



**STATEMENT BY Amb. JEAN MFASONI, SPECIAL ADVISOR AND
REPRESENTATIVE OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE AFRICAN UNION
COMMISSION
AT THE OPENING SESSION OF THE RETREAT OF THE PRC SUB-
COMMITTEE ON MULTILATERAL COOPERATION.**

PORT LOUIS, MAURITIUS

7 – 9 MAY 2018

Your Excellency, Ambassador Dwarka Canabady, Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Representative of the host country

Your Excellency, Ambassador Mohamed Idriss Farah, Chairperson of the PRC Sub-Committee on Multilateral Cooperation,

Excellency's Ambassadors, Members of the PRC Sub-Committee on Multilateral Cooperation,

Excellencies and Representatives of the Regional Economic Communities,

Representatives of the African Union Organs and the African Union Commission Technical Departments and Specialized Agencies

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to commence this statement by expressing my sincere gratitude and pleasure to be part of this historic PRC Sub-Committee on Multilateral Cooperation Retreat holding in this beautiful country, Mauritius.

On behalf of **H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat**, Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union, I would like to thank **H.E. Mr. Seetanah Lutchmeenaraidoo**, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade and the people and Government of Mauritius for the warm welcome and hospitality extended to all participants since our arrival in this beautiful city of Port Louis.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Through its Agenda 2063, Africa is determined to make all strides to achieve the Africa We Want, a united, integrated, peaceful, prosperous Africa, driven by its citizens and taking its role and place in the management of the world affairs. In order to gradually attain these lofty objectives, it has been imperative to undertake necessary reforms, starting with the financing the African Union in the spirit of responsibility, increased

ownership and accountability of the entire membership of that Union. At the June 2015 Johannesburg Summit, the Union has decided that at the horizon of 2020, it would fund from its own resources, 100% of the operational budget, 75% of its programmes and a share of 25% on the peace operations missions. Steps have already been taken to reach these levels by 2020. The 2016 Kigali Summit Decision introduced the tax levy of 0.2% of eligible imports to fund the Union in a predictable and sustainable manner. In January 2017, the Summit further consolidated these measures through the adoption of far-reaching reforms to rationalize the functioning of the AU institutions and to revamp its working methods and procedures, using the most proved best practices and experiences in a very fast-changing environment.

Nevertheless, Africa will continue to strengthen relationships with its traditional and new emerging development partners in a structured, strategic and mutually beneficial engagements both at political and socio-economic levels. Indeed, in this globalized and ever competitive world, no country or continent cannot develop sustainably without constructive encounters with the rest of the world. In this context, Africa ought to play first its part in ensuring that her interests are well understood and taken into account in all partnerships in line with the priorities that she has set for herself. This is the main thrust of the on-going reforms which will be at the core of the critical evaluation of Africa's partnerships which we shall maintain and develop further.

The convening of this Retreat comes at the right time, as the PRC has the mandate to complete this evaluation process and be able to submit a comprehensive report on the partnership evaluation at the forthcoming Summit in Nouakchott in June/July 2018. The primary objective of this retreat is therefore to brainstorm on the right responses to be provided to the PRC in light of the outcomes of the latter's retreat of Cairo in December 2017. As you are aware, these questions are the following:

1. What defines a strategic partnership and how do we ensure that a partnership is strategic?
2. What do partners want from Africa and what does Africa want from the partners?
3. Is there an African resource that more than one of the partners want? If so, how can Africa strategize or engage in negotiations in a manner that optimizes its gains and minimize costs?

4. Is there a need that Africa has, which may be too overwhelming for one Partner to undertake? In that case, how can Africa build a Consortium around such a need?
5. Are there areas of common interest, experience and best comparative advantages that Africa can share and replicate?
6. How to ensure adequate participation in partnerships in line of the prescriptions of the January 2017 institutional reforms?
7. How does the African Union establish new partnerships?

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In addressing these legitimate questions, the Commission will reflect with you on a number of analyses that may help set practical steps to ease the assessment of each partnership. Among these steps that could be envisaged, we could cite:

- i) The assessment of capacities and core competencies of each partner in order to leverage delivery and promote relationships that are mutually beneficial. This has often led to a lopsided relationship with our partners. In order to obtain maximum value from the current and potential partnerships, Africa, through its African Union, should clearly understand and firmly set its needs as a people, understand and assess the needs of our partners as well as assess the strength, the capacity, the vested interests as well as the willingness to support Africa's development agenda;
- ii) The common understanding of what Africa wants from its partners leads immediately to the critical importance for Africa to speak with one voice in future engagements with partners. This is the only way that Africa would be taken seriously and continental priorities, desires and aspirations be achieved. This further raised the issue of participation to the meetings with our partners. We need to clearly set the modalities of implementation of the Decision of the Assembly No.635 of January 2017 especially as we are approaching some partners Summits in the months to come.

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- iii) In order to achieve the above objectives, we must at the same time build our capacity to manage and engage effectively the partnerships we would have evaluated. In this respect, as was emphasized at the Joint AUC-PRC Retreat in Cairo last December, we have to provide the Commission with the necessary infrastructure and capacity. It is hoped that the decision to upgrade the structure that is in charge of coordinating and managing the Partnerships into a full-fledged Directorate, within the ongoing reforms, would enhance the relationships with our development partners to ensure that their important contributions are channeled through the programmes delineated for their specific intervention based on their own delivery capacity and within the principles of complementarity and win-win solution. It goes without saying that to be operational, such a Directorate would be equipped with adequate human resources with requisite skills and expertise.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I cannot conclude this statement without reiterating the commitment made by Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat at the Joint PRC-AUC Retreat in Cairo, regarding the dynamic and all-round cooperation and collaboration of the Commission with the PRC and all its Sub-Committees. As you have already witnessed, the Chairperson has been interacting with the PRC once every month as well as through direct encounters with the various Commissioners and Directors on priority programmes in the past few months. He intends to pursue this mutually enriching interaction. In particular, the Chairperson attaches great importance to the work of your distinguished Sub-Committee on Multilateral Cooperation which is now transformed into a Sub-Committee of the Whole. He pledges to render through all structures of the Commission all necessary support to your Sub-Committee's efforts.

I wish you very fruitful deliberations and outcomes.

I thank you.