

**AFRICAN UNION**

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## **STATEMENT BY**

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**ON THE OCCASION OF THE VALLETTA SUMMIT ON  
MIGRATION**

**VALLETTA, MALTA  
11-12 NOVEMBER 2015**

**Excellency, Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta,**

**Excellencies, Heads of State and Government, Leaders of Delegations**

**President of the European Union Council,**

**President of the European Commission,**

**Excellency, UN Deputy Secretary General, Esteemed Ladies and Gentlemen**

I am honoured to take the floor on behalf of the African Union Commission, and to express our appreciation to the Prime Minister of Malta, His Excellency Hon. Joseph Muscat and the people of Malta for hosting this Summit, in their beautiful country.

Our appreciation to the European Commission for the preparatory meetings, and the African and European negotiators for their hard work, which I hope will facilitate an outcome that reflects our common humanity, the spirit of solidarity and of finding lasting solutions to this complex challenge we are addressing today.

As we gather today, we remember the thousands who have lost their lives, whilst trying to seek refuge and better lives for themselves and their families.

## **Excellencies**

Migration, the search for safety, a better life, better climates, markets, goods to trade - is as old as humanity itself.

Historically, the majority of the population in countries like Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, United States, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, to name but a few, are the products of European migration.

Africa too has been a recipient of European migration, even before colonization. During and after the Second World War, European refugees, asylum seekers entrepreneurs and adventurers flocked as far down as the Southern tip of Africa for commercial or settlement purposes. They were welcomed, and at the time, there was no crisis of European migrants in Africa.

Today, less than 25% of the migrants and refugees to European shores are Africans. It's a small part of the young African population seeking greener pastures, some of who are running from pockets of wars, difficult situations and poverty. They believe they may seek asylum and get a better life in Europe.

Africa's population will continue to grow, and remain youthful till the turn of the Century. So, it is important to understand that this situation cannot be resolved with quick fixes. It will need short-, medium- to long-term sustainable solutions.

Before I continue, I would like to express our deep appreciation to those countries in Europe that have worked tirelessly trying to save lives, and to deal with the migrants' situation in a humane and dignified manner.

## Excellencies

The discussion between Africa and Europe about migration is not a new topic. It was high on the agenda in 2006, that is, nine years ago in Tripoli, when the first joint declaration on the issue was adopted.

In that declaration, we recognised, “that the fundamental causes of migration within and from Africa are poverty and underdevelopment, aggravated by demographic and economic imbalances, unequal terms of global trade, conflicts, environmental factors, poor governance, uneven impact of globalisation and humanitarian disasters.”

Since then Africa has been growing at an average rate of 5% a year, and has improved a lot of its demographic indicators. But, let me just quote Carlos Lopes, the UN Under-Secretary for ECA:

“In every moment of History growth has generated outward migrants from the same location. It is indeed happening with Chinese and Indians right now as it is in Africa. Growth spins the chances for a new life but its distribution, particularly at the early stages of a country take-off, is uneven and unpredictable. Those who see their neighbor with means and hope they do not have, venture out. It would have been absurd to propose bombing the boats that were sailing to South America full of migrants escaping the misfortunes of the two World Wars aftermath. These migrants were seeking better lives. Yet their countries were growing like never before, thanks amongst others to the Marshall Plan.”

## **Excellencies,**

The problem that we are facing today is in part because some countries in Europe have taken a fortress approach. There is no part of the world that can be a fortress. We should be open to legal migration. And also, Africa and Europe should be discussing beyond raw materials, beyond trade, but industrialization, because that's what will create jobs. We should be discussing development of skills, because that will be investing in our people so they can develop and create jobs on the continent.

We have to industrialise and modernize our continent, otherwise, young people will continue to go elsewhere. It is for those reasons that we designed NEPAD and now Agenda 2063.

As we gather today on this beautiful island of Malta, the deaths of thousands of Africans, in the Mediterranean Sea and in the Sahel, place upon all of us a moral obligation to search together for long-term sustainable solutions to address these issues.

## **Excellencies**

For us, at the African Union, we are embarking on the structural transformation of our economies and focusing on investing in our people. This is the main thrust of Agenda 2063, the Africa We Want.

Training young African men and women particularly is critical to African development. It will enable them to drive the

modernization of Africa, building of infrastructure, innovation, entrepreneurship, trade and overall socio-economic and cultural development of Africa. Investing in African youths is good for Africa; it is good for the world.

Agriculture and agribusinesses have a great potential for creating jobs, if we increase productivity; investment and fair global trade in Agricultural products from Africa.

In the same vein, we must ensure that we beneficiate and add value to our raw materials through industrialization, infrastructural development and energy generation.

Finally, we must silence the guns, bring peace to Africa, promote democracy and respect for peoples and human rights, and to prevent Africans from fleeing the continent in search of safety and security.

All these priorities, including climate change, are central to Agenda 2063. Addressing climate change is a collective responsibility; particularly that Africa contributes least, and suffers worst. We hope COP21 will deliver a binding agreement.

Through these priorities, we shall create conditions in Africa where our young people, men and women, will migrate out of choice, and not out of desperation. Today, a lot more migration is taking place within the African continent than to the European shores.

## **Excellencies,**

Regardless of their origin and status, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers deserve protection. The African Union has long recognized that comprehensive, collaborative regional approach is needed to protect migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons as well as victims of human trafficking.

However, let me state that the African Union is not in support of, and cannot endorse the establishment of the so-called processing centers in Africa. The Processing Centres, or whatever they may be called, are *de facto* detention centers that will constitute a serious violation of human rights and re-victimization of migrants. Especially women and children would be at great risks of falling prey to rape and human trafficking, including the trafficking in human organs. Above all, these centres risk becoming breeding grounds for organized crime, extremism and terrorism, thereby worsening the problem we are trying to resolve.

## **Excellencies,**

Should reintegration and reinsertion programmes be necessary, we think that they should be supported by both countries of destination and countries of origin. The details of such programmes, should be agreed upon by both sides, thus making voluntary return, in dignity and safety, the cardinal principle of such programmes.

As we address the root causes of illegal migration, we should not forget that we all face a common enemy – transnational organized criminal groups. Africa is committed to strengthen efforts to combat human trafficking and smuggling of migrants

through the implementation of the provisions of its own instruments as well as relevant international instruments.

However, the African Union expresses concern about the militarization of its shores and airspace and the tendency to resort to military action as a solution to the problems we are facing without international authority and the consent of the African littoral states.

### **Excellencies**

Let me recall that the free movement of people within the continent is a major preoccupation of our leaders. Most African migration takes place within Africa. Apart from our numerous policy instruments on Migration, as recently as the 25<sup>th</sup> AU Summit in Johannesburg, our leaders deliberated extensively on how to improve capacity for migration management and mobility in the continent, within the framework of continental integration.

We are striving to improve labour mobility, including through harmonization of higher education and professional qualifications to make them compatible, comparable, with so as to enable recognition of credentials, skills and expertise across the continent.

### **Excellencies**

Africa and Europe are historical neighbours and geographic neighbours. Our fate is closely interlinked. We believe that migration, and legal migration, can be an enabling factor for stronger partnership.



We must, therefore, work towards the frameworks that enable us to address this in a win-win manner. I can assure you of the readiness of the African Union Commission to continue this dialogue.

As I look around the Table, I cannot but have a feeling of optimism that Valletta will not just be another Tripoli, and that we shall not wait for another humanitarian tragedy before we act decisively.

For the results of this Summit not to have the same fate as Tripoli, there may be a need for further joint AU-EU meetings, even at a different level to look at the modalities for implementation.

I thank you.