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**Opening Address by H.E Moussa Faki Mahamat**

**High-Level Dialogue on the African Union Theme of Year 2019**

**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

**Mandela Hall, African Union Commission**

**9 February 2019**

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

It is my singular honor and pleasure to welcome you to this high-level dialogue on the African Union theme of the year, which is, the “*Year of Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons: Towards Durable Solutions to Forced Displacement in Africa.*” The 32<sup>nd</sup> Ordinary Session of the Assembly, tomorrow will officially launch the theme.

**Ladies and Gentlemen.**

Today’s high-level dialogue between key stakeholders, such as yourselves, is a unique and timely opportunity to share and challenge the notions and approaches that guide our response to the effects of forced displacement.

No country or region can tackle the issue of forced migration alone; it is a global phenomenon that requires concerted global action. But an African focus is important in our discussion today; not least because the African continent hosts one of the largest number of displaced persons in the world.

Forced to flee their homes by conflict, natural disasters, the effects of climate change and other factors, once self-sufficient communities, often just children, suddenly lose the lives they knew to uncertain realities of being a refugee at the mercy of humanitarian assistance and international generosity.

I too, for eight years of my life, was a refugee. Your voices as responders and policymakers are vital, but I urge you to include the voices of those who experienced first-hand, the reality of forced displacement.

## **Ladies and Gentlemen.**

The scale and scope of these crises and their protracted nature require innovative and robust approaches that tackle the root-causes and implement approaches that support durable solutions.

For this to occur we often find that resources are limited especially in areas where they are needed most. Countries that are recovering attract less global attention. Our search for solutions must also include assisting communities in their reconstruction efforts after they return home.

The face of refugees is often young and female. The solution must be no different. I have asked my youth envoy Ms Aya Chebbi, to moderate and guide our discussion this morning. I hope she will challenge you but also share with you some of the vital perspectives of the Youth.

## **Ladies and Gentlemen.**

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the continued commitment of the Commission in general and myself in particular to work with all of you during and beyond the lifespan of the theme of the year.

**I wish you fruitful discussion and look forward to your conclusions and recommendations**