Session of the Executive Council kicks off with the resolve to uphold Africa's resilience to challenges & achieve a successful implementation of the AfCFTA



Ministers of Foreign Affairs and heads of delegations from the Member States of the African Union (AU) converged today at the headquarters of the AU in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, for the official opening of the 42nd Ordinary Session of the Executive Council. The opening session was chaired by H.E. Madame Aissata Tall Sall, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Senegalese Abroad in the presence of H.E. Demeke Mekonnen, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the FDRE, H.E. Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the AU Commission, Deputy Chairperson of the AUC, Ag. Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the Commissioners of the AUC and Heads of AU Organs/ Missions, the diplomatic corps, representatives of the international community and invited guests among others.

H.E. Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the AU Commission (AUC) in his opening remarks began by inviting the participants to observe a minute of silence, in solidarity of the “brotherly countries” Turkey and Syria, following the terrible tragedy caused by the recent earthquake which led to the death of more than 30,000 people, hundreds of thousands injured and homeless persons. “I would like to seize this opportunity to express our collective compassion The whole of Africa sympathizes with the families of the victims”. Noted the AUC Chairperson, before highlighting some of the challenges and achievements of the AU Commission in recent years. He recalled that these activities took place in a context marked by the continuation of the difficulties which prevailed worldwide in the sectors of health, economics and peace and security, among others.

The AUC Chairperson said this has contributed to changes in global geopolitics causing more uncertainties, remodeling, structuring and restructuring of international configurations.

Notably, the worrying progression of terrorism, the return of non-constitutional changes, declining growth, constantly deteriorating climatic conditions among other challenges are issues which the continent is bent to consistently deal with until they are completely eradicated. “Despite this unfavourable context, Africa is showing remarkable signs of resilience and the African Union, in its various components, has maintained its operational dynamic in the implementation of programs and decisions”. Taking into account the combined impacts of the various crises that have recently shaken the whole world the Chairperson said that the African Union is determined to give priority to health and nutrition issues. “While mitigating the effects induced by the urgency of meeting the needs of the populations, the Union is part of the search for long-term solutions aimed at setting up structures and capacities for food and medicine production. It is in this logic that the operationalization of Africa CDC is nearing completion while the African Medicines Agency, AMA, has begun its own with already the choice of its headquarters,” said Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat.

In the area of democratic governance, peace and security, the Chairperson stated that the AU relentlessly pursued its efforts to bring peace to the Continent. He noted that The AU Commission has greatly contributed to reconciliation and its effectiveness in Ethiopia. In Sudan the Commission established tripartite mechanism with IGAD and the United Nations which has contributed significantly in the progress towards a new, inclusive and consensual agreement. In the Great Lakes region, in eastern DRC in particular, Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat noted that the Union has implemented two mechanisms for the search for peace and reconciliation under the leadership of the President of the Republic of Angola H.E. João Manuel Lorenzo and the former Kenyan President H.E. Uhuru Kenyatta who continues to make tireless efforts with the Parties concerned. “We are hopeful that this dual African mechanism will manage to resolve this crisis and demonstrate that there is no solution to African crises and conflicts other than peaceful solutions initiated by Africans themselves,” reiterated Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat.

The Chairperson of the AUC said that the reconciliation process in Libya has taken significant steps in the preparation of the inter-Libyan reconciliation conference. The Chairperson stated that the High-Level Committee on Libya, chaired by President Denis Sassou Nguesso, has taken significant steps in the preparation of the inter-Libyan reconciliation process. “I am convinced that the meeting of the high-level committee to be held on February 17 will give a strong impetus to this salutary action in solidarity with the Libyan people,” said Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat.

The Chairperson informed the meeting that the African Union also organized an extraordinary session of the Conference on Unconstitutional Changes of Government in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea in May 2022, after the Accra meeting held in March 2022 devoted to the same issue. “In order to enhance the effectiveness of peace support operations, a Common African Position on the financing of peace support operations led by the African Union has been developed. This common position will serve as a solid support for our international advocacy in favor of the management of African operations by permanent UN resources,” said Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat.

As part of the AU comprehensive approach to security centered on human security, the Chairperson noted that the African Union initiated an institutional reflection on humanitarian emergencies through the extraordinary session of the Conference organized in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, in May 2022. The Pledging Conference saw pledged contributions of US\$174 million to accelerate the process of effective implementation of the African Humanitarian Agency.

In the area of the institutional reform, the Chairperson stated that the evaluation of the first decade of the implementation of Agenda 2063 was carried out using a participatory approach. Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat said that the success of the implementation of the second decade

will depend on the level of effectiveness in the implementation of the decisions of the legislative bodies. He noted that the African Union Commission has strengthened its results-based management at the administrative level, to operationalize the new departmental structure of the Commission and systematized internal control to ensure the regularity of financial operations carried out by the various organs and specialized agencies of the Union. The Chairperson further noted that staff recruitment, based on skills criteria and compliance with the new quota formula, reached a rate of 66% for phase 1 of the transition period.

The Chairperson of the AUC in his speech, saluted the progress made on the way to the acceptance of the AU as a member of the G20. "Such an accession will broaden the scope of our advocacy for the continent and open up real opportunities for Africa to contribute to the solution of the world's problems," said Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat.

The Chairperson of the AU Commission concluded by reiterating the importance of availability of reliable statistical information. In this respect, the AU, in the perspective of the anchoring of statistics in Africa, intends to emphasize the full operationalization of the African Center for Statistical Training (PANSTAT) and the African Union Institute for Statistics (STATAFRIC).

Taking the floor, H.E Demeke Mekonnen, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, expressed gratitude for the support and solidarity received from African sisters and brothers to support Ethiopia in its efforts to enhance peace in the country. "I am happy to inform you that the implementation of the Peace Agreement is on course. We are redoubling efforts to ensure full implementation of the Agreement. We have continued expediting humanitarian aid to the region. We have taken measures to restore services interrupted by the conflict. We are also working with the African Union Commission to support the work of the Monitoring, Verification, and Compliance Mechanism. This Mechanism consists of a Joint Committee and a Team of African Experts. The Team is now witnessing major developments in the area of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration" stated the Deputy Prime Minister.

Mr. Antonio Pedro, Acting Executive Secretary, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) on his part stressed that, at the ECA, "We believe that the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) can be a catalyst to stimulate recovery, accelerate trade and industrialization, and build resilience into the African economy. The AfCFTA continental market provides the economy of scale to invest in manufacturing, leading to increased intra-Africa trade, thereby bringing supply chains closer to home and injecting a degree of self-sufficiency in essential products such as medicines, food and fertilizers. He said, this will help provide more opportunities for women and the youth, it will reduce inequality and poverty, and will also improve inclusion. "Indeed, our member States agreed to establish the AfCFTA in the first place precisely because they saw these opportunities and had the determination to seize them. The progress in the AfCFTA represents an extraordinary feat of diplomacy and statesmanship and deserves commendation and provide good reasons for hope" concluded Mr. Pedro.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Spain expressed appreciation for the fact that the African Union has adopted Spanish as one of the working its languages upon the request of Equatorial Guinea.

H.E Madam Aissata Tall Sall, Chair of the Executive Council stated that the Executive Council has always been there to help meet the challenges facing Africa, in line with the guidelines given by the Heads of State and Government. She thanked her peers for the support given during the chairmanship of Senegal at the helm of the Union." The task of the Executive Council could not, however, have been accomplished without the fruitful contribution of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, the Specialized Technical Committees (STCs), the organs and all the structures affiliated to the African Union, without omitting the RECs and

Regional Mechanisms, and ECA” she noted. She also thanked the important work undertaken by the Permanent Representative Committee (PRC) which was successful due to the good working relationship and collaboration with the AU Commission. “I would like to extend my warmest congratulations to the Chairperson of the Commission, whose leadership has made it possible to accelerate the implementation of the AU programs, together with the, the Deputy Chairperson of the Commission and the Commissioners and all the AUC Staff ...I encourage you to continue the ongoing reform process for a more efficient Commission, to better serve Africa and consequently contribute to the achievement of Agenda 2063”.

During the opening session, foreign ministers also observed a minute silence in memory of the late Gabon's Foreign Affairs minister Michael Moussa Adamo who died on January 20, 2023.

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