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**Celebration of African Day of Seas and
Oceans and Meeting of the Strategic Task
Force on 2050 Africa's Integrated
Maritime Strategy (AIM 2050)
30 and 31 May, 2018
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

STATEMENT

BY:

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AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION

**Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

On behalf of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, H.E. Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, it is my pleasure to welcome you to the third Celebration of African Day of Seas and Oceans.

“La mer est un espace de liberté et de rigueur »
According to the eminent French author Victor Hugo.

The relationship our continent has with its oceans and seas must surely be addressed in this context.

Our Continent depends heavily on the sea as the primary means of living and getting goods to the market. As you may be aware, Africa has 38 Coastal States and a number of Island States. Collectively, they encompass vast ocean territories of an estimated 13 million km². You

will agree with me that the potential here is far too great to ignore.

Therefore, it can be said the sea is undoubtedly the treasure trove of assets and benefits for humankind. As the world population continues to increase, its needs and demands are also on the rise. Land alone will not be able to afford us optimal satisfaction. Hence turning to the ocean is indispensable. Oceans' resources could be of crucial importance in ensuring food security, health and energy security of our peoples in the decades to come.

In addition, through the ocean, we are neighbors to almost every continent. There has to be international cooperation in this vital sector, to work together to develop an orderly system for sustainable management and exploitation of the Blue economy for the benefit of all. The development of our Blue Economy implies a paradigm shift. It requires that we change many of the ways we are used to doing things to secure shared prosperity.

In actualizing this potential, the African Union has so far adopted several legal and policy instruments such as African Maritime Transport Charter or the Lomé Charter, whether policy documents, such as the 2050 Africa's Integrated Maritime Strategy (2050 AIM Strategy) – which has a holistic approach to all marine and maritime issues – or the AGENDA 2063 and its 10 year implementation plan which includes the African Blue/Ocean Economy to boost sustainable and inclusive growth, with in dimensions as natural resources, energy, trade, development and security, among others.

This undoubtedly marked a momentous achievement in uncharted 'waters' with regard to African marine policy.

In fact, the implementation of the AIM Strategy will require tackling a vast range of governance and regulatory challenges. While doing so, numerous opportunities will arise to develop various fields of marine law, maritime law and

ocean governance to support the sustainable growth of the African economies.

This Year's celebration will be useful to address the best means through which Africa can harness the full potential of its rich marine resources in order to promote African development?

**Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

On this day after the celebration of the Africa Day of Seas and Oceans the Strategic Task Force meeting will take place. Therefore, allow me to emphasize two things in this connection.

Firstly, I would like to further recall that the Executive Council, in its June 2014 Decision (EX.CL/Dec.822(XXV)) on the progress report on the implementation of the Assembly Decision on the 2050 AIM Strategy, *“requested the Commission, in consultation with PRC, to facilitate the establishment of a Strategic Task Force composed of Representatives of Member*

States, the Commission and the RECs by the end of October 2014, with a mandate to consider the technical details of the 2050 AIM Strategy and propose a road map for the incremental implementation of the strategy in conformity with International Maritime Law”.

As further mandated by the Executive Council Decision, the Office of the Legal Counsel of the Commission invited Member States to indicate their willingness to serve on the Strategic Task Force. In this regard, I am pleased to report that 21 Member States and 3 RECs have so far expressed interest in participating in the work of this Task Force.

Therefore, we are here today to celebrate Africa Day of Seas and Oceans and, in the Strategic Task Force Meeting, to work on the development of the annexes to the African Maritime Charter towards the implementation of 2050 AIM strategy.

**Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Let me conclude by encouraging with everyone present here today, to do everything in our powers to ensure that the 2050AIM Strategy will have a real impact on Africa's engagement with its adjoining seas.

Having said that, I am confident that today's Celebration will increase awareness amongst stakeholders of the strategic importance of "Maritime Governance" and will take to work towards the annexes of the Maritime charter.

I thank you for your attention and wish you fruitful deliberations.