

AFRICAN UNION

الاتحاد الأفريقي



UNION AFRICAINE

UNIÃO AFRICANA

**THIRTY SECOND ORDINARY SESSION
OF THE ASSEMBLY OF THE UNION**

**10-11 FEBRUARY 2019
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA**

**STATEMENT OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE
COMMISSION OF THE AFRICAN UNION**

H.E. MR. MOUSSA FAKI MAHAMAT

Excellency Current Chairman of the African Union,
Excellencies, Heads of State and Government,
Mr. Secretary General of the United Nations,
Mr. Secretary General of the League of Arab States,
Representatives of the Regional Economic Communities,
Invited Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to begin by wishing you, Excellencies, a Happy and Prosperous New Year 2019.

To you Mr. Chairman and dear Brother Paul Kagame, I would like to tell you that I was very happy to work under your Chairmanship. Your impressive leadership abilities and qualities are matched only by your humility, your modesty, your ethics and your righteousness. We have learnt a lot during this year, in which we have pooled our efforts to serve the Continent. For all this, I express my sincere gratitude and congratulations.

(صاحب الفخامة السيد عبد الفتاح السيسي رئيس جمهورية مصر العربية،
يطيب لي و يشرفني كثيرا أن أنتهز هذه المناسبة الجلى للترحيب بكم رئيسا دوريا للاتحاد الإفريقي. و لأعرب عن قناعاتي
أن رئاستكم ستدفع دفعا جديدا للاتحاد الإفريقي لما تتميزون به من خصال نبيلة و لما لمصر من مكانة تاريخية و حضارية
عريقة و لما تشكل إفريقيا في المخيال المصري من مقام عظيم حيث قال الزعيم الراحل جمال عبد الناصر "إن إفريقيا هي
الثورة النابضة " بعينها.)

(*Excellency Abdel Fattah Al Sisi, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt,*

I have the pleasure and honour to welcome you as the Current Chairman of the African Union. I am convinced that your Chairmanship will give a new impetus to the African Union because of your noble qualities, the historical and cultural prestige and ancient civilisation of Egypt and the vision of Egypt about Africa as a great place where the Late leader Gamal Abdel Nasser said " Africa is a pulsating revolution".)

To the Presidents Andry Rajoelina and Félix Tshisekedi, who are joining this Assembly, I extend my warm welcome and express my best wishes of success in their exalting responsibilities.

The commitments you solemnly made at your inauguration will be the flags of your endeavour to build your countries thirsting for peace, stability, justice, of democracy and development .

To their Excellencies, the thematic champions, I extend my warm congratulations on the efforts made and initiatives taken to accomplish the missions which your colleagues entrusted you in the construction of our exalting Africanist project.

Excellencies
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The theme of this year raises in me emotions that I cannot hide. I have been myself a refugee for years. I experienced the deprivation and the nostalgia of my dear ones..

The phenomenon of forced displacement is, therefore, significant. The Commission of the African Union wants our proclamations of faith on this theme sound, finally, the knell of all forms of apathy, inertia or indeed mere resignation before the horrors of the unbearable scourge.

It is important that we tackle more resolutely the rootcauses of this phenomenon in parallel with the speeding up of their operationalisation of the African Humanitarian Agency.

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The year 2018 witnessed progress made in our flagship projects.

The achievement of the required number of ratifications for the Continental Free Trade Agreement is now within reach. The first Coordination Summit of June/July 2019 in Niamey will be held in the country, a symbol of the fight for this Agreement when probably it will have already entered in force, thus crowning your commendable efforts, President Issoufou.

Such a progress augurs well, without lapsing into excessive optimism, for an encouraging development for the Single Air Transport Market, the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons and the African Passport

The issues of peace and security are taking concrete shape. A new era has, henceforth, dawned in the the Region. We are for this very grateful to Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and the other leaders of this Region who have engraved in the marble of African solidarity, cooperation and good neighbourliness.

The fight against terrorism in The Sahel and in the Lake Chad Basin certainly continues to be a real source of concern for us. In spite of the remarkable efforts made by the countries of the Region, The situation remains very serious. There is need for a new impetus of solidarity.

This situation is worsened by the persistence of the Libyan crisis. We call for the pooling of national and international efforts for the rapid organisation of the Peace and Reconciliation Conference.

As regards the conflict in the Western Sahara, the new mechanism was set up at the Nouakchott Summit. The first meeting of the Mechanism will be held on 10 February and a Roadmap will be adopted to enable the AU to contribute to the efforts of the United Nations and to play fully its role as regards this issue.

The recent Peace and Reconciliation Agreement confirms the great progress by the African Initiative that we launched since 2016. Our efforts will focus on its implementation with maximum speed.

This is an opportunity to congratulate President Faustin Archange Touadera and all the leaders of the armed movements of the CAR as well as President Omar Hassan Al Bashir and the Government of The Sudan, who accorded hospitality to host the Talks in Khartoum. We also thank the United Nations and all the multilateral and bilateral partners that contributed to this major success.

Excellencies
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Elections in Africa also greatly mobilised us. In spite of the challenges it is to be noted that the democratic awareness and practices have progressed much on the Continent. In all the elections the Commission strove to provide the relevant support and ensure the best assistance to the Member States engaged in often difficult and decisive electoral processes.

This year there will be the organisation of 16 national elections. As a result, the efforts made in 2018 will have to be stepped up so that the Organisation can continue to carry out its duty of solidarity with the member States.

The question of youth was given special attention and care by us. A special Envoy for Youth, Ayah Chebi of Tunisia, was appointed following an open and transparent process. An Advisory Youth Council was set up. The way has been paved for a new and beautiful adventure in response to the immense expectations of African youths, in a hurry, rightly so, to win the worthy place they deserve in our national and continental institutions.

The gender dimension and the centrality of women in the African project remain a major priority for us. The struggle for parity against inequalities based on gender, sexism, must be pursued with renewed vigour. This is the determination we have made as soon as the Report of the African Panel on these issues in our Union was deposited.

In this regard, I solemnly wish to inform you of the launch of the African Union Gender Strategy adopted in Nouakchott in July 2018, the implementation of which will mobilise our energies. I express my heartfelt gratitude to all those who contributed to it.

Excellencies
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Agriculture, environment, health, education, scientific research and innovation occupied a very important place in our action throughout the year. They will remain at the centre of our programme for 2019 and beyond. The key idea is to ensure, by all means, that the AU, often perceived by the citizens as a distant entity, becomes this active actor impacting concretely on their daily life.

The tragic situation of African migrants has, for a number of reasons, mobilised us at the highest level. This is the place to express our gratitude to the organisations and States, including Qatar, which allotted \$ 20 million to fund the massive repatriation and reintegration of African migrants.

Our active participation in the global summit on the issue of migration in Marrakesh, Morocco, was motivated by the same concern.

This humanitarian and social action was accompanied by the commitment of the Commission in the fight against Ebola, in the DRC in particular.

Excellencies
Ladies and Gentlemen,

There has been significant progress in our strategic partnerships, both in their diversification and in their content. Our partnership with the United Nations continued to deepen in the service of common objectives and consensual approaches - Thank you Dear Friend Antonio Guterres for your commitment. The same vitality marks the partnership with the European Union. I am happy that these two multilateral partnerships have henceforth reached their age of maturity.

With the Arab world, the preparation of the Arab-African Summit has begun. Despite the fact that it is rooted in the history of the two entities that bring us together and unite us, this partnership remains below our expectations. We should leave no stone unturned to reactivate it.

At the bilateral level, the remarkable success of FOCAC, held in Beijing, shows an unprecedented dynamism of our partnership with China. The opening of an AU office, with substantial help from China, will strengthen this already fruitful and multifaceted partnership, including the Strategic Dialogue between the Commission and the PR of China.

Progress has also been made in other Partnerships. Within the framework of political consultations with the other Permanent members of the Security Council, we pursued the Strategic Dialogue with the United States. Similar efforts are underway with Russia and France and intend to do the same with the United Kingdom.

Moreover, I note the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with the United Arab Emirates. The commitment of Africa to participate in the Dubai World Expo 2020 is expected to shed new light on the role of Africa and its immense potentialities for investment.

Excellencies

Ladies and gentlemen,

In the area of reform we are making steady progress towards financial autonomy and improving accountability. The F15 is in place and playing a strong oversight role. As a result we were able to rationalise the AU budget and reduce it by 12% in 2019. 26 countries are implementing the 0.2% levy.

We have strengthened the sanctions regime for the non-payment of contributions by the Member States which will now ensure payments on time.

49 Member States have contributed \$89m to the AU Peace Fund which now has its Board of Trustees in place. Agreement on the Scale of Assessment for the regular budget for 2020-2022 is already in hand.

The Extraordinary Summit on the AU reforms in November 2018 took important decisions: Streamlining the senior leadership, enhancing performance management and accountability at the leadership level and strengthening the selection process for the senior leadership that will be overseen by a Panel of Eminent Africans.

I hope this Assembly will select those Eminent personalities so that the Panel can begin its important work.

Looking ahead, the Assembly has requested me to present a new Departmental structure for the AU Commission for consideration and adoption by the Executive Council in June 2019 in Niamey, Niger, which is intended to improve overall coordination and ensure a clear division of labour between the RECs and the African Union Commission. Reform is tremendously progressing . It is irreversible.

Excellencies

Ladies and gentlemen,

May I, as a final remark, highlight, not without intense emotion, this formidable combination of temporal symbols that hover around our Summit : the Centenary Anniversary of the First PanAfrican Congress, to be celebrated on 19 February in Paris, the Twentieth anniversary of the Sirte Declaration transforming the OAU into the African Union and, the cherry on the cake, the unveiling of the statue immortalising Emperor Haile Selassie, this worthy figure of the Founding Fathers of our Organisation.

These events play, each one, its note in the symphony of the memory and the remembrance which makes our historical inheritance an inexhaustible source of inspiration.

At a time when multilateralism is suffering its most serious battering, after the end of the cold war, such symbols are there to convey to us the strong message that our true salvation is in our unity, our historical continuity and our strong anchoring in our civilisational heritage.

I wish you full success in your deliberations.

I thank you