

## INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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### COMMISSIONER ABOU-ZEID ATTENDS THE 4TH EUROPEAN CORPORATE COUNCIL SUMMIT (ECAM)



The African Union participated in the 4th European Corporate Council Summit on Africa and the Middle East (ECAM) organized by ECAM in collaboration with the European house Ambrosetti in Rome, Italy. The conference, which took place on the 27<sup>th</sup> July 2023, brought together a select group of heads of state, government ministers, heads of multi-lateral agencies as well as 200 leading figures from the political, diplomatic, business, scientific and academic world of Europe, Africa, and the Middle East.

African Union Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy, Dr Amani Abou-Zeid, began her intervention with a historical anecdote. She reminded the audience that Africa was the breadbasket of the Roman Empire. From the third century climate change led to the progressive desertification of formerly agricultural land which impacted the breadbasket and consequently, the Roman Empire, leading to its progressive decline. Thousands of years later, history repeats itself as the world is highly interconnected, the food supply chain is threatened by climate change and an incident in one part of the world can have major impacts elsewhere. *“This demonstrates the need for greater collaboration and stronger partnerships to address the many challenges that the world still faces - food security and poverty being key priorities”.*

Dr. Abou-Zeid acknowledged the challenges Africa is facing but also focused on the many positive notes on the continent. She lauded the resilience shown by African countries during the Covid-19 pandemic who *“responded quickly to the pandemic by stepping up their public health interventions and by expanding social safety nets”.* She also praised the work carried out by the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) and its success in building the capacity of public health institutions across Africa to strengthen the timeliness and effectiveness of public health responses. The Commissioner also demonstrated how Sierra Leone has used technology, data and innovation not only to respond to Covid-19 but also to

overcome service-delivery challenges. Furthermore, the Commissioner commended the launch of the new continental regulatory body for medical products, the African Medicines Agency (AMA). The AMA is a specialised AU agency intended to facilitate the harmonisation of medical products regulation throughout the AU to improve access to quality, safe and efficacious medical products on the continent. Finally, she shared the experience of Egypt in eradicating virus C with its “100 Million Health” initiative. *“This campaign not only succeeded in eliminating the virus but also provided the government with a valuable health database of millions of citizens.”*

The Commissioner also stressed the importance of looking at digitalization as a widely untapped solution for addressing climate change’s impact on the agricultural sectors, in a way that supports sustainable food security. She called for an *“urgent need to scale up access to climate-smart digital technologies, and associated data-driven agricultural and financial services for farmers in Africa”*. However, digitalization must be accompanied by universal access to energy, to that end, the AU is driving the establishment of an interconnected electricity market that *“will maximize the continent’s abundant resources to accelerate universal energy access and promote productive use of energy especially for rural economies where it can have a transformative impact on food production and improved livelihoods”*.

The meeting created an opportunity for the Commissioner to exchange talks with H.E. Nana Akufo-Addo President of the Republic of Ghana and H.E. Robinah Nabbanja Prime Minister of Uganda as well as the Health Minister of Egypt.

She has also discussed potential cooperation with Dr Kamel Ghribi, President of GKSD Holding and Executive Director of ECAM and Mr Nasser Kamel, Secretary General of the Union of the Mediterranean.

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