

**OPENING ADDRESS BY PRESIDENT PAUL KAGAME****11<sup>th</sup> EXTRAORDINARY SUMMIT OF THE AFRICAN UNION**

Addis Ababa, 17 November 2018

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Good morning. Let me begin by thanking His Excellency, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, along with the Government and people of Ethiopia for the warm hospitality and for serving once again as our host.

We also note that this is the Prime Minister's first time attending a summit like this one. Your Excellency, congratulations and welcome.

The purpose of this Extraordinary Summit is to advance the institutional reform of our Union. Events on our continent and across the world continue to confirm the urgency and necessity of this project. The goal is simple: To make Africa stronger and give our people the future they deserve.

I am pleased to note that we are very much on course. We have passed the halfway point and the end is in sight. But there is still very important work to do. Today the Assembly will consider detailed proposals for making the Commission itself more effective and performance-based, now and in the future. This goes straight to the heart of the Reform Decision.

We would not have reached this stage without extensive collaboration and consultation between the Executive Council and the Commission, with outstanding support from the Permanent Representatives Committee along the way.

Allow me to commend the Chairperson of the Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, and the Reform Implementation Unit for this important achievement, without forgetting the Member State representatives at every level who have ensured fidelity to the vision set forth by the Assembly. This is exactly how we should be conducting our business.

I wish to conclude with three final points.

Excellencies, *je tiens à vous remercier*. It was your unwavering support that brought Africa's candidate to head the Francophonie, Louise Mushikiwabo, to victory. This shows yet again that when we are united, nothing is impossible for Africa.

Second, we welcome the lifting of sanctions against Eritrea by the United Nations Security Council. This action will contribute to the ongoing process of normalisation in the Horn of Africa. Thanks to the leaders in this region, beginning with Prime Minister Dr Abiy Ahmed and President Isaias Afewerki of Eritrea for their courageous actions, and the other leaders who worked with them.

Finally, I wish to extend, on behalf of the African Union, condolences to the governments and people of Malawi and Tanzania for this week's tragic loss of their peacekeepers. Our thoughts and prayers are with the families of the fallen soldiers.

I should also mention that we wish our brother, President Ali Bongo, a quick recovery and continued stability for his country, Gabon.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you for your kind attention and look forward to a productive Summit.