

AFRICAN UNION

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**INTRODUCTORY NOTE OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF
THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION**

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMMISSION OF THE AFRICAN UNION

A. INTRODUCTION

i. Preliminary Remarks

1. I have the honour to present to the Policy Organs my Introductory Note for the period of February to June 2018, as an overview of the activity reports submitted by the Commission and other entities of the Union to the Summit, in accordance with their reporting obligations.

2. In this second Introductory Note, I reflect on the ideals of Pan-Africanism and related themes that both were at the roots of the founding of the Union and which still serve as the guiding principles in our quest for integration and unity on the continent and in the Diaspora. I intend this reflection to be a tribute to how far we have come as a people and a continent, as well as a reminder of how much work remains to be done to live up to the expectations of the Union's founders and the aspirations of the African people.

3. During the reporting period, the implementation of Agenda 2063 advanced steadily. The Introductory Note provides an update on the implementation of the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM), as well as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and the Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment, following their signature at the Kigali March 2018 Extraordinary Summit. Also included in the Note is a status report on the ratifications of legal instruments. The note covers other issues, including on Silencing the Guns, response to emergency situations on the continent, empowerment of women and institutional reform of the Union.

4. I have been following with serious concern certain major developments that are taking place in the world and their potential impact on Africa and the multilateral order on which humanity depends for global peace and prosperity. I am convinced that the Union should be more actively involved in preserving and promoting multilateralism, albeit a more equitable system of interstate relations in which Africa occupies its rightful place. At the same time, I argue that to be a dynamic force in the global arena, we must, as Africans, look increasingly inwards, capitalize on our resources and capacities, and more actively involve our citizens and the African Diaspora in all of the Union's programs and projects.

5. I conclude the Introductory Note by emphasizing the imperative for Member States to accelerate the implementation of the Union's integration agenda and, in particular, ensure that commitments are backed up with concrete action. It is equally essential, in light of the current developments in the world, for Member States to speak with one voice. African unity is our most important asset: as I had the opportunity to say before, with it, we will build the Africa We Want; without it, we will further marginalized on the international scene.

ii. Highlights of Areas of Focus and Key Achievements (February-June 2018)

6. The first part of this year witnessed the launching of the SAATM, as well as the signing of the AfCFTA and the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment.

7. SAATM implementation is advancing, as illustrated below:

- (i) The number of participating Member States is increasing slowly but steadily. At the January 2015 Summit, eleven (11) Member States made the *Solemn Commitment* to implement the Yamoussoukro Decision and participate in the SAATM. They were twenty-three (23) at the launching of the SAATM in January 2018 and, as of this reporting, the membership stood at twenty-six (26).
- (ii) Participating Member States have also begun to implement the required immediate measures to effectively operationalise the SAATM.
- (iii) The Ministerial Working Group on the SAATM held its 4th meeting in Lomé, Togo, from 25 to 28 May 2018. Twelve (12) Member States negotiated bilateral air services agreements to remove market restrictions that are incompatible with the Yamoussoukro Decision. Also, fourteen (14) Member States present at the ministerial meeting finalized and signed a *Memorandum of Implementation* of the Yamoussoukro Decision, which ensures that all bilateral air services agreements involving them are compatible with the Yamoussoukro Decision.
- (iv) Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and the African Civil Aviation Commission (AFCAC) concluded a *Memorandum of Cooperation* for effective operationalisation and management of the SAATM. The Memorandum has been signed by the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the East African Community (EAC).
- (v) While in Lomé for the ministerial meeting on SAATM, I had a fruitful meeting with President Faure Gnassingbé, in his capacity as the Champion of SAATM, to strategize on how best to address the major challenges facing SAATM operationalisation. The Champion has identified his specific targets, including: (i) ensuring that at least ten (10) more Member States join the SAATM by the July 2018 Summit, and (ii) enhancing the share of African airlines in the SAATM and cooperation amongst them.

8. I would like to urge all remaining Member States to seriously consider joining the SAATM for greater connectivity of our continent, efficient and affordable air travel as well as wider economic benefits to our countries, airlines and Africa in general.

9. Work towards the operationalization of the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment has commenced. The Commission convened in Seychelles a meeting of the Chiefs of Immigration. Participants reviewed the draft Guidelines for the design, production and issuance of

the African Passport prepared by the Commission, in close consultations with Regional Economic Communities.

10. The Chiefs of Immigration also requested the Commission to set up a Committee of Experts to develop the technical specifications of the African passport. The Commission has begun working on these issues, with the technical support of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). A report on the outcomes and recommendations of the Committee of Experts will be presented to the Chiefs of Immigration at their next meeting, scheduled for July 2018.

11. The Protocol requires fifteen (15) ratifications to enter into force. Given the Protocol's historic and practical significance, I urge all fifty-five Member States to ratify it without delay as a demonstration of their commitment to the free movement of Africans on their own continent.

12. The African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement was signed by 44 Member States at the Tenth Extraordinary Summit in Kigali, Rwanda. During May and June 2018, we have received four (4) instruments of ratification from Kenya, Ghana, Rwanda and Niger. Twenty-two (22) ratifications are required before the Agreement can come into force. In May, the Commission met with the Pan-African Parliament in order to expedite the ratification process. The legal scrubbing of the Annexes to the Agreement and its protocols was undertaken. This was a crucial step to facilitate further signatures and ratifications by Member States.

13. Implementation of the decision of the Policy Organs on the African Mining Development Centre (AMDC) is on course. The Commission looks forward to the early operationalization of the AMDC to, among others, increase cooperation among African producers of minerals and ensure they have a greater say in determining the price of these commodities, as well as a greater share in value creation, so as to accelerate the continent's industrialization drive.

14. Activities have been undertaken to give more visibility to the theme of the Year 2018 on the fight against corruption, and generate concrete action against this scourge. Under the leadership of President Muhammadu Buhari of Nigeria, the Champion of the theme of the year, the anti-corruption message will be taken to the RECs and African youth with the convening in Abuja, in July 2018, of an African Youth Congress against Corruption. The AU Advisory Board on Corruption has undertaken to provide technical support to the East African Legislative Assembly for the development of an East African Community (EAC) Law on Corruption and Whistleblowing.

15. This year, nineteen (19) Member States have scheduled presidential and parliamentary elections. Djibouti, Egypt and Sierra Leone have already held their elections. Of the remaining sixteen (16), Chad, Libya and South Sudan are yet to confirm the dates for their elections. The Commission deployed AU observer missions and implemented other election-related activities. Additionally, a high-level political mission travelled to Zimbabwe, and a pre-election assessment mission visited Mali.

16. The Commission's election-related activities have achieved notable results. Member States currently hold regular multi-party elections that exhibit appreciable

level of integrity, credibility and legitimacy. Election-related violence has subsided, and many Member States have now established independent and impartial election management bodies, to conduct electoral processes in a manner acceptable to all key stakeholders.

17. Some progress has been made on Silencing the Guns in Africa, but the Union much work remains to make a tangible impact by the year 2020. The AU Master Roadmap on Silencing the Guns by 2020 is premised on the principle that Africa should assume primary responsibility in ending violent conflicts raging in different parts of the continent.

18. The past seven years have witnessed an increase in the number of ratifications of legal instruments, from twelve (12) in 2010, to forty-one (41) in 2016, and forty (40) in 2017. By contrast, the pace of entry into force remains slow. As an example, of all the treaties adopted from 2012 to date, none has entered into force, except for Statutes, because they enter into force upon adoption by the Assembly.

19. A number of Member States have been affected by the fall army-worm scourge, now causing environmental disaster. Parts of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), also experienced the resurgence of the Ebola virus disease. The Commission's relevant units have provided technical assistance to the affected countries and mobilized more support from AU international partners to help fight the outbreaks.

20. Efforts are underway for the launching of the African Women Leaders Fund. Conceived as a multi-layer investment vehicle, the Fund seeks to create enabling conditions for women entrepreneurs to engage in the finance value chain and give them access to start-up capital. Given the centrality of women in the Union's peace, development and integration agenda, Member States are encouraged to provide full support to this endeavour.

21. Finally, some progress was made in enhancing the Commission interactions with the Permanent Representatives Committee (PRC) and the Peace and Security Council (PSC), as a follow-up to the pledge I made during the December 2017 Cairo joint retreat between the Commission and the PRC. Regular reports on the activities undertaken by the Commission are now submitted to the PRC I hold periodic meetings with the PRC; and I have initiated monthly luncheons with the members of the PSC. In parallel, efforts are being made to streamline decision-making, enhance transparency and ensure accountability. A number of challenges are yet to be overcome, but I am determined to do all what is necessary to make the Commission fit-for purpose and more effective in delivering on its mandate.

iii. Activities of the Chairperson of the Commission

22. As part of my efforts to follow up on the decisions of the Policy Organs and my regular interactions with Heads of State and Government on issues related to the implementation of the Union's peace, development and integration agenda, as well as to mobilize support from our international partners, I undertook a series of official visits within and outside the continent during the period from February to June 2018.

23. In this connection, I travelled to Zimbabwe (February 2018), Algeria and Mauritania (March 2018), eSwatini, South Africa and Kenya (April 2018), Namibia, Togo, Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire (May 2018), and Morocco and Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) (June 2018). During my visits, I had the honor to meet, in turn, with Presidents Emmerson Mnangagwa of Zimbabwe, Mohammed Ould Abdel Aziz of Mauritania, Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa, Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya, Hage Geingob of Namibia, Faure Gnassingbé of Togo, Nana-Dankwa Akufo-Addo of Ghana, Alassane Ouattara of Côte d'Ivoire, and Brahim Ghali of SADR, as well as their Majesties King Mswati III of eSwatini and Mohamed VI of the Kingdom of Morocco. I also met other senior officials, including Prime Ministers and Ministers of Foreign Affairs.

24. At the invitation of President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni of Uganda, I travelled to Kampala to take part in the Summit meeting of the Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs) of the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), in March 2018. I also travelled to Congo Brazzaville, at the invitation of President Denis Sassou-Nguesso, to participate in the Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Climate Commission and the Blue Fund for the Congo Basin, which took place in Brazzaville in April 2018. While at the Summit, I interacted with a number of African leaders present at the event. In May 2018, I responded positively to the invitation of the Pan-African Parliament to address its opening session in Midrand, South Africa.

25. In Addis Ababa, I had discussions with then Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn in February 2018, and met with his successor, Dr. Abiy Ahmed, upon his designation, in April 2018.

26. Lastly, I went to Beijing in February 2018, at the invitation of Minister of Foreign Affairs Wang Yi. I took part, as co-president, in the International High-Level Conference on the Sahel with the G5 Sahel leaders and the European Union (EU), held in Brussels in February 2018. Arab League Secretary General Ahmed Aboul Gheit invited me in April 2018, to address the 29th Ordinary Session of the Council of the League at Summit level, held in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. On 23 May, I led the Commission's delegation to the College-to-College Meeting with the European Commission in Brussels. On 12 and 13 June, I participate in the interactive dialogue convened by the Secretary-General of the United Nations with regional organizations on global threats confronting the international community and the challenge of prevention.

27. Also in May 2018, I held a telephone conversation with the new U.S. Secretary of State, Michael Pompeo, during which we exchanged views on ways and means to further enhance the partnership between the United States and the AU. Secretary Pompeo reiterated the continued support of the United States to the AU efforts to advance integration and address conflict and crisis situations on the continent

iv. High-Level Foreign Visits to AU Headquarters

28. During the period between February and June 2018, I received several high-level delegations from around the world. The visits provided an opportunity for the Commission to exchange views with our international partners on issues of common concern and ways to strengthen cooperation in various areas of mutual interest.

Date	Names and Titles of Visitors
28 February	Mr. Miroslav Lajcak President of the United Nations General Assembly
6 March	Mr. Li Young Director General, United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)
7 March	His Highness Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, United Arab Emirates
8 March	Mr. Rex Tillerson Secretary of State, United States of America
9 March	Mr. Sergey Lavrov Minister of Foreign Affairs, Russian Federation
3 April	Ninsao Gnofam, Minister of Infrastructure and Transport of Togo
27 April	Ms. Michaelle Jean Secretary General of La Francophonie
11 May	Mr. Li Zhanshu Chairman of the 13 th Chinese National People's Congress, People's Republic of China
18 May	Dr. Martin Elia Lomuro, Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs of South Sudan
27 May	Hassen Kheire, Prime Minister of Somalia
2 June	Mr. Souef Mohamed El Amine, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Comoros
3 June	Mr. Léonard She Okitundu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of Congo
8 June	Mr. Jean Yves Le Drian Minister of Europe and Foreign Affairs of France

B. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNION'S INTEGRATION AGENDA

29. There is increased resolve on the part of Member States to achieve the Union's integration agenda. During the period under review, progress has continued in a number of areas.

i. African Continental Free Trade Area

30. At the January 2018 Summit, the Heads of State and Government adopted the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement, including the Protocol on Trade in Goods, the Protocol on Trade in Services and the Protocol on the Rules and Procedures for the Settlement of Disputes. Given the need to fast track the signing and entry into force of the Agreement, the Assembly also decided to convene an Extraordinary Summit in Kigali on 21 March 2018. This historic event was convened with the participation of business leaders from across the continent. Forty-four (44) Member States signed the AfCFTA Agreement. In order to ensure broad-based ownership, the threshold for its entry into force was set after the deposit of the 22nd instrument of ratification.

31. I am pleased to announce that within six weeks of the Kigali Summit, the Commission received the first instruments of ratification from the Republic of Kenya and the Republic of Ghana on 10 May. The Commission has since received two more instruments, from the Republic of Rwanda and the Republic of Niger, on 26 May and 8 June 2018, respectively. I look forward to receiving additional signatures and ratifications at the July 2018 Summit. The Commission intends to recognise Member States that have signed or deposited their instruments of ratification during the Summit, to send a clear message to African citizens and the world as a whole that Africa is committed to boosting intra-African trade.

32. One of the key outstanding issues that must be resolved to facilitate signature and ratification relates to the harmonization of the Annexes to the Protocol on Trade in Goods and the Protocol on the Rules and Procedures for the Settlement of Disputes. I commend the Ministers of Trade and the Specialised Technical Committee (STC) on Justice and Legal Affairs, who met in Dakar in early June 2018, for finalizing their recommendations. Their reports are being submitted to the Summit. In Dakar, the Ministers of Trade also agreed on the priority service sectors to be included in the regulatory harmonisation that is envisaged in the first phase of the AfCFTA negotiations.

33. The Built-In Agenda continued, with further work on finalising the Modalities for Tariff Liberalisation and commencing work on the Schedule on Tariff Concessions and the Schedule of Commitments for Trade in Services. This work is expected to be concluded before the January 2019 Summit. In the month of August 2018, Member States will begin Phase 2 of the AfCFTA negotiations, which involves Investment, Intellectual Property Rights and Competition Policy. So far, the negotiations schedule is on track.

34. A parallel work stream has started, involving the establishment of the AfCFTA institutions. Shortly after the July 2018 Summit, the Commission will work with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the African Development Bank (AfDB) on a benchmarking exercise to analyse best practices regionally and globally and propose the institutional arrangements that will be able to support more efficiently the implementation of the Agreement. This is a crucial exercise in the context of the AU institutional reform, as it has been decided by the Assembly of the Union that the AfCFTA Secretariat shall be functionally autonomous, with an independent legal personality within the AU family. I look forward to a decision on this matter at the January 2019 Summit.

35. In March 2019, the Union will celebrate the first anniversary of the Kigali Extraordinary Summit. It would be appropriate to mark this occasion with the deposit of the 22nd instrument of ratification that will usher the AfCFTA into effect. The Commission, under the leadership of the AfCFTA Champion, President Issoufou Mahamadou, and in partnership with Member States, the RECs and the private sector, is working towards this key milestone. I count on the support of all Member States to conclude the negotiations without delay and proceed with the implementation of the Agreement.

36. I am encouraged to note that Member States have set up national AfCFTA committees that include key stakeholders and which will coordinate the ratification and

implementation processes. These committees provide a useful platform to ensure harmonization with other policy issues related to industrial development, infrastructure development, free movement of persons, capital and goods, so as to deliver tangible results to the citizens of the continent. Meaningful jobs are essential to peace and sustainable development.

37. During the consultations with the private sector on the implementation of the AfCFTA, concerns were expressed regarding constraints arising from the current payment systems across the continent. This issue is also of concern to Member States, given its centrality in facilitating intra-African trade. In general, Africa's payment systems are the least developed globally. Cash payment dominates in most countries, and inter-bank domestic transactions can sometimes take up to 45 days.

38. Over the last three years, however, thirty-three (33) countries have started and, in some cases, fully completed the modernization of their payment systems, including establishing Automatic Clearing Houses (ACH) and Real Time Gross Settlement (RTGS) systems. Once in place, these improvements will enhance the speed and lower the cost of financial transactions. Several initiatives have also been launched in the RECs to develop and integrate payment systems.

39. I would like to stress that with the launch of the AfCFTA, there is an urgent need to conduct a review of all the efforts underway in the different RECs and Member States to establish payment systems, and to draw the necessary lessons from this experience. COMESA appears to be more advanced in this respect and, therefore, worthy of our attention.

40. A modern payment system will have to integrate innovations in financial payments, such as block chain and crypto currencies. However, these innovations will require that regulations and the regulatory authority are sufficiently competent to supervise their operations and further development. Payment systems providers will also need to be regulated. At the continental level, there will be a need to appoint a regulating authority that oversees the activities of all service providers and ensure that market competition and access are safeguarded.

41. Another critical element of modern payment systems is the provision of payment systems infrastructure, essentially the hardware, software, secure telecommunications networks and operating environments that are used to manage and operate payment systems and, therefore, support the clearing and/or settlement of transfers of funds. These systems will also need to be harmonized, and some Member States may need technical assistance to strengthen their national systems in order to compete regionally.

42. As part of the AfCFTA trade facilitation process, there is need to define common standards for trade facilitation. Equally important is the need to agree on the minimum security level of the continental systems and the basic risk mitigation measures.

43. Central banks play an important role in payment systems operations, as they ultimately provide the clearing function. Central Banks validate requests and settle payments via settlement agencies. To operate efficiently, the continent will also need to designate specific clearing or settlement currencies. These could include a number

currencies depending on the exchange volatility and trading patterns at the time decisions are taken. I count on the support of Member States as we develop these critical instruments for facilitating the implementation of the AfCFTA.

ii. Single African Air Transport Market

44. I am pleased to report that the Union is making progress in implementing the SAATM. The number of Member States participating in the Single African Air Transport Market is increasing slowly but steadily. At the Assembly's January 2015 Summit, eleven (11) Member States made the Solemn Commitment to implement the Yamoussoukro Decision and participate in the SAATM. The membership rose to twenty-three (23) at the launching of the SAATM in January 2018, and it now stands at twenty-six (26). The following countries are currently part of SAATM: Benin, Burkina Faso, Botswana, Cabo Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Swaziland, Togo and Zimbabwe.

45. Practical steps have been taken to implement the immediate measures necessary to effectively operationalise the SAATM. Three of the four Yamoussoukro Decision key regulatory texts were adopted by the Assembly [Assembly/AU/Dec.676(XXX)] at the January 2018 Summit. These are: (i) Competition Regulations; (ii) Consumer Protection Regulations; and (iii) Powers and Functions of the Executing Agency. The fourth regulatory text – Dispute Settlement Mechanism – is expected to be finalised by the end of 2018.

46. An inter-institutional stakeholder consultative meeting was held in March 2018 at the headquarters of the AfDB in Abidjan, to discuss concrete strategies for expediting the operationalisation of the SAATM. The meeting finalized an action plan highlighting the priorities for the period 2018-2019.

47. The Ministerial Working Group on SAATM held its fourth meeting in Lomé, from 25 to 28 May 2018. Twenty-one (21) of the twenty-six (26) Member States currently participating in the SAATM took part in the meeting. Twelve countries undertook bilateral consultations to harmonize their Bilateral Air Services Agreements (BASAs), with a view to removing market restrictions that are incompatible with the Yamoussoukro Decision. These are the Central African Republic, the Republic of Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Togo. Furthermore, Cabo Verde and Burkina Faso reported that they already have Yamoussoukro Declaration-compliant BASAs with all the States that attended the ministerial meeting.

48. Additionally, fourteen countries that were present at the meeting – Benin, Cabo Verde, Central African Republic, Republic of Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Togo – finalized and signed a Memorandum of Implementation of the Yamoussoukro Decision. The Memorandum is a multilateral instrument that ensures that all BASAs are compatible with the Yamoussoukro Decision.

49. The Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and the African Civil Aviation Commission (AFCAC) also concluded in January 2018 a Memorandum of Cooperation

for effective operationalisation and management of the SAATM. The Memorandum is open for signature by each REC. So far, it has been signed by the East African Community (EAC) and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA).

50. Lastly, while in Lomé for the ministerial meeting on SAATM, I had a fruitful meeting with President Faure Gnassingbé in his capacity as the Champion of SAATM, to strategize on how best to address the major challenges facing SAATM operationalisation. The Champion of the SAATM has also identified his targets, which include: (i) attracting at least ten (10) more Member States to join the SAATM by the next ordinary Session of the Assembly in July 2018; and (ii) enhancing the share of African airlines in the SAATM, as well as fostering cooperation amongst them.

51. On its part, under the leadership of the Champion of SAATM and in collaboration with the RECs and other air transport stakeholders, the Commission is planning a robust advocacy campaign to engage Member States that have not yet done so to sign on to the Solemn Commitment and participate in the SAATM.

52. The following activities have also been identified:

- i) Member States will be encouraged to abolish any provisions in their BASA for intra-African air services that are contrary to the provisions of the Yamoussoukro Decision;
- ii) the Commission will expedite the completion of the activities on the SAATM Roadmap, ensure dissemination to all Member States of key continental aviation frameworks – especially the Yamoussoukro Decision Regulatory and Institutional Texts and the African Civil Aviation Policy (AFCAP) – and undertake capacity building for Member States and RECs, focusing on their application and domestication;
- iii) the AfDB and other funding partners intend to expedite mobilisation of resources for the operationalisation of the Executing Agency, *i.e.* the African Civil Aviation Commission, to enable it to carry out its mandate in the management and supervision of the established SAATM; and
- iv) the Commission plans to develop a framework for establishing the single African sky architecture by 2023, which will strengthen aviation safety and security and ensure efficient and harmonised seamless air navigational and communication systems.

53. The realisation of the SAATM is vital to the achievement of the long-term vision of an integrated and prosperous Africa. This will indeed bring about enhanced connectivity across the continent, leading to sustainable development of the aviation and tourism industry, with immense contribution to economic growth, job creation, prosperity and integration. Africa stands to gain significant economic benefits by liberalizing and unifying its single air transport market. I urge all Member States that have not yet done so to join this initiative as early as possible.

iii. Free Movement of Persons

54. African leaders have agreed that, by 2063, Africa shall be a continent with seamless borders where people, capital, goods and services will move freely, so as to increase intra-African trade, investment and cultural exchanges. The Protocol on Free Movement of Persons and its Implementation Roadmap were adopted by the Assembly at its January 2018 Summit. The introduction of the African passport at the Assembly's June 2015 Summit in Johannesburg is also key to the free movement of persons.

55. During the Assembly's Extraordinary Summit of March 2108 in Kigali, thirty-one (31) Member States signed the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons. The Protocol requires fifteen (15) ratifications to enter into force. However, given the historical and practical significance of the Protocol and the imperative for of free movement for Africa's unity and integration, I urge all AU Member States to demonstrate their commitment to this endeavour by promptly signing and ratifying this instrument in earnest. This was also my message when I addressed the opening session of the Pan-African Parliament in Johannesburg in May this year.

56. Following the Kigali Extraordinary Summit, the Bureau of the STC on Migration, Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons met in May 2018 and adopted its 2018 workplan in relation to the free movement of persons and the African passport. The Bureau also requested the Commission to prepare a detailed roadmap for the popularization of the Protocol, as well as the development of guidelines for the design, production and issuance of the African passport at national level.

57. On its part, the Commission organized briefings on the free movement of persons for the PSC and the ministerial segment of the STC on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. The Commission also convened in Seychelles, in May 2018, a meeting of Chiefs of Immigration from Member States. Twenty-six (26) delegations were present to consider the draft guidelines on the design, specifications, production and issuance of the African passport. Representatives of the RECs were also in attendance.

58. The meeting of the Chiefs of Immigration agreed, among other outcomes, to the amendments to the Guidelines document prepared by the Commission and the formation of a Committee of Experts to further discuss the technical specifications of the African passport. The meeting tasked the Commission to facilitate the creation of the Committee of Experts, as well as secure technical support from the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), in order to ensure the compliance of the African passport with international standards. It also, requested the Commission to report on the outcomes of the Committee of Experts recommendations to the next Chiefs of Immigration meeting scheduled for July 2018.

59. There are demonstrable gains for Member States in facilitating the free movement of Africans. I am encouraged by the measures taken by some Member States on granting entry visas to all Africans on arrival or waiving them altogether. I also want to commend the RECs that have taken steps to facilitate the free movement of their citizens within their respective areas of geographical coverage.

60. These are encouraging steps toward the fulfilment of the desire of African people to move freely in their continent. While security and other concerns are legitimate, the Commission stands ready to continue working with Member States and the RECs, to assist them in addressing these and other obstacles to the Union's progress towards greater unity and integration.

C. AFRICA'S MINING AND INDUSTRIALIZATION VISION

61. Africa continues to be trapped in a resource curse. The continent is endowed with abundant mineral resources, including vast gas and oil deposits, and is ranked among the top producers of several mineral commodities of global strategic value. Yet two-thirds of the least developed countries are located in Africa, while the large majority of the poorest Africans live in countries that possess mining extractive industries. This is largely due to the export-oriented nature of African economies and their inability to break loose from their traditional global role as suppliers of raw materials. As a result, beneficiation from this mineral wealth continues to take place outside the continent, thus depriving Africa of much needed revenues and skills that are critical to stimulate the continent's industrialization.

62. It is ironic that Africa contributes significantly to the world market in high-value minerals in their raw form, but it consumes very little of the finished products. As an example, Africa holds large reserves of iron ore, a key component of steel which is critical for infrastructure development, including highways, railways, bridges and skyscrapers. Africa produces 110 million tons of iron ore every year, which corresponds roughly to 65 million tons of finished steel, and exports almost all of it in raw form. In return, Africa imports 28 million tons of steel annually, around 70% of its needs, making the continent the world's lowest consumer of steel per habitant.

63. Importing steel as a finished product means that 100,000 people are employed outside the continent. It also means that the related skills and opportunities for skills development, revenue generation and infrastructure development are allocated outside of Africa. Yet, for Africa to industrialize, beneficiation of its raw materials is paramount. Africa must be able to use its own iron ore and transform it into steel products needed for infrastructure development. Much benefit can be accrued only if Africa is able to speak with one voice, through a Pan-African mechanism on minerals that are in high demand globally and which are also needed in the realization of continental energy and infrastructure projects.

64. As Member States embark on the structural transformation of their economies and the building of large-scale infrastructural projects to accelerate the continent's socio-economic development and integration, it is imperative that the Union forges ahead with the implementation of the Africa Mining Vision to ensure that minerals that are produced in Africa also benefit the continent and its people, stimulate the continent's industrialization and contribute to the development of infrastructure, power generation and intra-African trade, to name but a few benefits.

65. The Commission, working with the RECs and other AU relevant entities, such as NEPAD, continues to assist Member States in the implementation of the Africa Mining Vision. Institutions and legal instruments that are provided for in this landmark decision are already in place or being established. The African Mining Development

Centre (AMDC), as the specialized agency in charge of coordinating the implementation of the Africa Mining Vision, is becoming operational. I would like, once more, to urge Member States to expedite the signature and ratification of the AMDC Statute and finalize the decision on its headquarters, in order to enable the AMDC to become fully operational as soon as possible.

66. Several other activities are underway to promote the sustainable use of minerals and to enhance beneficiation of mineral wealth for African producers. The Commission and NEPAD provided technical assistance to some Member States in the review of their mining legislation and alignment with the Africa Mining Vision.

67. Pursuant to the Assembly's Kigali decision of July 2016 – Assembly/AU/Dec.605(XXVII) – the Commission is elaborating the Model Law for Mineral Resources Development that provides guidance to Member States in reviewing their royalties and fiscal regimes. An African Mineral Governance Framework was developed in 2017, and will be implemented upon its adoption by the Policy Organs. The newly-established Association of Chamber of Mines and Other Mining Associations in Africa endorsed the Africa Mining Vision Private Sector Compact that was developed by the Commission as a framework for a greater partnership between the public and private sectors in the mining industry.

68. One critical element in the process of implementing the Africa Mining Vision is the need for a comprehensive geological mapping of mineral resource endowments. This knowledge is available outside Africa, but it is neither readily accessible by Member States nor in their possession. To address this need, the Commission continues to work with the World Bank on a Geological and Minerals Information Systems (GMIS) strategy that will coordinate all continental GMIS initiatives and programs. Implementation work continues on the Pan-African geo-scientific knowledge and skills in African Geological Surveys (PanAfGeo), the African minerals Geoscience Initiative (AMGI) Pilot Project, and the African Resources Geoscience Initiative (ARGI). Also critical is the need to establish a Pan-African mechanism for joint exploitation of transboundary mineral resources, in order to promote regional value chains around shared mineral resources.

69. I look forward to the work of the African Mineral Development Centre, to foster greater cooperation among African producers of minerals to help them not only have a greater say in determining the price of these commodities, but also a greater share in value creation. This will, in turn, result in more and better jobs and skills for Africans and to drive the continent's industrialization.

D. THE GREAT GREEN WALL FOR THE SAHARA AND SAHEL INITIATIVE

70. The Great Green Wall Initiative for Sahara and Sahel Initiative (GGWSSI) is a flagship program of the AU launched in 2007, and covering the Circum-Sahara region. It aims to contribute towards improved livelihoods and resilience of people living in the dry lands, through sound management of ecosystems, and promotion of green economy. It advances the realization of aspirations contained in Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

71. Ten years after its adoption by the Assembly, significant progress has been made as more than 20 countries have adopted the initiative. Several projects are being implemented by the AU and its partners under the auspices of the GGWSSI. These projects have also leveraged resources from national budgets for the implementation of the initiative. It is worth noting that the capacity of Member States has also been strengthened with the creation of specialized agencies for the implementation of the Initiative. Thirteen (13) countries have developed National Action Plans and are implementing them with financial support from various partners.

72. Of the 20 participating countries, 11 have put in place a coordination and knowledge sharing mechanism called “Pan-African Agency of the GGWSSI”, in compliance with Executive Council decision EX.CL/Dec.465 (XIV), which calls on the concerned Member States and their respective RECs, to put in place the necessary financial and institutional arrangements, to guide the program implementation process. This Agency, initially based in Ndjamena, Chad, is now located in Nouakchott, Mauritania.

73. Overall, the initiative is contributing to job creation, especially for women and youth. For example, in Senegal and Nigeria, communities have established multipurpose gardens which are a source of income and contribute to food and nutrition security. There is evidence that incomes generated through the GGWSSI activities has led to sedentarization of women pastoralist and improved health and attendance of children in schools.

74. In addition to the Pan-African Agency of the GGWSSI, the Commission has also established a continental hub to facilitate and coordinate the implementation of the initiative beyond the Sahel.

75. Despite the successes, there are still some challenges that need to be addressed for the effective implementation of the Initiative. Overall, the implementation of the GGWSSI is essentially made possible through funding from the donor community, especially from the EU, the World Bank and FAO. Very few Member States have leveraged resources from national budgets for the implementation of the Initiative. Despite the call made in Dakar in 2016, during the Dakar Conference on the GGWSSI, many countries still need to put in place requisite mechanisms in order to access innovative resources, such as the Green Climate Fund and other climate-related resources.

76. Furthermore, since the launch of the GGWSSI in 2007, several other initiatives are launched or implemented by AU institutions on restoration, including AFR100 and TerrAfrica implemented by NEPAD. Based on the Regional Harmonized Strategy adopted by the AU Summit in January 2013, the Commission has prepared, in collaboration with its partners, a results-based framework that should guide the intervention of all stakeholders. Steps are being taken to ensure that all stakeholders consider this results-based framework as a reference to design GGW projects and as a tool to enhance synergies and complementarities between their activities. I urge all relevant organs involved in the GGWSSI to work together in a coordinated manner for the effective implementation and success of this initiative.

E. ADDRESSING EMERGENCY OUTBREAKS

i) Fall Armyworm

77. The Fall Armyworm (FAW) – *Spodoptera frugiperda* – is an insect pest that feeds on more than 80 crop species, causing damage to cereals such as maize, rice, sorghum, as well as vegetable crops and cotton. It is a pest native to tropical and subtropical regions of the Americas, and able to move over 100km per night. It lays its eggs on plants, from which larvae hatch and begin feeding on the infested crop. High infestations can lead to significant yield loss. Farmers in the Americas have been managing this pest for many years, but at a high cost.

78. The FAW was first detected in Benin, Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe and Togo, in early 2016. But it quickly spread to other Member States across Central, Southern and East African regions, notably in Angola, Botswana, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. By February 2018, forty-four (44) Member States were affected, with maize as the main affected crop.

79. Through the Inter-African Phytosanitary Council (IAPSC) – the AU Specialized Technical Office responsible for plant health management – the Commission has initiated consultations with various technical and development partners, such as the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), the Centre for Agriculture and Bioscience International, the International Centre for Insect and Pest Ecology (ICIPE) and USAID, on how to address the FAW challenge and coordinate responses to the spread of the pest and the damage it has caused in Africa. The Commission has also worked with AU bilateral and multilateral technical partners to document the impact of the FAW and disseminate resource related materials.

80. The Commission and FAO are implementing a US\$500,000 Technical Cooperation Project (TCP). The project aims, among others, to strengthen the capacity of the Commission's Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture to manage information relating to the FAW, and create a continental coordination platform, as well as a well-coordinated early warning and rapid response system at national and regional levels. The project will also support regulatory actions at the level of Member States to ensure and fast-track registration of low-risk products for FAW management.

81. The Commission has launched several initiatives to ensure advocacy and raise awareness of the FAW challenge in Africa. FAW infestation was brought to the attention of the STC on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment during its 2nd Ordinary Session in October 2017. A special meeting of African experts was convened during the 13th Session of the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures, on 19 April 2018, in Rome, Italy, to mobilize technical assistance for Member States from the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC). The Commission on Phytosanitary Measures is the governing body of the IPPC. Similarly, a high-level policy dialogue on FAW was held in Libreville, in April 2018, during the 14th Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) Partnership Platform.

82. I am encouraged by the cooperation between the Commission and its bilateral and multilateral partners in addressing the serious threats posed by the spread of the FAW on the continent. The pest is a serious threat to food security and safety. It poses a grave risk for African agricultural exports and the implementation of CAADP. The spread of the FAW in over 80% of the African continent warrants, therefore, an urgent and coordinated response by the Union.

ii) Support to the DRC on Ebola Outbreak

83. In May 2018, the Ministry of Health of the Democratic Republic of the Congo declared a new outbreak of the Ebola virus disease (EVD) in Bikoro Health Zone, Equateur Province, after two confirmed cases. This is the ninth outbreak of the Ebola virus disease in the country over the last four decades, with the last one in May 2017. As of the end of May 2018, the DRC Government had reported a cumulative number of fifty-one (51) cases, including twenty-five (25) fatalities.

84. Forty-eight hours after the announcement the Ebola outbreak, the Commission's Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention activated its Emergency Operational Centre (EOC). It also deployed an assessment mission to DRC, where it worked with the Ministry of Health and other partners in the development of a three-prong strategy to combat the outbreak: (i) surveillance and contact tracing for early detection of cases; (ii) definition of the various affected health areas for institution of control measures; and (iii) laboratory testing and network for easy case identification and classification.

85. Subsequently, Africa CDC deployed twenty-five (25) epidemiologists, laboratory experts and anthropologists, to support the efforts of the DRC Government in the major outbreak areas of Mbandaka and Bikoro. The Commission also pledged US\$2 million to Africa CDC to support its ongoing interventions in containing the outbreak and ensuring resilient systems are in place to prevent, detect and better respond to any future outbreak.

86. The Ebola virus outbreak in West Africa in 2014 claimed more than 11,000 lives. To prevent a similar tragedy in the DRC and beyond, I urge Member States, as the Union did in West Africa at the time, to lend substantial human and material assistance to the Africa CDC in its ongoing efforts to contain the disease.

F. ENHANCING AFRICA'S CAPACITY IN NATURAL DISASTERS AND RISK MANAGEMENT

87. Africa is one of the most vulnerable continents to the impact of natural disasters, extreme weather and climate variability, unsafe food and outbreaks of disease. Such events have a disproportionately negative impact on the most vulnerable people. They weaken economic growth, erode resilience and increase the risk of political instability.

88. At present, preparedness and emergency response to natural disasters at the national level is generally not adequate. When international assistance is secured, it is usually after disaster strikes, insufficient and hardly on time. On their part, national Governments are forced to reallocate funds in national budgets, when they are

available, from essential development projects to crisis response. As a result, many lives are lost, and more people – particularly the young and most vulnerable – are forced into chronic hunger, malnutrition, disease and destitution.

89. Contingent funds for early warning systems and appropriate contingency plans linked to credible national response mechanisms offer the best solutions for delivering more effective and efficient responses to natural disasters in the short term. Such instruments also facilitate long-term investments in food safety and security, reducing disaster risk and strengthening climate resilience. Managing risks is, therefore, more economical and more efficient. In addition, it saves more lives and improve livelihoods.

90. In 2010, the AU Ministers of Finance called upon the Commission to explore the feasibility of a continental financial risk pooling mechanism and the creation of an African-owned, Pan-African disaster risk pool for food security. In November 2012, pursuant to a decision by the Assembly [Assembly/AU/Dec. 417(XIX) of July 2012], the African Risk Capacity (ARC) was established as a Specialised Agency of the AU to help Member States improve their capacities to better plan, prepare and respond to extreme weather events and natural disasters, therefore ensuring food security of their vulnerable populations.

91. By linking early warning and preparedness with contingency planning and support of modern financial mechanisms (specifically insurance), ARC enables Member States to provide targeted responses to disasters in a more timely, cost-effective, objective and transparent manner, thereby reducing governments' fiscal burden and loss of livelihoods. The rationale is that US \$1 spent on early intervention through ARC saves nearly US \$4.5 spent after a crisis is allowed to evolve.

92. Currently, thirty-three (33) Member States are signatories¹ to the ARC Establishment Agreement and ARC Insurance Company Limited (ARC Ltd), which is the financial affiliate of ARC Agency. It was established in 2014 to provide insurance to participating countries. ARC Ltd is a mutual insurance company owned by its members (countries that pay a premium) to manage the risk taken on through underwriting a pool of weather and other disaster risks. Studies and actual operations on the ground have shown that by pooling their risks together, African countries can substantially reduce the cost of insurance.

93. Since its creation, eight (8) countries² have participated in the insurance pool and paid a premium to secure coverage for their drought risk through ARC Ltd. African Governments have shown commitment through payment of premium despite fiscal constraints, and ARC has collected over US \$54million in premium in its first four years, 95% of which directly from the participating Governments.

94. Over the same period, ARC Ltd has also made pay-outs totalling over US \$36 million to four (4) Member countries³ whose policies were triggered by drought events.

¹ Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Republic of Congo, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, The Gambia, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Kenya, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Mali, Malawi, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Togo, Zambia and Zimbabwe

² Senegal, Niger, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, The Gambia, Malawi and Kenya

³ Senegal, Niger, Mauritania and Malawi

The recipient Governments are Mauritania, Niger and Senegal for drought event in the Sahel in 2014, Malawi for drought in early-2016, and Mauritania in early 2018. These resources have assisted directly 2.1 million people and over 1 million livestock through the scale up of cash transfer, food distribution, and subsidized livestock feeding programs. These payouts and the corresponding response efforts were, for the most part, mobilised before the international humanitarian appeals had been formulated, thereby representing a significant improvement in national response efforts.

95. The most direct benefit of ARC mechanism is to compensate Member States for losses due to natural disasters. However, ARC insurance offering is not limited to weather events; ARC is currently developing an outbreak and epidemic product to mitigate the unpredictable funding that amplifies both the risk and impact of outbreaks.

96. ARC also seeks to become an R&D centre for innovation which attracts and trains a highly skilled labour force, develops and maintains intellectual capital within the continent; and provides a portal through which significant capital flows on research and development can flow directly to the continent. Finally, unlike traditional insurance mechanisms, where profits generated are retained by the provider, ARC offers Member States the opportunity to purchase equity in the company when they enter into an insurance contract. This unique construct provides African Governments protection from disaster whilst simultaneously investing in the establishment of an African risk financing vehicle.

97. It is important to note, however, that Member States seeking to participate in the ARC Ltd pool face difficulties in mobilizing the premium funds in their early years of participation. Premium payment is often not prioritised by Governments that, in some instances, face other fiscal priorities. As a result, although there is a recognition of the value of ARC insurance, Governments often are unable to pay their premiums.

98. In traditional responses to natural disasters, Governments depend on international humanitarian actors both financially and for the delivery of assistance to populations in need. As a result, the direct cost of risks associated with natural disasters and their impact on national development are often neglected in most national budgets, as they do not make provisions for risk management and resiliency against disasters.

99. There is also a sense of fatigue on the part of some Governments to pay premium when they have not received payouts. Similarly, a shift in national leadership or priorities – as a result of elections or civil unrest – may affect national commitments to disaster risk management and, with it, reduce interest in subscribing to ARC insurance financing mechanism. This issue speaks to the need to continue to foster a culture of disaster risk management in Africa and the associated fiscal discipline.

100. These challenges notwithstanding, ARC presents an opportunity that the Union can leverage to ensure the success of this unique African owned solution. In line with Executive Council decision of January 2018 Ordinary Session, EX.CL/Dec.997(XXXII), I call on Member States to renew their commitment to the original vision that led to the establishment of ARC as an African-owned solution structured to help Member States better finance and respond to natural disasters. I invite them to actively participate in the ARC risk pool and fully leverage the benefits

of this mechanism. I urge them to accelerate ratification of the ARC treaty to generate even stronger support for this important institution.

G. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE THEME OF 2018 YEAR – COMBATING CORRUPTION

101. Corrupt practices are at the roots of social inequality and remain a serious impediment to peace, security, democratic governance and socioeconomic transformation. Thus, it is imperative to intensify efforts to combat this scourge that affects the right and welfare of our people, particularly the most vulnerable ones.

102. The World Bank's Africa Poverty Report for 2016 described corruption as "Public Enemy Number One" for developing countries: "Every dollar stolen leads to increased strain on public goods and services, such as roads, education and healthcare; weakened political institutions; and damage to a country's ability to compete globally". In Africa, the negative impact of corruption is compounded by illicit financial flows out of the continent, which is estimated at about US\$ 50 billion annually.

103. Cognizant of these impediments, the Assembly declared 2018 as the year for Africa to combat corruption and lay a sustainable path for its transformation. I welcome the overwhelmingly positive response of African citizens to this message and their engagement to take part in this struggle. On its part, the Union has, through its relevant entities, initiated several activities with respect to the theme.

104. The PSC convened an open session in April 2018 on the nexus between corruption and conflict. The debate highlighted, among other issues, the need to fight corruption in the areas of elections, as well as security and defence contracting. The PSC also requested the Commission, through the AU Anti-Corruption Board and its relevant Departments, to develop a joint report on these issues.

105. It should be recalled that the AU Convention on Preventing and Combatting Corruption, adopted on 11 July 2003, entered into force in August 2006. So far, thirty-nine (39) Member States have ratified it. I congratulate the Member States that have ratified this instrument and urge those that have not yet done so, to follow this example, in order to demonstrate their commitment to the fight against the scourge of corruption in Africa.

106. I welcome the initiative of the AU Anti-Corruption Board to undertake a review of the state of implementation of the Convention, as well as to revise the reporting questionnaire by Member States. This will ensure that it accurately captures new corruption data and practices, including illicit financial flows.

107. The AU Advisory Board on Corruption has also initiated the development of a Common African Position on Asset Recovery as a tool to assist Member States identify, quantify and repatriate stolen assets. It should be recalled that the STC on Finance, Monetary Affairs, Economic Planning and Integration, held from 12 to 17 April 2018 in Addis Ababa, reiterated the need for Member States to speed up the implementation of the recommendations of the High-Level Panel on Illicit Financial Flows.

108. The Advisory Board has, since January 2018, partnered with the AU Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACEWRS), to develop a study on the impact of corruption on children and how to remedy it. Also, through the AU Advisory Board, a partnership with the Confederation of African Football (CAF) was finalized on 15 February 2018, to disseminate the AU message on combating corruption to the African people and develop joint branding and advocacy strategies, including the designation of Football Ambassadors against Corruption.

109. The Commission, through the Anti-Corruption Board, has also agreed with the East African Community to provide technical support to the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) for the development of an East African Community Law on Corruption and Whistleblowing. The agreement followed a joint engagement between the Anti-Corruption Board and the EALA Committee on Regional Affairs on the African Anti-Corruption Year. The EALA has been working on the draft instruments and will benefit from the comparative lessons that the AU Anti-Corruption Board will provide from experience in other regions.

110. The Commission plans to carry out more activities in the second half of this year (July- December 2018), to give greater visibility and generate action to eradicate corruption in Africa. Under the auspices and guidance of President Muhammadu Buhari of Nigeria, the Champion of the theme of the year, the anti-corruption message will be taken to the African youth, through a Youth Congress scheduled to be held from 9 to 11 July 2018 in Abuja, Nigeria.

111. Lastly, I wish to highlight the call of President Muhammadu Buhari, the Champion of the theme of the 2018 year, at the launch of the Theme of the year, last January. President Buhari called on all of us to work together to defeat this evil. He specifically prioritized three main issues as key milestones to be achieved during the course of 2018: (i) the organization of African Youth Congresses against Corruption, in order to sensitize and engage our youth in the fight against corruption; (ii) the mobilization of all Member States to implement the AU Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption; and (iii) strengthening the criminal justice system across Africa, through exchange of information and sharing best practices in the enforcement of anti-corruption laws.

112. I take this opportunity to renew the Commission's commitment to continue working with Member States to more effectively address the scourge of corruption. I look forward to their renewed determination. In this respect, I would like to remind Member States that the Executive Council, by its decision EX.CL/Dec.951 (XXX) of January 2017, recommended to the Assembly the proclamation of 11 July of every year as the African Anti-Corruption Day. It is my fervent hope that this unique day will be used observed as an opportunity to enhance the resolve to eradicate this scourge from the continent.

H. SILENCING THE GUNS BY 2020

113. Five years ago, through the 50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration commemorating the Golden Jubilee of the OAU/AU, the Heads of State and Government declared their goal of achieving a conflict-free Africa and making peace a reality for all the people of the African continent. They pledged not to bequeath the

burden of conflicts to the next generation of Africans and undertook to end all wars by the year 2020. This commitment was further asserted in Agenda 2063 and its First Ten-Year Implementation Plan, which stresses the imperative of ending all wars, gender-based violence and armed conflicts by the year 2020.

114. Several actions have been undertaken to implement the 50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration. During its retreat held in Lusaka in November 2016, the PSC adopted a Master Roadmap (the Lusaka Master Roadmap) on 'Practical Steps to Silence the Guns in Africa by the year 2020'. Subsequently, the Assembly of the African Union, meeting at its 28th Ordinary Session in Addis Ababa in January 2017, adopted the PSC Roadmap as the 'AU Master Roadmap of Practical Steps to Silence the Guns by 2020'. Since then, two status reports on the implementation of the Master Roadmap have been considered by the Assembly at its 29th and 30th Ordinary Sessions in July 2017 and January 2018, respectively.

115. At its 29th Ordinary Session, in July 2017, the Assembly, in decision Assembly/AU/ Dec.645(XXIX), declared the month of September of each year, starting from 2017 till 2020, as "Africa Amnesty Month" for the surrender and collection of illegally-owned weapons and arms, in line with African and international best practices. Subsequently, the PSC launched, in September 2017, the "Africa Amnesty Month" for the surrender and collection of illegally-owned weapons and arms.

116. In October 2017, I appointed the former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Algeria, Amb. Ramtane Lamamra, as my High Representative for Silencing the Guns in Africa. I have also interacted with many stakeholders who work on peace and security in Africa as part of their mandates.

117. A key conclusion from these interactions is that the Union has still much to do to make a tangible impact in silencing the guns, despite the progress recorded over the past years. Armed conflicts and crises persist in parts of the continent, some peace processes have been in abeyance for decades, and new threats are emerging in other part of the continent. Meanwhile, countries that were at once seen – with great hope – to have emerged from conflicts have relapsed back into the abyss of violent conflict.

118. The AU Master Roadmap is premised on the principle that Africa should assume leadership and ownership of the efforts aimed at ending violent conflicts. To this end, a number of mechanisms have been put in place to assist in addressing conflicts. In addition to the existing Special Envoys or Special Representatives, there is the Panel of the Wise that has, since 2013, been complemented by the Pan-African Network of the Wise (PanWise) and, since 2017, by the African Network of Women Mediators (FemWise-Africa).

119. The Union's conflict resolution process is also conducted by sitting or former Heads of State and Government who act as AU High-Level Representatives on specific conflict areas or countries. It is worth mentioning here the AU High-Level ad hoc Committee on South Sudan, comprising South Africa, as Chair, Algeria, Chad, Nigeria and Rwanda; as well as the AU High-Level Implementation Panel, made up of former President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa and General Abdasalami Abubakar of Nigeria, and tasked to deal with Sudan-South Sudan relations and to accompany political dialogue in Sudan. Mention should also be made of the AU High-Level

Delegation that visited Burundi in February 2016, comprising the Heads of State and Government of Ethiopia, Gabon, Mauritania, Senegal and South Africa. Additionally, the Commission has, where required, set up International Contact Groups, under its leadership, to coordinate and harmonize international responses to instances of political instability. In some cases, these mechanisms have yielded positive results.

120. In order to improve the efficiency of these mechanisms, the Commission will endeavour to provide them with more effective support. It is also proposed, where appropriate, to consider establishing ad hoc committees of sitting or former Heads of State to ensure a greater focus on specific conflict/crisis situations, with the view to mobilizing enhanced political resources towards their resolution.

121. While striving to resolve existing crises, it is also important to renew focus on the issue of prevention. The AU is endowed with a rich normative framework in this regard. Operational or direct prevention, which aims at defusing potential crises and averting their escalation into full-blown conflicts, face huge challenges, not least reluctance from Member States to allow timely intervention on account of sovereignty. As a result, situations that could have been contained through timely interventions end up degenerating into violent crises, with far-reaching consequences for the countries concerned and their neighbours.

122. The AU Master Roadmap rightly notes that: *“most crises and violent conflicts in Africa are driven by poverty, economic hardships, violation or manipulation of constitutions, violation of human rights, exclusion, inequalities, marginalization and mismanagement of Africa’s rich ethnic diversity, as well as relapses into the cycle of violence in some post-conflict settings and external interference in African affairs.”*

123. The 2007 Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance aims to help Member States address the multifaceted governance challenges confronting them. Upon receiving the requisite 15 ratifications, the Charter entered into force in 2012. So far, out of the fifty-five (55) Member States, forty-six (46) have signed the Charter, while thirty-one (31) have ratified it. Six (6) Member States have neither signed nor ratified this Charter. So far, only one Member State, Togo, has submitted its report on the implementation of the Charter. I urge all Member States that have not yet done so, to sign, ratify, domesticate and implement this Charter and report on progress. The conduct of democratic, credible and peaceful elections, that reflect the will of the people, is crucial in enhancing participatory governance and ensuring the legitimacy of the leadership, thereby creating condition for political stability. On average, there are fifteen (15) elections every year in Africa. Elections have the potential to anchor democracy and peace, much the same way that they can trigger violent conflict and undermine democratisation. Our collective task is to make sure that elections become an asset to democracy and peace and not a liability. The AU Master Roadmap emphasises the need to embed a culture of constitutionalism and uphold the rule of law, including recourse to and use of referenda – whenever circumstances so necessitate to tap from the collective will of the people in the evolving national constitutional architecture. This is crucial for peaceful political succession and predictable transfer of power. Governments must, as a rule, respect and act in accordance with existing legal instruments.

124. It is also imperative to inculcate a culture of human rights. Many conflicts on the continent have human right violations as one of their main causal factors. Conversely, all violent conflicts often lead to massive violations of human rights. So, human rights violations tend to be either a cause or consequence of violent conflict. Thus, in our efforts to silence guns, we will have to put spotlight on the promotion, protection and observance of human and peoples' rights. Dealing with human rights aspects of violent conflicts is also inextricably linked to addressing the humanitarian consequences of this crises on our continent. Conflicts results in massive forced displacement of our people in the form of refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons. It was in recognition of adverse humanitarian effects of violent conflict that the AU policy organs declared 2019 as the Year of Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons: Towards Durable Solutions to Forced Displacement in Africa. This decision is important as 2019 marks the 50th anniversary of the adoption of the 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa. Furthermore, 2019 also marks the 10th anniversary of the adoption of the 2009 AU Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa.

125. I am pleased to note that the decision of the Assembly declaring 2018 as Africa Anti-Corruption Year under theme "Winning the Fight Against Corruption: A sustainable path to Africa's transformation". This declaration will surely elevate the Union's efforts in combatting this scourge. I am grateful to President Muhammadu Buhari of Nigeria for accepting to lead us in our fight against corruption, as the Champion for the theme of the year. This was a big step in the right direction, but it is essential that Member States take urgent actions to domesticate and ratify the relevant AU and sub-regional anti-corruption instruments, as a way to enhance the efforts to silence the guns and promote stability on the continent.

126. The points made above highlight the importance of structural conflict prevention. To address this challenge, the Commission has been working with the RECs on a framework to address the root causes of conflict and coordinate and harmonize their interventions. In this regard, the Country Structural Vulnerability and Resilience Assessments and the related Country Structural Vulnerability Mitigation Strategies are powerful tools for strengthening Government resilience against root causes of conflict. Ghana is currently the first Member State undergoing this voluntary assessment process with the support of the Commission and ECOWAS.

127. Funding remains a serious challenge to overcome in the implementation of the Declaration on Silencing the Guns by 2020. Many activities contained in the AU Master Roadmap are time-limited with firm deadlines, and they require substantial resources to meet the targets by those deadlines. For example, the demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants who may voluntarily give up their weapons under the AU Amnesty Month decision require funding. Additionally, the Commission needs to finance activities of its High Representatives, Special Envoys and the whole mediation architecture in the implementation of the AU Master Roadmap, as well as a significant portion of the African-led peace support operations. Member States have responded positively to the strengthening of the Peace Fund, and I expect that this trend will continue to meet current and future needs.

128. Key to the efforts to silence the guns by 2020 is the issue of coordination with the Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, which

are part of the overall security architecture of the Union. In line with the PSC Protocol, the Union has primary responsibility for promoting peace, security and stability in Africa. The modalities for interaction between the Union and the Regional Mechanisms were further elaborated in the January 2008 Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in the Area of Peace and Security. While the normative framework is clear, implementation has proven to be challenging. There is still room for further progress in ensuring closer coordination and harmonization of efforts. I intend to take forward this issue, including through more regular meetings with the Chief Executives of the Regional Mechanisms.

129. More needs to be done to ensure that African citizens are adequately involved in all institutions and mechanisms aimed at silencing the guns by 2020. A major disconnect still exists between the Union's initiatives undertaken at the highest level of Government and aspirations at grassroots level. All too often, African citizens are either unaware of decisions adopted by the Union or unconvinced that these decisions will make a difference in their lives. The Union should, therefore, strive to give more visibility to the contribution of African civil society and other non-state actors in the field of conflict prevention, mediation and resolution, and facilitate a greater synergy of efforts.

130. More opportunities should be created for interactions with African civil society in the formats that are already in place. The Commission, therefore, intends to organize, in 2019, a highly visible and inclusive Peace and Security Forum that will bring together the Commission, relevant AU organs, the RECs, Member States and faith-based and civil society organizations on the continent and in the Diaspora. The purpose will be to exchange views on how, as Africans, we can pool our efforts together to realize the goal of a conflict-free Africa.

131. Silencing the Guns also requires renewed efforts to promote African solutions to African problems. This is more relevant today than ever before in the face of multiple challenges confronting the continent. Since the inception of the OAU/AU, African leaders recognized the multifaceted nature of African problems and the impracticality of ready-made solutions in the African context. Accordingly, they established several specialized committees, organs and entities to address African challenges, taking into consideration the realities of the continent. AU leaders have also adopted numerous decisions and policy instruments to provide home-grown solutions to the diverse challenges facing the continent. Implementing AU decisions is, therefore, the best way to give greater effect to the principle of African solutions to African problems.

132. The concept of African solutions to African problems seeks to reaffirm the primordial necessity for solutions to our challenges to be determined and led by ourselves. It requires of us to ensure that efforts to resolve these challenges are based on our analysis and understanding of the conditions and environment that exist in our societies.

133. It is important to recall the statement that Dr. Salim Ahmed Salim, then OAU Secretary General, made at the second meeting of the Chiefs of Defense Staff of OAU Member States in Harare, in October 1997: *"OAU Member States can no longer afford to stand aloof and expect the international community to care more for our problems*

than we do, or indeed to find solutions to those problems which in many instances, have been of our own making. The simple truth that we must confront today, is that the world does not owe us a living and we must remain in the forefront of efforts to act and act speedily, to prevent conflicts from getting out of control”.

134. African ownership does not mean Africa’s disengagement with the international community or rejection of the latter’s support. Upon my assumption of duties, I signed with the UN Secretary-General a ‘Framework to enhance AU-UN Cooperation on Peace and Security’. Broadly speaking, African ownership fits within the context of Chapter VIII of the UN Charter’s definition of the division of labor and sharing of responsibilities between the UN and regional organizations, which has been endorsed by various resolutions of the UN Security Council on cooperation with the African Union. African-led initiatives in the promotion of peace require, to be effective, the support of the international community. On peace and security, such support should be demonstrated more concretely by providing UN assessed contributions to AU-led peace support operations that are undertaken with the UN Security Council’s authorization.

135. The challenge for Member States remains on how to translate commitments into action. The Union is undoubtedly on the right track, but more efforts are required both in terms of domestic funding and the enhancement of our collective determination to take the lead in addressing the complex challenges that drain away Africa’s much-needed resources and stifle the creativity of its youth. Silencing the Guns by 2020 remains a laudable ambition and a highly desirable objective. Some major efforts have been made in this regard, but much more action is needed to translate this ambition into reality.

I. RATIFICATION OF AU LEGAL INSTRUMENTS

136. Since the inception of the OAU/AU, the Policy Organs have adopted seventy-one (71) treaties, including, more recently the Agreement on the AfCFTA (2018), the Statute of the Trust Fund for victims of Hissene Habre Crimes (2018), the Statute of the African Institute for Remittances (2018), the Protocol Relating to Free Movement of Persons, Rights of Residence and Right of Establishment (2018), the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disability in Africa (2018), and the Statute of the African Space Agency (2018).

137. All the OAU/AU treaties are based on the inter-linkage between peace, stability, development, integration and regional cooperation. This is intended to create synergy between the mandates and activities undertaken by the variety of AU organs and, therefore, help to consolidate Africa’s integration.

138. During its thirty-nine years of existence (1963-2002), the OAU adopted a total of twenty-four (24) treaties. In comparison, the AU has, since its inception, adopted a total of forty-seven (47) treaties, an achievement that can be attributed to its broader mandate.

139. Of the seventy-one (71) treaties adopted under the auspices of the OAU/AU, fifteen (15) are Statutes that entered into force upon adoption by the Assembly. The remaining fifty-six (56) are treaties proper and require Member States’ consent to be

bound by them. Of the fifty-six (56) treaties, only thirty-two (32) have entered into force, leaving a total of twenty-four (24) that are still awaiting the requisite number of ratifications or accession by Member States. The oldest treaty that is yet to enter into force is the Inter-African Convention Establishing an African Technical Co-operation Program. It was adopted forty-three years ago, in 1975. Others include the Protocol on the African Investment Bank and the Protocol on the Establishment of the African Monetary Fund. The following treaties are in force provisionally: the 2009 Constitution of the African Civil Aviation Commission, the Agreement for the establishment of the African Risk Capacity, and the Agreement for the establishment of the African Remittances Institute.

140. The rate and pace of treaty ratifications by Member States is a source of major concern for the Policy Organs. Several decisions have been taken to encourage Member States to improve the situation. There has been some progress, but much more needs to be done in this respect.

141. The past seven years have witnessed an increase in the rate of ratification, with twelve (12) ratifications in 2010, forty-one (41) in 2016 and forty (40) in 2017. Despite this growing rate, the pace of entry into force remains slow. For example, of all the treaties adopted from 2012 to date, none has entered into force, except for the Statutes which enter into force upon adoption by the Assembly. This slow pace has not improved in spite of the decision adopted by the Executive Council at its 14th Ordinary Session [EX.CL/Dec.459(XIV)], reiterating its appeal to Member States to commence the process of treaty ratification within one year of their adoption.

142. It is worth noting that the AU Constitutive Act is the only OAU/AU treaty that has achieved universal ratification. It is followed by the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, which has obtained fifty-four (54) ratifications.

143. There are various reasons for the slow pace of ratification. They include issues related to political commitment, administrative red tape, poor administrative coordination and limited technical capacity. The lack of involvement of African citizens and civil society organizations may also explain why ratifications are at such a slow pace.

144. The Commission has embarked on several activities to assist Member States to ratify and implement OAU/AU Treaties. Among them is the support to the establishment of National Sectorial Committees in line with Executive Council Decision EX.CL/Dec.705 (XXI) of July 2012. These Committees are mandated to assist the AU Ministerial Committee on the Challenges of Ratification/Accession and Implementation of OAU/AU Treaties in advocating for treaty ratification/accession and implementation, and in identifying strategies to encourage Member States to commence the process of ratification. National Sectorial Committees act as national focal points to transmit relevant information to the Ministerial Committee on the efforts made by Member States in relation to the signing, ratification/accession and implementation. The Committee also report on challenges encountered.

145. The RECs and other AU Organs – notably the Pan-African Parliament, the AU Commission on International Law (AUCIL), ECOSOCC, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and

Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) – are active in advocating for the need to expedite the process of ratification of/accession to OAU/AU Treaties. The Commission is working on a coordination mechanism to ensure proper synergy in these campaigns.

146. I urge Member States to accelerate the pace and the rate of ratification and implementation of treaties. The Commission stands ready to continue to provide to Member States any technical assistance required on the ratification processes and any other relevant information.

J. THE AFRICAN WOMEN LEADERS NETWORK (AWLN) AFRICAN WOMEN'S FUND (AWF)

147. In 2010, the Assembly decided to set up the AU Africa's Women's Fund, to mobilize resources from Member States to fund projects within the context of the African Women's Decade. Since 2016, USD 2 million has been mobilized and used to fund 119 small scale projects. While this modest achievement is commendable, the transformative effect on the women's landscape required by Agenda 2063 entails supporting women to double productivity in agriculture/ value addition; enhancing women's access to financial and productive assets, among others. Lessons to date indicate that further resource mobilization will be required to deliver the Agenda 2063 objectives on women

148. To complement the efforts of AWF, which is Member States-driven, an African Women's Leaders Fund (AWLF) is being set up under the auspices of the African Women Leaders Network (AWLN) to help achieve the objectives articulated in Agenda 2063. The AWLN is being set up through a collaborative effort between the AU Commission, the UN Economic Commission for Africa and UN Women, to mobilize resources from the global private sector. This Fund will support women initiatives and promote the growth of women-owned and operated companies; support women-owned, managed and focused fund companies; and promote an enabling environment for the increased participation of women across the continent.

149. The AWLN was launched at the UN Headquarters in June 2017, to galvanize women and mobilize them to play a significant role in the transformation of Africa. Since its launch, AWLN has undertaken solidarity missions to the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan and Nigeria. It convened its Second Forum in Addis Ababa in April 2018, under the theme: "Women Working together for the Africa We Want: From Commitment to Action".

150. The establishment of an African Women Leaders Fund is one of the AWLN's priority areas that will focus on improving funding for women's economic initiatives, women's business organizations, and expanding African women-led businesses. The Fund is innovative in that it seeks to address a fundamental gap in the access to finance architecture for women. There is still a chronic absence in financial institutions of women leading, managing and allocating finance to other women-owned businesses. This endeavour seeks to address this gap by designing a Fund to support a new generation of women managers. It will supply the market with qualified African women fund managers, provide capacity to them to learn and understand the structure and challenges of women's businesses on the continent enabling them to provide systemic solutions to these challenges. If successful, this Fund will also serve as a

growth outlet for the smaller micro-enterprise funds, providing women businesses with a vehicle that supports growth and scalability.

151. Over the next decade, the Fund intends to invest up to USD 500 million in African women-led companies and an additional USD 2 billion, through partnerships with African women fund managers. This Fund will be earmarked for each of the five (5) regions of Africa. The strategy for each region will be customized and evolve over time to address unique elements of the markets and to reflect priorities for each region.

152. Agenda 2063 and the UN Sustainable Development Goals affirm the importance of equal opportunities for women at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life. The African Women Leaders Fund is a concrete step aimed at turning these commitments into reality and helping achieve gender equality and women empowerment. I wish, therefore, to appeal to Member States to galvanize support at national and regional level for this critical endeavor.

K. INSTITUTIONAL REFORM

153. During its January 2018 Summit, the Assembly decided that, as part of the efforts to deepen consultations around the implementation of the AU institutional reform process, the Reform Troika, which comprises the Assembly Lead on the Reform as well as the outgoing and incoming Chairs of the Union, should be expanded to the Bureau of the Assembly of the Union. The Assembly also decided to establish a group of fifteen (15) Ministers of Foreign Affairs, three per region, to play an advisory role to the reform process.

154. The Bureau of the Assembly and the fifteen (15) Ministers of Foreign Affairs met on 26 May 2018. Chief Executives of the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) also participated in the consultation meeting.

155. The meeting discussed the ongoing reform implementation process and a Draft Issues Paper and Roadmap on establishing an effective division of labour between the AU, the RECs and other continental organizations, such as the AfDB and the UNECA. The meeting reiterated that the reform process is necessary and timely, and that it should be implemented within the framework of the AU Constitutive Act. The meeting also agreed that the inter-governmental nature of the organization should always be maintained. The meeting identified the reform of the Commission as a necessary and central part of the overall AU reform process. There was consensus that the structural reform exercise of the Commission should involve independent experts.

156. Establishing an effective division of labour between the AU, the RECs and other continental organizations has been an unresolved issue for decades. It was agreed that, if delivered, this will have a transformational effect in ensuring that the continental integration agenda is implemented faster and more efficiently. The meeting agreed that the Union cannot afford to continue dispersing and duplicating efforts, as this was not cost effective.

157. There were strong calls for the further rationalization of the RECs from the existing eight (8) RECs to five (5), in line with the AU regions. On their part, Chief

Executives of the RECs called for a better representation of the RECs within the AU, as well as a fundamental change in the way the AU-REC relationship is managed.

158. During the period under review, the Reform Implementation Unit conducted various meetings and consultations with the AU Organs and institutions that are the subject of the ongoing reform process. These included the Pan-African Parliament, the African Court of Justice, the African Commission on Human and People's Rights, the African Peer Review Mechanism and the NEPAD Co-ordinating Agency and the AU Advisory Board on Corruption.

159. The Commission, through the Reform Implementation Unit, also undertook consultations with the following five (5) RECs at their headquarters on the division of labour with the AU: COMESA, Economic Community for West African States (ECOWAS), the Economic Community for Central African States (ECCAS), the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). Consultations with the remaining RECs will take place after the July 2018 Summit.

160. In line with Assembly decision Assembly/AU/Dec.635(XXVIII) of January 2017, I am submitting the following reform updates and proposals for the consideration of the July 2018 Summit: (i) Division of Labour Issues Paper and Roadmap; (ii) Options for the selection of the AU Commission Leadership and a Roadmap for the Reform of the AU Commission; and (iii) Initial Findings on AU Organs and Institutions (i.e. the Pan-African Parliament, the judicial organs, the Peace and Security Council, and the African Peer Review Mechanism).

161. I am pleased to report that progress has been made on the financing of the Union agenda. Of the six (6) reform related financing decisions – on 0.2%, budget oversight, golden rules, sanctions regime strengthening, scale of assessment, and the Peace Fund – four (4) have been implemented ahead of the scheduled timeline. Since January 2018, the main focus has been on operationalizing the new budget process and the golden rules that were adopted in the January 2018 Summit. As a result of the application of the golden rules, the preparation of the 2019 AU budget process has witnessed enhanced credibility.

162. The first joint sitting of the F-15 Experts and the PRC Sub-Committee to review the 2019 budget is currently underway. As a result of a more rigorous scrutiny of projected expenditures, the proposed budget of the Union for 2019 has been reduced by 10%, compared to the 2018 budget. Options for a new scale of assessment for 2019-2021 have been prepared in line with the recommendation of the Ministers of Finance that 'caps' and 'minima' be introduced to improve overall burden-sharing among Member States and avoid risk concentration with respect to their annual contributions.

163. The initial proposals for reinforcing the existing sanctions regime for non-payment of contributions have been reviewed. The Ministerial Committee on the Scale of Assessment and Contributions requested the Commission to further strengthen the proposal and re-submit it for consideration. On the revenue side, twenty-three (23) countries are now at various stages of implementation of the 0.2% levy. Since 2017,

Member States have contributed a total of \$45.3m to the Peace Fund, the highest ever amount generated since the establishment of the Fund in 1993.

L. REVITALIZATION OF THE MINISTERIAL FOLLOW-UP COMMITTEE ON THE IMPEMENTATION OF AGENDA 2063

164. At the 32nd Ordinary Session held in Addis Ababa in January 2018, the Executive Council adopted decision EX.CL/Dec.998(XXXII)Rev.1, in which it called upon the Ministerial Follow-up Committee on Agenda 2063 – also known as the Bahir Dar Ministerial Follow-up Committee – to: (i) revive its initial vigour, including by convening twice a year within the framework of the Commission’s calendar of meetings funded from the AU budget; and (ii) be assisted by a group of Member States’ Ambassadors corresponding to the members of the Ministerial Follow-up Committee, which was formally institutionalized, as Ambassadorial Committee on Agenda 2063.

165. To recall, the Ministerial Follow-up Committee on the implementation of Agenda 2063 was established by a decision of the Executive Council [EX.CL. /Dec. 807(XXIV)] in January 2014, to provide political direction to the development of the final Agenda 2063 document and report to the Executive Council on its implementation. The Committee’s membership is comprised of the moderators of the 2014 Ministerial Retreat, the Chairs of the eight officially-recognized RECs, as well as the outgoing and incoming Chairperson of the Executive Council, the Chairperson of the Commission, the Chief Executive Officer of the NEPAD Agency, the President of AfDB, and the Executive Secretary of the UNECA. The tenure of the Committee was set for two years, following which the membership had to be reviewed, taking into account the spirit of rotation and regional balance.

166. In the first two years after its establishment, the Ministerial Follow-up Committee deliberated on various issues of importance to the Union and made several recommendations that were endorsed by the Policy Organs. Its achievements included the finalization of Agenda 2063 and its First Ten-Year Implementation Plan (FTYIP) and the organization of a series of Ministerial Retreats during which the Executive Council deliberated on issues pertaining to AU relations with the RECs and international partners; the streamlining of the meetings of AU Policy Organs; the financing of the Union and its Agenda 2063, to mention but a few.

167. Steps are under way to ensure the revitalization of the Bahir Dar Ministerial Follow-up Committee. The Ministerial Retreat held in Nairobi in May 2016 adopted the terms of reference of the Ministerial Follow-up Committee, which were later endorsed by the Executive Council during the July 2016 Summit in Kigali.

168. The terms of reference identified four main areas of competence for the Committee, namely: (i) strategic orientation of the Union; (ii) ensuring efficiency of performance of AU institutions; (iii) financing AU institutions and programmes; and (iv) accountability in the delivery of Agenda 2063, the First Ten-Year Implementation Plan and successive Plans. The terms of reference also identified the activities that the Ministerial Follow-up Committee would be tasked to carry out and made appropriate recommendations to the Ministerial Retreats for consideration by the Policy Organs.

169. The activities covered the monitoring of all aspects of the implementation of Agenda 2063, including its financing, the preparation of Ministerial Retreats and implementation of their outcomes, and the undertaking of mid-term reviews of Agenda 2063 Ten-Year Implementation Plan. The Ministerial Follow-up Committee has also put in place an Ambassadorial Committee on Agenda 2063, as directed by the Executive Council, which has developed its own rules of procedure, along with a work plan and methods of work.

170. The Ministerial Follow-up Committee is essential for monitoring the implementation of Agenda 2063. This task is now even more critical, considering the new dimension brought about by the Framework for a Renewed UN-AU Partnership on Africa's Integration and Development Agendas (PAIDA) and the African Union-United Nations Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals.

171. Over the past years, a number of activities have been undertaken to popularize Agenda 2063. These include domestication missions to 40 Member States; as well as the development of the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, in conjunction with NEPAD, UNECA and Member States experts. At the same time, a number of challenges remain linked to the lack of visibility of Agenda 2063 in Member States, limited knowledge of the Agenda within the Governments' Departments that are supposed to implement it, and budgetary constraints at national level.

172. It is against this backdrop that I discussed the issue of the popularization of Agenda 2063 with President Alassane Ouattara, the designated Champion for this Initiative, during my visit to Côte d'Ivoire on 31 May 2018. Subsequently, President Ouattara dispatched a team to the AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa, for consultations with the Commission on how best to support the implementation of his mandate and that of the Ministerial Committee. A number of ideas were explored, including the prioritization of the flagship projects, renewed efforts to popularize Agenda 2063, and the involvement of the Heads of State and Government of the countries that are members of the Ministerial Committee. The Champion is expected to present a comprehensive report to the Assembly at its January 2019 Ordinary Session.

M. THE AFRICAN UNION'S ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL COUNCIL (ECOSOCC) AND THE AFRICAN DIASPORA

i. ECOSOCC

173. ECOSOCC is mandated to enhance the contribution of African civil society organizations to the implementation of Agenda 2063. Its first strategic plan was adopted at the January 2018 Summit, and aligned with Agenda 2063's First Ten-Year Implementation Plan.

174. The Commission and the Government of Zambia are moving ahead with the relocation of the ECOSOCC Secretariat to Lusaka. The host agreement has been finalized; it is expected to be signed in the second week of July 2018. Furthermore, following the approval of the new ECOSOCC staffing structure by the Assembly, recruitment for priority posts of the Secretariat is underway. The ECOSOCC supplementary budget, which covers the cost of relocation and transition to Zambia

was approved by the Permanent Representatives' Committee on 28 February 2018. In a letter dated 20 April 2018, I provided a comprehensive update to President Edgar C. Lungu on the relocation process and other related aspects. I took the opportunity to convey my profound appreciation to the Government of Zambia for its support to the process and cooperation with the Commission.

175. In its Decision EX.CL/Dec.849 (XXV), the Executive Council requested ECOSOCC to undertake an in-depth study of its functioning since its inception, and provide appropriate recommendations, in line with the current reforms of the AU, on ways and means to revamp its operations and help it adequately perform its advisory role. The study is ongoing, and a report will be submitted soon.

176. Progress has also been made regarding the establishment of ECOSOCC National Chapters as a framework for accountability of elected members and a conduit for information dissemination and support mobilization for AU programs and activities [EX/CL/Dec.869 (XXVI)]. Fifteen (15) National Chapters have so far been established.

177. The Executive Council, through decision EX.CL/924(XXVII), requested ECOSOCC, as an advisory organ of the Union and in close consultation with the Commission, AU organs and Member States, to actively pursue the development of a harmonized mechanism with clear criteria for the granting of AU consultative and observer status to Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Africa. Consultations have started on this matter. A framework for the engagement of CSOs and interface with the AU is expected to be in place before the end of 2018.

ii. The African Diaspora

178. There are over 170 million people of African descent living outside Africa. The majority are in the Americas, the Caribbean and in Europe. The global African community represents a vast pool of human capital that can be leveraged for Africa's development and her dynamic participation in global affairs, provided that the right policies and structures of engagement are in place to maintain its active link with the continent.

179. Remittances to Africa exceeded US\$63 billion in 2015, providing a lifeline to many families on the continent. In addition to remittances, the African Diaspora contributes in philanthropic activities, knowledge exchange, business investments and trade links, and better access to non-African capital markets. The World Bank estimates that the African Diaspora saves US\$53 billion annually, most of which is currently invested outside Africa. This vast amount could be mobilized for Africa via instruments such as diaspora bonds and diaspora investment funds.

180. The size of the African Diaspora and its vast pool of skills and resources dictated the need for the Union to put in place effective engagement mechanisms that can harness this asset for the benefit of Africa's development and integration. In recognition of the importance of the global African community, the Assembly declared the African Diaspora as the Sixth (6th) Region of the continent.

181. The Commission, working with Member States, has developed several initiatives to tap into skills, resources and networks of the global African community.

Firstly, the Commission is helping Member States to build their capacity in diaspora engagement. Currently, at least thirty-six (36) Member States have established diaspora engagement units within their national Governments, with the unique mission to engage and mobilize their compatriot communities abroad in support of national development. Diaspora focal points range from full Ministries to Departments within the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, to stand-alone Commissions or Offices within the Presidencies.

182. Secondly, the Commission continues to establish and strengthen African diaspora networks globally. These networks allow for joint planning, development and implementation of development initiatives in Africa. As a follow-up to the Action Plan of the Global African Diaspora Summit, the Commission has instituted a program of Regional Consultative Conferences (RCCs) as a vehicle to enable consultations with various Diaspora stakeholders and give practical effect to the designation of the African Diaspora as the 6th Region.

183. In addition, the Commission has initiated several diaspora engagement activities that showcase the value of diaspora participation in Member States. The Commission also works on specific initiatives that are designed to harness the skills, knowledge, resources and networks of the African Diaspora, particularly skilled professionals, entrepreneurs and technical experts, to support economic development priorities in Member States. The Commission has also accelerated efforts to strengthen its cooperation with Member States, through the Working Group on Diaspora Engagement, to support capacity building and to develop mechanisms for coordinating and harmonizing the work of the Commission with that of national and regional diaspora engagement frameworks.

184. With regard to the establishment and support of African diaspora networks, the Commission continues to utilize the RCC mechanism to engage with the various Diaspora stakeholders around the world on its programs and on ongoing efforts to make the Diaspora an integral part of the Union. Official diaspora networks are now operational in the Caribbean Region, Australia, Canada and Europe.

185. In addition, the Commission has initiated work on the African Diaspora Youth Volunteer Corps, the African Diaspora Investment Fund, and the Promotion of African Diaspora Business and Investment in Africa. These initiatives are designed to create modalities for channelling diaspora investment and entrepreneurship to Member States.

186. The Commission has intensified its efforts to expedite the implementation of the Program of Action adopted by the African Diaspora Summit held on 25 May 2015, with special reference to the full operationalization of the Assembly's Declaration on the Sixth Region. New partnerships and frameworks for engagement have been developed with civil society organizations across all five regions of the continent, to ensure the full dissemination and popularization of AU policy decisions and programs.

187. As the Commission works to operationalize the people-centred aspirations of the African Union, Member States are strongly encouraged to join this effort by creating new spaces or expanding existing ones to enable civil society and diaspora

constituents to bring the full complement of their contributions in support of Africa's development.

N. STATUS OF SUBMISSIONS TO THE INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE ON THE CHAGOS ARCHIPELAGO

188. Member States will recall that, at the request of the AU, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) extended the deadline for making written submissions on the issue of the completion of the decolonization of the Republic of Mauritius, as a follow-up to the advisory opinion on the legal consequences of the separation of the Chagos archipelago from Mauritius at independence in 1965. The new deadline was set for 1 March 2018.

189. Subsequently, the Assembly, at the January 2018 Summit, adopted Decision Assembly/AU/Dec.684 (XXX) calling on all Member States, RECs, the League of Arab States, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and all AU partners to make written submissions to the ICJ in support of the Republic of Mauritius. Given the tight deadline, and in order to ensure a coordinated response, the Commission distributed to Member States a simplified and short draft Statement that could be used for this purpose. The Commission also sent out communications to the RECs, the League of Arab States and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, encouraging them to submit to the ICJ their first written Statements before 1 March 2018, in their regional capacity, to amplify the position of the AU on the matter.

190. The AU submitted its first written statement on 1 March 2018. Eight (8) Member States, as opposed to twenty-one (21) UN Member States, also did so. These are: Djibouti, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mauritius, Namibia, Niger and Seychelles.

191. The second AU statement was submitted to the ICJ in May 2018. The Commission also sent a communication to Member States, in April, May and June 2018, encouraging them to inform the Registrar of the ICJ of their intention to take part in the hearings on the legal consequences of the separation of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius by/before 15 June 2018. A reminder was also sent to Member States urging them not to miss the stipulated deadline.

192. Oral proceedings have been rescheduled for 3 September 2018. The Commission is working with the Government of Mauritius to ensure a larger African presence at this event. The Commission is preparing its own oral statement for the September hearings to convey to the ICJ the position of the Union on this matter. It is encouraging to note that, so far, the majority of the written statements were made in favour of Mauritius's submission.

193. I would like to reiterate the Commission's determination not to relent in its efforts until the Chagos question is settled in all its aspects, through a comprehensive, just and lasting resolution, in accordance with international law. I commend the Member States that have submitted statements, in compliance of the relevant Assembly decisions, and call on all Member States to participate in the hearings scheduled for September 2018.

O. PARTNERSHIPS

i. Forum for China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC)

194. The AU Commission and the Chinese Government held a strategic dialogue on 8 February 2018 in Beijing, where I met with Foreign Minister Wang Yi. In line with Executive Council Decisions EX.CL/Dec.942(XXX) of January 2017 and EX.CL/Dec.986(XXXII), which requested the Commission to collaborate with African members of FOCAC, and to work closely with the Government of China for deepening cooperation within FOCAC, this Dialogue is meant to inform the continental dimension of the upcoming FOCAC Summit. This was the second such dialogue in less than one year, as Minister Wang Yi had visited the AU Commission in June 2017, where similar discussions were held. I also met with the African Group of Ambassadors in Beijing, who were fully briefed about the strategic dialogue discussions.

195. At the Strategic Dialogue, we agreed on a path to increase Chinese investments in Africa, particularly in regional projects linked to infrastructure, energy, digitalization, industry, agriculture and pharmaceuticals. We also reviewed progress on people-to-people relations and exchanges under the Johannesburg Declaration on FOCAC and agreed on the need to promote two-way tourism flows, including by increasing the number of African approved destinations for Chinese tourists, and increasing Chinese investment in tourism infrastructure in Africa. In a related manner, we discussed the need for facilitating air traffic between the China and the African Continent, including the possibility of China offering an open skies privilege to African airlines. We also reviewed progress on the Africa Centres for Disease Control, including establishment of the premises for the CDC, as well as provision of laboratory facilities and technical assistance. China re-iterated its commitment to continue supporting African-led efforts to promote peace and security. In this respect, China reported that it had begun delivery of the first batch of assistance to the Africa Standby Force, valued at USD 25 million out of USD 100 million pledged in total.

196. Subsequently, I discussed issues relating to FOCAC with President Ramaphosa during my visit in South Africa on 14 April, 2018. We agreed on the need to coordinate efforts on the African side together with China on preparation of the FOCAC Summit, in the pursuit of the integration agenda.

197. The Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, Mr. Li Zhanshu, visited the AU on 11 May 2018. The AU headquarters was his first stop on his first visit to Africa after the March 2018 Chinese elections. Discussions followed up on the Strategic Dialogue outcome and reiterated the importance of implementing the agreement reached.

198. The AU Commission conducted a fact-finding mission to Beijing from 27 to 29 May 2018, to launch the process of setting up an AU representational mission in Beijing, in accordance with the FOCAC Action Plan (Johannesburg 2015), which was endorsed by Executive Council Decision 942 (January 2017). The mission also discussed preparations for FOCAC Summit. The mission made significant steps that would allow opening of the office in September 2018.

199. On the margins of the upcoming FOCAC Summit, the Commission plans to organize a side event to inaugurate its representational mission, as well as a side event on investing in infrastructure in Africa, namely “InfraDay”, in collaboration with a number of partners. *InfraDay* will take place on the eve of the 2018 FOCAC Summit under the theme of “Enhancing China-Africa Cooperation on Regional and Continental Infrastructure and Energy projects Development under PIDA and the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative”. The event will provide a platform for marketing investment potentials in African infrastructure development and enabling the creation of synergies between African and Chinese investors in the development of African infrastructure. In doing it will capitalize on the synergies between the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA) and the Chinese Belt and Road initiative.

ii. Common African Position for a new Cooperation Agreement with the European Union (post Cotonou negotiations)

200. The end of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement between the EU and 78 African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries on 29 February 2020 will mark the next major milestone in the African Union – European Union partnership. The current Cotonou Partnership Agreement is a legally-binding treaty that covers trade, development cooperation and includes a political dimension. Its imminent expiry offers an opportunity for Africa to build a new framework for cooperation with Europe, taking into account developments in Africa over the past 15 years, and giving priority to continental integration and sustainable development.

201. Over the past six months, the Permanent Representatives Committee, in collaboration with the Commission, has taken a number of steps to follow up on Executive Council Decision EX.CL/Dec. 986 (XXXII) on the post-2020 Cotonou Agreement. An African Common Position for the negotiations with the EU was adopted in Kigali, on 19 March 2018, by an Extraordinary Session of the Executive Council, with a recommendation for refinements of the Position to be processed expeditiously. The Position emphasizes the need for Africa to be treated as a single and indivisible entity, and further stresses the requirement for the new agreement to be concluded independently of the ACP Group and on the basis of a commitment to a strong and sustainable partnership between the African Union and the European Union. It also clarifies that the cooperation framework should accommodate the interests, specificities and aspirations of each African region and country. The Position also reaffirms AU commitment to continuously strengthen South-South solidarity and the existing partnership between Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific States.

202. In adopting the African Common Position, the Council allowed one month for regions to submit their comments. In addition to comments made at the Executive Council meeting in Kigali, comments were also received in writing from some Member States and RECs. The Common Position was enriched with those inputs, and finalized by the Commission following a formal meeting, on 17 May 2018, in Addis Ababa, of the Task Force set up for this purpose, in accordance with stipulations of the relevant Executive Council Decision.

203. I subsequently sent the final version of the African Common Position to all African Heads of State and Government with individual letters urging collective adherence to it. I also wrote to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Togo on 19 May 2018,

requesting support of the Togolese authorities to allow the Chair of the AU Executive Council to present the African Common Position at the ACP Council of Ministers held in Lomé on 27 May 2018, and liaised with the ACP Secretary-General and other stakeholders for the same purpose.

204. Subsequently, the AU participated in the ACP-organized “Inter-Agency Consultative Meeting with Regional and Continental Organizations on the ACP Group’s Negotiating Framework for a Post-Cotonou Agreement with the EU”, held in Lomé, Togo, on 26 May 2018. The AU delegation presented the African Common Position. Despite the wide support expressed by regional African organizations to the Common Position, some delegations took the floor to recommend adherence with the ACP structure, in a tacit challenge to the principles contained in the African Common Position at the ACP Council of Ministers. There was a demonstrated lack of unity on the African side, which resulted in a denial of the request for presenting the African Common Position. As anticipated, the ACP Council of Ministers at that meeting adopted its negotiating mandate. Further, the meeting selected Togo to lead the negotiations on behalf of the ACP. The ACP ministerial meeting was followed by the 43rd Session of the ACP - EU Council of Ministers, which endorsed the outcome of the 107th ACP Council of Ministers.

205. Next steps for Africa is to prepare for negotiations of a post-Cotonou agreement between Africa and Europe. At this stage, the two partners see that agreement differently. From the AU perspective, this should be a continent-to-continent agreement detached from the ACP structure. From the EU perspective, this should be a compact with Africa under a post-Cotonou agreement to be concluded at the ACP level. This gap in vision will have to be bridged, in order to make progress on this critical and strategic partnership.

206. Africa has made enormous progress in establishing a mature institutional framework that includes a variety of instruments that are hardly matched in the developing world. That includes legally-binding agreements and tools that cover areas as vast as trade, finance, sectoral development, peace and security and good governance. The EU, the largest donor to the AU, has been part of such progress and certainly would continue to value the importance of continental integration. The new Agreement between the two continental institutions should be based on principles of parity and mutual respect. It should support Africa’s determination to enforce its own positions in the global arena and to have its voice heard, independent of external interference, while recognizing the diversity of Africa and the specificities of its Member States and regions.

207. The African Common Position gave an unambiguous signal that the successor to the Cotonou Agreement cannot be based on a linear extension. The evolution of both continents over the past 20 years was at display in the approach and deliberations of the AU-EU Summit that took place in Abidjan in November 2017. The Abidjan Declaration called for a paradigm shift to an even stronger, mutually-beneficial partnership in the spirit of shared ownership, responsibility, reciprocity, respect and mutual accountability and transparency. The EU’s multi-annual financial framework (2021–2027) published in May 2018, whose External Action component would finance the post-Cotonou partnership with Africa, among other regions, recognized this evolution and called for “a major restructuring of the external action instruments” and

a greater focus on priority themes and select geographic regions of importance, namely Africa, the Neighbourhood and the Balkans.

208. As part of its own evolution, Africa has identified structural transformation, through industrialization, as its own way to foster progress and generate the type of growth that will respond to the demographic challenges it faces. Traditional overseas development assistance has shown its limits in investment mobilization and job creation, which prompted the EU to begin several years ago to directly support private sector promotion and investment with new innovative instruments. With a similar objective in mind, the AU intensified its efforts to speed up continental economic integration, which culminated in the signing of the AfCFTA, the Single African Air Transport Market, and the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons in Africa. The speedy and consistent progress on continental integration, and the need to go beyond aid, are important shifts that cannot be ignored in any post-Cotonou agreement.

209. On the security front, Africa and Europe have exponentially increased their cooperation in peace-keeping and peace support operations, as well as in counterterrorism, conflict prevention, post-conflict reconstruction and related areas. Europe plans to raise its own investments in security 22 folds in 2021-27 period, compared to 2014-20. Any Post-Cotonou agreement should put priority on the need to reflect similar urgency in addressing questions of its own security.

210. Europe in recent years has put in place programs and instruments to manage migration flows. Africa has developed its own. Both sides agreed to revitalize the migration and mobility dialogue, which forms a critical piece of the AU-EU partnership and should aim to bridge existing gaps between the two approaches, in order to also reach agreement within the post-Cotonou agreement.

211. On the political front, the AU has been active in developing instruments that ensure good governance, such as its own Constitutive Act; the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance; the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights; and the architecture governing the implementation of the above. Those instruments are Africa's own, and for that reason should serve as the reference points in a post-Cotonou Agreement, to replace similar areas in the current agreement.

212. The AU has stressed the importance of making its voice heard in the international arena. It shall govern its interventions through an active support to multilateralism, by promoting dialogue and political solidarity with like-minded regions, including with Europe, as well as with the Caribbean and Pacific regions.

213. The adoption of the Common Position is part of the overall efforts of our Union to speak with one voice and effectively defend the continent's interests on the world stage. The current international context, unfortunately marked by a weakening of multilateralism, confers an even greater urgency on the need for Africa to close its ranks in dealing with global issues that impact its future. I look forward to the forthcoming negotiations on a new cooperation regime that further illustrates the ability and determination of Africa to speak with one voice and advance its continental principles.

P. AFRICA AND EMERGING CHALLENGES TO MULTILATERALISM

214. In my report to the January 2018 Summit, I observed that the prospects for peace, security and development in Africa are closely intertwined with the global multilateral order under the aegis of the United Nations. I noted that Africa has much to gain from a world order governed by the rule of international law, in which decisions of global import are taken in a collective manner, and where global institutions carry out their mandates for the benefit of all its members.

215. Over the past seven decades, and despite its inherent defects, multilateralism has delivered tangible results and had positive impact on the resolution of African issues, from armed conflicts and humanitarian crises to the collective fight against poverty, pandemics and climate change, to name but a few. Africa has also contributed to the maintenance of international peace and security, the development of international norms on human rights, refugees and internally-displaced persons, as well as the prevention of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

216. Recently, however, developments in different parts of the world appear to put under strain the current multilateral order, challenging its very existence and undermining its institutional and normative foundations. Member States that contributed to the building of multilateralism have taken steps that could seriously undermine the edifice they so judiciously erected. Regime change through unilateral use of force and/or other means, in violation of the UN Charter, is also of concern.

217. Doubts are being raised about the viability of various international agreements on global security, trade and climate change – and the relevance of institutions mandated to enforce them, as a few countries elect to withdraw their initial adhesion and revert to unilateralism and protectionism. At the same time, the world's intergovernmental institutions that were created to serve as the guardians of humanity's welfare have gradually become weak and unable to oppose the nationalistic pressures exerted by some of the most influential states that consider intergovernmental institutions as obstacles to their definition of welfare and development, as they wrestle with rising domestic inequality and deepening social polarization. In sum, the positive gains of the erstwhile multilateral order appear to be either lost or facing major reversals.

218. This was also the conclusion of the 8th Annual Retreat of the AU Special Envoys and Mediators that was held in N'Djamena in October 2017. Participants noted with concern the deepening rifts in international relations and the frequent recourse to unilateral actions by some countries against others, often in violation of agreed international norms and procedures. They underscored that a rules-based multilateral order remains the primary mechanism for enhancing international cooperation in addressing peace, development and environmental challenges. While stressing the need for its democratization, participants also reaffirmed the primacy of the United Nations as the legitimate global forum for an effective and inclusive multilateral order.

219. I have followed with great concern the escalation of trade disputes among major international trade partners and the imposition of unilateral sanctions in the pursuit of protectionist agendas in disregard of established international trade regulations. It is

worth recalling that similar trade pressures have been exerted against some of our Member States.

220. Following the allegations of chemical weapons use in Syria in April 2018, I expressed the Union's strong condemnation of any use of chemical and other weapons prohibited in international law. Stressing the AU's strong commitment to multilateralism, I underlined that any response to such acts ought to be based on incontrovertible evidence gathered by a competent, independent and credible entity and to comply strictly with international law, including the primacy of the United Nations Security Council for any recourse to force. I reminded permanent members of the UN Security Council that Africa expects them to put aside their differences and spare no efforts in the pursuit of global peace and humanity's common good, in line with the responsibilities conferred upon them by the United Nations Charter.

221. On 9 May 2018, I also expressed deep concern at the decision of the United States Government to unilaterally withdraw from the July 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPoA) on the Iran nuclear program and its plans to re-impose sanctions on the Islamic Republic of Iran. I noted that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has consistently confirmed Iran's full compliance with the terms of the Agreement, which was unanimously endorsed by the United Nations Security Council. I stressed that the decision taken by the United States Government has the potential to heighten tensions in the region, as well as further erode confidence in the credibility of international commitments. Furthermore, this decision deals a serious blow to multilateralism and to international regimes on nuclear verification.

222. I also noted with deep concern the situation prevailing in the Palestinian territories in May 2018, following the relocation of the United States Embassy in Israel to Jerusalem. I strongly condemned the disproportionate use of force by the Israeli army, which resulted in the killing of over fifty Palestinian demonstrators, while many more were wounded. I stressed that the relocation of the United States Embassy to Jerusalem could only heighten tensions in the region and complicate the search for a lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I reiterated the AU solidarity with the Palestinian people in their legitimate quest for an independent and sovereign State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and called for renewed international efforts to find a just and lasting solution to the conflict, based on the existence of two States, Israel and Palestine, within the framework of the relevant United Nations resolutions.

223. I also issued statements in support of the peaceful settlement of disputes and dialogue, which are part and parcel of the underlying principles of multilateral order. Thus, I welcomed both the Inter-Korea Summit of 27 April 2018, which adopted the Panmunjom Declaration, and the Summit meeting between Chairman Kim Jong-un of North Korea and the President Donald J. Trump of USA on 12 June 2018, expressing hope that they will pave the way to lasting peace, stability and prosperity in the Korean Peninsula, including its complete denuclearization.

The AU is deeply committed to multilateralism and respect for international law under United Nations leadership. No efforts will be spared in advancing multilateralism in cooperation with other likeminded members of the international community. I am pleased to note that many of our international partners have also reaffirmed their commitment to multilateralism.

224. Africa's multilateral agenda is inextricably linked to a strong and impartial United Nations that acts in partnership with the AU and its RECs and in accordance with Chapter VIII of the UN Charter. Africa's effective presence in the UN-led global order is also inextricably linked to its adequate representation in the UN system at all levels, particularly in the Security Council whose agenda remains largely dominated by African issues.

225. As a major participant in the global world order with, among others, a presence of over a quarter of total UN membership, the AU must become more active in furthering global world order and strengthening multilateralism. For us in Africa, the pursuit of shared goals of global peace, security, stability and development are not negotiable. We must continue to underscore the importance and leading role of multilateral institutions as the appropriate instruments to address the multifaceted and inter-related challenges confronting the international community.

226. For the Union, the maintenance of a rules-based international order, which advances a relatively level-playing field for all, is both a matter of principle and a necessity for the satisfaction of our collective interests. When it is effective, multilateralism serves the best interests of smaller, weaker countries in the global system and shields them from the arbitrariness and impunity of the mightier.

227. I am convinced that, amidst the current global tensions and the weakening of multilateral institutions, the AU must rise up and speak with one voice in support of multilateralism in the 21st century. The current challenges of multilateralism offer an opportunity for the Union to reposition itself for the emergence of a reformed world order and contribute to the building of an alliance of nations in which Africans will play their dutiful role as a dynamic force.

228. To do so, the Union needs to focus on four major priority areas: (i) a relentless pursuit of African unity and integration agenda; (ii) a heightened focus on tapping our own resources and capacities; (iii) the ability to act collectively and withstand external pressure in the pursuit of our collective interests; and (iv) enhanced communication with African citizens within and outside the continent.

229. The Commission will continue to provide an assessment of emerging trends, its trajectory for the world and the continent, and the kind of action that is required from our Member States to preserve the multilateral order while ensuring, albeit through its reform, equity and fairness for all its members, as well as the realization of Africa's legitimate interests.

Q. STRENGTHENING ACCOUNTABILITY WITHIN THE COMMISSION AND VIS-À-VIS THE POLICY ORGANS

230. Following the pledge I made at the Joint AUC-PRC Retreat in Cairo in December 2017, the Commission has held, since March of this year, several interactive sessions with the PRC to keep Member States informed about its work and that of other AU Organs and specialized institutions. These interactions aim to improve the working relations between the two Organs, promote a better flow of information and increase accountability on the overall management of the Organization.

231. Progress reports have been shared with the PRC on a monthly basis on several specific issues, such as the Pan-African e-Network, livestock and animal disease control, control of outbreaks and pandemics, food safety, geothermal risk mitigation, among others. These interactions and the progress reports are crucial as they provide updates on critical work streams to Member States and identify the actions that are required from the Union to enhance Africa's development and improve the wellbeing of the African people. The Commission intends to continue these monthly interactions, to keep Member States regularly informed about our work and the support we expect from them.

232. In line with the on-going institutional reforms, I have directed the Commission to scrupulously implement the measures that I have issued on the strict observance of AU Staff Regulations and Rules, the Financial Rules and Regulations, as well as the Code of Ethics and Conduct. These measures touch on the need to enforce good governance at all levels of the Organization, including in recruitment process, performance evaluation, staff development, and promotion of quotas reserved for women and youth.

233. I have also issued instructions to reinforce the AU Travel Policy by, among others, reducing official missions and limiting them to those of productive relevance to the Union's core priorities. Travel plans are now submitted every quarter with the necessary justifications and indications about their duration, which is not to exceed 21 calendar days. Likewise, meetings, seminars and workshops shall be planned in accordance with the Union's core priorities, with attendance at an advanced level and size.

R. ENTRENCHING PAN AFRICANISM AND AFRICAN RENAISSANCE

234. Agenda 2063 aspires to fully entrench Pan-Africanism by the year 2063. It recognizes that our common history and destiny, our shared values and heritage, our religious and cultural diversity shall be a cause for Africa's strength and the foundation of our consciousness as Africans on the continent and in the Diaspora.

235. African leaders reinforced this aspiration during the celebration of the Golden Jubilee of the founding of the OAU/AU on 25 May 2013. In the 50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration, the Heads of State and Government declared their "strong commitment to accelerate the African Renaissance by ensuring the integration of the principles of Pan-Africanism in all policies and initiatives", as well as their "unflinching belief in our common destiny, our shared values and the affirmation of African identity, the celebration of unity in diversity and the institution of African citizenship". As Africa commemorates historic events and the passing of its illustrious sons and daughters, it is appropriate to reflect on their legacy and long-lasting significance to the Union's determination to realize its peace, development and integration agenda.

i. The Adwa Victory

236. Over 122 years ago, the Ethiopian people mobilized as one to fight at Adwa against invading Italian forces. The Adwa Battle on 1 March 1896 was an outstanding

African victory over colonial forces. As such, it represented a watershed in the history of our continent and had global resonance and impact.

237. The Adwa Victory is not just a major historical event for our Ethiopian brothers and sisters, but also an enduring source of pride for the entire continent and for all the people across the world who, at one time or another, were subjected to colonial domination. The Adwa Victory inspired the rise of liberation movements on the continent and galvanized all oppressed and colonized peoples to gain confidence and fight for the liberation of their people and the independence of their countries.

238. In a statement I issued on 25 May 2018, on the occasion of commemoration of this historic victory, I congratulated the Government and people of Ethiopia and I noted the many lessons that Ethiopians and our Union can draw from the victory at Adwa. The most significant among those lessons is the critical importance of self-reliance, patriotism, selflessness and unity, irrespective of political, ethnic and other differences.

239. These were the values that united and motivated Ethiopians who joined hands together to defend their motherland and sacrificed their lives for the higher interest of their country, thus securing its sovereignty. These were the same values that galvanized and motivated other liberation struggles across the continent and beyond, for freedom from the yoke of colonial domination, apartheid and racial discrimination.

240. At this juncture in the history of the continent, we should rekindle these values and the spirit of our forefathers.

ii. Commemorating the roots of Pan Africanism – Centennial of the Pan African Congress (1919—2019)

241. The year 2019 will mark the centenary of the First Pan-African Congress that was organized in Paris by people of African descent from 19 to 21 February 1919. This event will coincide with the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Sirte Declaration on 9 September 1999, which transformed the Organization of African Unity (OAU) into the African Union (AU) and gave a renewed impetus to Africa's unity and socio-economic integration.

242. The Pan-African Movement was launched in London in 1900 by Henry Sylvester-Williams and other leaders of the African Diaspora, who coined the term Pan-Africanism. The First Pan-African Congress was followed by similar events in London (1921 and 1923), New York City (1927) and Manchester (1945). Efforts were made to revive the Pan-African Congresses in Dar es Salaam (1974), Kampala (1994) and, more recently, in Accra (2014).

243. The First Pan African Congress in 1919 is memorable in that it took place at the time of the Versailles Conference. Prominent leaders of African descent in the Americas, such as W.E.B DuBois, took advantage of the presence of all European powers in Paris to demonstrate the unity of all people of common African ancestry, call for self-determination of African colonies, and change the narrative about the inferiority of black people.

244. These positions were reaffirmed at the 1945 Manchester Congress by a new generation of intellectuals from Africa and her Diaspora, such as Kwame Nkrumah, Adam Clayton Powell and George Padmore, who forcefully asserted their rights to reject colonial domination and to be ruled by their own elected leaders. Ghana's independence in 1957 and the establishment of the OAU in May 1963 were the first tangible outcomes of this and previous Pan-African Congresses.

245. The centenary of the First Pan-African Congress in 1919 should be another momentous opportunity to reflect on our past and honor our unity as Africans, on the motherland and her Diaspora. It is, therefore, fitting for the AU to commemorate this historic event. The centenary should also be an opportunity to renew the AU's respect to those women and men who initiated the Pan-African movement, starting from the 19th century, and sustained it up to the establishment of the OAU and its successor, the African Union. Illustrious forebears include Henry Sylvester Williams, Dr. W.E.B. DuBois and Ida Gibbs Hunt, George Padmore and Blaise Diagne, Marcus Garvey and Edward Wilmot Blyden, and all the committed Pan- African women founders of the *All African Women's Conference* in 1961 who midwived the OAU in 1963.

246. Since its advent, the AU has adopted several decisions and taken many initiatives to strengthen the links with the African Diaspora. The African Diaspora is recognized in the AU Constitutive Act and declared as the Sixth Region. Worldwide consultations led by the Commission culminated in the convening of the Global Diaspora Summit in South Africa in May 2012. A Directorate in the Office of the Chairperson of the Commission is specifically dedicated to handle Diaspora issues.

iii. Commemoration of Africa Day – 25 May

247. Every year, 25 May is celebrated as Africa Day throughout the continent and in some parts of the world by friends of Africa and people of African descent. In my statement on the occasion this year, I noted that the launch of the AU in 2002 marked a major step in the continent's journey towards greater integration and unity. It was a testimony to the determination of the leadership of the continent to fully take charge of the continent's destiny and to find solutions adapted to the needs and aspirations of African people.

248. More importantly, the advent of the AU marked an acute awareness of the need to more actively involve fellow Africans in the management of the business of the continent. The AU's unity and integration agenda is a collective ambition, whose realization requires, therefore, the involvement of all Africans.

249. Let me, however, note with regret that Africa Day was observed only in a limited number of countries, which declared 25 May as an official holiday, in accordance with relevant decisions of the Policy Organs. I wish to recall that, in addition to the Declaration of 25 May as Africa Liberation Day taken at the 1964 OAU Summit, the Assembly, at its July 2000 Summit, adopted a decision (AHG/Dec.157/XXXVI) proclaiming 25 May as a work-free day throughout the territories of the Member States of the OAU and requested Member States *to organize activities to bring peoples closer together, reaffirm their faith in the integration and popularize the ideals of union in the continent.*

250. The OAU Council of Ministers, meeting at its 74th Ordinary Session in July 2001 in Lusaka, Zambia adopted decision CM/Dec.32(LXXIV) on singing/playing the OAU anthem and hoisting the OAU flag. Displaying these symbols will assist in popularizing the principles of unity, solidarity and integration, especially among the youth and children. In the 50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration, the Heads of State and Government, once again, undertook to fly the AU flag and sing the AU anthem along with national flags and anthems.

251. I commend the Member States and, particularly, the Government of the Republic of Namibia, for implementing these decisions. I urge all other Member States – by far the majority – to put in place appropriate legislative and regulatory measures to implement these decisions. It is my fervent hope that Africa Day in 2019 will be fully observed throughout the continent, as requested by the Heads of State and Government since 2000.

iv. Preparations for the Mandela Centenary

252. During the January 2018 Summit, the Assembly, recalling its earlier decision to declare 2014-2024 as ‘Nelson Mandela Decade for Reconciliation in Africa’, adopted Declaration Assembly/AU/Decl.2 (XXX), in which it decided *inter alia*, to (i) observe 2018 as the Nelson Mandela Centenary; (ii) convene a meeting in honor of Nelson Mandela at the July 2018 Summit in Nouakchott; and (iii) support the holding of a Peace Summit on the margins of the 73rd session of the UN General Assembly on 17 September 2018, under the theme “Strengthening the role of the UN in the promotion and maintenance of international peace: Building on Mandela’s Legacy”.

253. As directed by the Assembly, the meeting to honor Nelson Mandela’s centenary is already scheduled to take place at the July Summit in Nouakchott. Furthermore, consultations are ongoing with the Government of the Republic of South Africa and the United Nations, towards the planning and arrangements for the Peace Summit. Update on the preparations of the Summit will be provided as necessary.

254. Meanwhile, at the initiative of the Permanent Representative of the Republic of South Africa to the AU, the Embassy of South Africa is planning to organize a Round Table discussion in Addis Ababa on 18 July 2018, to mark the celebration of the centenary which will fall on that date. The discussions at the Round Table will focus on Madiba’s legacy, particularly his clarion call for nation-building, reconciliation and redress of past injustices. They will also provide an opportunity for an evaluation of the current state of Pan-Africanism, democracy, peace, justice and development, as well as on youth, migration and unemployment issues. The Commission looks forward to working closely with the Permanent Mission of South Africa to ensure the successful holding of this event.

v. Celebrating Winnie Mandela’s legacy

255. I wish to note with sadness the passing, on 2 April 2018, of Winnie Madikizela-Mandela. “The Mother of the Nation”, as she was affectionately called, was an icon of the anti-apartheid movement. Fearless and selfless, Winnie never wavered in her commitment to the struggle, despite imprisonment, banishment and other abuses. Winnie Madikizela-Mandela paved the way for women in the struggle to end apartheid,

and fought relentlessly for their rights and welfare. It was in recognition of her formidable contribution that the Commission conferred to her a lifetime achievement award in 2017.

256. It is against this background that, in April 2018, I paid a visit to the family of the deceased, in Soweto, to express my condolences on behalf of the Union and on my own behalf. I also extended our collective respect and admiration for this formidable lady who overcame the harshest humiliations inflicted by the apartheid regime to become a role model for many within and outside South Africa.

S. REASSERTING SELF-CONFIDENCE AND PRIDE IN AFRICAN IDENTITY

257. Crude generalizations about Africa and African people have prevailed in the Western world from ancient Greece to the colonial era. The dominant image of Africa was of a continent full of savagery, famine, diseases and wars. Africa was not only “different”, but also dangerous. It was the Heart of Darkness, the Dark Continent, a place so forbidding that it was of no use to humanity. Backwardness and predetermined biological inferiority were perceived to be the hallmark of African people. Their subjugation – through slavery, colonialism and apartheid – was thus justified for their own benefit.

258. The stereotype subsided briefly in the immediate aftermath of the postcolonial era, but it has resurfaced in recent times, in subtle and not so subtle ways, as observed in the resurgence of racism, exclusion, discrimination and degrading treatment inflicted on Africans and people of African descent in different parts of the globe.

259. During the commemoration of the OAU/AU Golden Jubilee, African leaders deliberated without complacency on the continent’s situation in all its complexity. They recognized that serious challenges remained in the implementation of the integration agenda, the involvement of African citizens in the management of the Union’s priorities, notably the quest for peace and security, the fight against poverty, disease, inequality and underdevelopment, and ensuring Africa’s rightful place in the world. In the 50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration, African leaders stressed their determination to take full responsibility for Africa’s destiny and endeavoured to realize a united and integrated Africa, pledging self-sufficiency and self-reliance.

260. Some progress has been made since then, collectively and by individual Member States. However, the road to self-reliance and self-sufficiency is still long and arduous. Without self-sufficiency and self-reliance, the obstinate prejudice against Africans and people of African descent, and the stereotypes that come to the minds of some outsiders about Africa, will still prevail.

261. The Union must therefore continue to act in unison to change this situation and the related narratives. More importantly, we must have full confidence in our ability to address the challenges at hand. Solutions are in our hands, within our reach and on this continent.

T. CONCLUSION

262. Three major themes run through this Introductory Note. First, is the critical importance of putting our house in order and making our Union more efficient and more effective as an international institution in the comity of Nations. There is urgency to focus inwards through reliance on our own resources and capacities. The imperative of the AU reform, the urgency of securing domestic financing for the implementation of Agenda 2063, and the need for a substantial reduction of the dependency on external funding for our programs remain key priorities. Equally important is the need to advance the goal to silence the guns, as well as take forward our agenda on democracy, human rights and good governance.

263. I would also like to underscore the crucial importance of being steadfast and resolute in speaking with one voice on issues of concern to our continent and the world at large. Member States have recently demonstrated their attachment to this imperative in adopting the African Common Position for the upcoming post-Cotonou negotiations. I wish to reiterate my appeal to all Member States to adhere to the Position taken, and participate actively and in full force in the negotiations starting from next August this year.

264. Third is the daunting challenge of implementing the decisions and policies of the Union, including ratification of OAU/AU legal instruments. As directed by the Assembly, I intend to pursue, with the utmost vigour, consultations with Member States, the RECs and other AU entities, on how to improve our scorecard on this critical matter in order to demonstrate, in real terms that these legal instruments matter to the lives of fellow African men, women and youth.

265. I look forward to the continued support of the Policy Organs in the coming weeks and months as together, we strive together to implement Agenda 2063 and realize the Union's peace, development and integration agenda.