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Introductory Remarks

By

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First of all, I would like to thank the Interim Director General of IRENA for inviting the African Union Commission to its First Assembly, and for giving me this opportunity to take the floor during this important event.

The African Union Commission is looking forward to a close collaboration and synergy with IRENA keeping in minds that:

- Energy is one of Africa's largest infrastructure challenges by far. For instance, one billion Africans (around 16% of the global population), use a mere 4% of global electricity. Many Africans walk miles, and spend hours, to collect firewood for cooking whilst most spend a large portion of their incomes on costly fuels.

- The continent has an abundance of untapped renewable energy resources that include: hydropower, wind, geothermal, solar, bio-fuels and biomass. These energy resources are in sufficient quantities to satisfy future energy needs. Know-how, adapted mechanisms and policy frameworks, are essential to develop and utilize these energy resources to support sustainable development and enhance economic growth.

- Substantial mitigation potential exists to reduce GHG emissions from energy sector through: (i) utilization of renewable energy resources as a low/zero carbon technology; (ii) carbon trading in some regions, as feasible, and (iii) various policy support mechanisms including credible regulatory frameworks.

- In this context, the Department of Infrastructure and Energy (IED) of the African Union Commission, in cooperation with other regional and international partners, started to design

and implement strategies for optimal utilization of various energy resources (particularly renewable energy) to accelerate growth and development in the African Continent. This was also reaffirmed recently by the African Union Ministerial Conference of Energy as stated in Maputo declaration.

- Most international and regional organizations recognize that renewable energy should play a critical role to achieve this goal.

- The 14th Assembly of the African Union Heads of State and Government held in Addis Ababa in February 2010 adopted Resolution on Solar Energy in the Sahara and requested the AU Commission to conduct a study to support efforts underway to harness solar energy. The first phase of the study focused on the Sahara Desert in North Africa has been completed and adopted last January. The second phase will focus on the Southern Africa to exploit the resources of the Kalahari Desert and the third phase of the study on the Eastern Africa for the exploitation of solar resources of the Ogden Desert.

- In the geothermal energy, the Ministers responsible for Energy from 11 Eastern Africa countries gave a mandate to the African Union Commission (AUC) in the Addis Ababa Declaration on Geothermal Energy (among others) to coordinate and facilitate the "Regional Geothermal Programme" in the Eastern Africa countries .

- A Road Map and Action Plan to accelerate development and exploiting geothermal energy resources in the region were adopted. The status, strategy, gaps and supporting programmes in Eastern Africa countries are ready, and we already started with some partners the preparations for the implementation of regional geothermal programs.

- Clearly, between our two organizations (IRENA and AUC) there are areas of convergence in visions and approaches on the climate change and renewable energy development. Therefore, I would like to request IRENA to closely collaborate with AUC in the promotion and development of Renewable Energy for sustainable development in the African Continent.

In conclusion, there is a need and a will from both sides: IRENA and AUC to synergize our efforts and contribute significantly to enhance energy access and energy security of Africa for its sustainable socio-economic development, with the support of various partners.

Thank you.