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**SPEECH OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION
H.E. MR. MOUSSA FAKI MAHAMAT**

AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE 10th AFRICAN UNION GENDER PRE-SUMMIT

UNDER THE THEME:

**“WINNING THE FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION: A SUSTAINABLE PATH TO GENDER
EQUALITY AND WOMEN’S EMPORWEMENT IN AFRICA”**

17 JANUARY, 2018

AUC HEADQUARTERS, ADDIS ABABA,

**Excellencies, African Union Ministers in Charge of Gender and Women's Affairs,
Commissioners of the African Union Commission,
Heads of African Union Organs and Specialized Agencies,
Chairperson of the Permanent Representatives Council,
Women Ambassadors of AU member States,
Representative of Regional Economic Communities
Representatives of Civil Society Organisations
United Nations Agencies
Representatives of Development Partners,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I would like to offer you the sincere apologies of HE Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union who, in view of the importance of the theme of your meeting, would have liked to have been with you this morning and to pronounce the introductory word but because other pre-Summit commitments he cannot be among us.

He asked me to convey his warm greetings.

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the 2018 African Union Gender Pre-Summit under the theme "Winning the fight against corruption: a sustainable path to gender equality and women's empowerment in Africa", as part of the activities on the sidelines of the 30th Summit of the AU.

I wish to thank you sincerely for having responded positively to my invitation to attend this event which is of utmost importance in the Gender Agenda of the African Union.

Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

2018 marks the 10th anniversary of the AU Gender Pre-Summit, which has played a significant role in influencing and shaping AU policies on gender equality and women's empowerment. This platform has ensured the inclusion of the critical voices of women and their perspectives in the AU.

Initially conceived as a civil society platform under the Gender is my Agenda Campaign (GIMAC), the Gender Pre-Summit is now well-established as one of the key multi-stakeholder policy platforms of the AU. The transformation of the Gender Pre-Summit from a civil society platform to an institutionalized AU policy platform affirms the importance of strong partnerships between the AU and Civil Society Organs. Allow me, therefore, to express my profound gratitude to the leadership of GIMAC and all other CSOs in the continent and the Diaspora that contributed in initiating this platform.

Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Over the past Decade, the Gender Pre-Summit has served as a women's advocacy platform to ensure that gender equality and women's empowerment remain on the priority list of the highest

decision-making organs of the AU. It has enabled AU Heads of State and Government to adopt some of the most progressive women's rights policies and legal instruments such as the 2009 Gender Policy, which is currently under evaluation, the 2010 Fund for African Women, the Women's Decade that started in 2010 and will end in 2020.

The African Leaders have put in place various special mechanisms including the first Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, whom I would like to commend for her commitment and actions on the ground in favor of the empowerment of women.

Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

The 10th AU Gender Pre-Summit is therefore an opportunity for us to reflect on the road travelled over the past Decade and to plan for the journey ahead especially in the context of the new AU reforms and Agenda 2063.

I therefore hope that this meeting will develop concrete recommendations on the future of AU gender policy platforms and will prepare adequately for the 10th anniversary celebrations of the Gender Pre-Summit, that are scheduled later in the year.

Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to remind you that this meeting is convened under the theme "Winning the fight against corruption: a sustainable path to gender equality and women's empowerment in Africa. The AU Heads of State and Government, concerned that Africa is considered among the world's most corrupt continents have declared 2018, the African year of the fight against corruption to put an end to this scourge which is plaguing the continent and is delaying the progress of Africa. It appears from rankings that out of ten most corrupt countries in the world, six are from Africa. The impact on development is just as illustrative.

Every year, the African continent loses close to 150 billion dollars to corruption. This is unacceptable and must be addressed with immediate effect. Otherwise the vision of achieving an Africa that is self-sustaining and prosperous will remain nothing but a dream.

Corruption affects every facet of our lives. For example, in politics where some politicians are involved in high-level graft, to low-level bribes to custom officials, police, educators or even medical officers to receive preferential treatment. Large businesses collapse because of corruption. At a community level, service delivery is either delayed or substandard services are delivered and in the worst case scenario, no services are provided at all to the poor and vulnerable. This exacerbates poverty and delays development

Corruption is by far, the highest risk to the successful implementation of Agenda 2063. It is for this reason that meetings such as this one are important in assisting the AU to develop creative intervention strategies to prevent and curb corruption.

Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is also important to highlight that corruption affects progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment. It deepens already existing inequalities and discrimination in women's access to their fundamental human rights. It is therefore imperative that we mainstream gender equality and women's empowerment in our anti-corruption strategies.

On that note, I hope this Gender Pre-Summit will be able to interrogate, among others, how best to integrate gender equality and women's empowerment in the mandate of anti-corruption institutions in the continent

It is for us women to ensure that women's specific concerns are addressed as well as how to support the full and effective participation of women in anti-corruption processes in the continent.

Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

In closing, I wish to reaffirm the commitment of the African Union Commission to partner with you to fight corruption in Africa and to advance the rights of women to development, gender equality and women's empowerment. I wish you fruitful deliberations and I look forward to your recommendations and strategies.

on behalf of the President of the African Union Commission, I declare open the work of the Pre-summit of the African Union under the theme "Winning the fight against corruption: a sustainable path towards equality between men and women and the empowerment of women in Africa "

I thank you.