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**Statement of H. E. MR. MOUSSA FAKI MAHAMAT, Chairperson of the
Commission of the African Union**

**On the occasion of the Opening of the 38th Ordinary Session of the
Permanent Representatives Committee**

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

17 June 2019

Excellency Mr. Osama El Khalek, Chairman of the Permanent Representatives Committee,

Distinguished Permanent Representatives, Members of the PRC,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to address you on the occasion of the solemn opening of this 38th Ordinary session of the PRC. First of all I would like to welcome the representatives and plenipotentiaries who have come directly from our capitals. I wish them a pleasant stay in our midst.

Your Committee, as I keep saying, is an essential organ in the life of the African Union. It forms, with the Commission, the linchpin of our organisation. We are with you, proud to be the architects on a daily basis, of this Africa that we want.

Each one, in his own area of competence, performs, under conditions that are not always easy, his fundamental part of the common work.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

Our Union has chosen to dedicate the year 2019 as the Year of Refugees, Displaced Persons and Returnees. It has set itself the task of "*finding lasting solutions to forced displacements in Africa*". The theme is both a challenge and summons us to quickly end this spiral of forced displacements in the various theatres of conflict and crises that continue to plague large areas of the Continent. The unbearable situation severely handicaps the fulfilment of our vision of a united, integrated, peaceful and prosperous Africa. Its persistence, if it is not quickly curbed, or, at the very least reduced, seriously jeopardizes our resolute march towards the harmonious integration of the Continent. The legitimate dream of integration has remained the deepest motivation for the crucial stages in the life of our Organisation, from the inception of the OAU in May 1963, through the Abuja Treaty in June 1991, the unanimous adoption from Agenda 2063 in January 2015, until the adoption of the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement of Africa and the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons in January and March 2018.

The eradication of the scourge is not only an ethical and moral imperative for African citizens in distress, it is also a duty of solidarity with the host countries where such African citizens, instead of being a demographic dividend in their countries of origin, become an excruciating burden and vectors of permanent insecurity in the countries of the host countries.

The noble mission of finding lasting solutions to the phenomenon of forced displacements is indeed at the heart of the prerequisites of good democratic governance and effective conflict prevention. The action is, as you can imagine, in direct relation with one of the most important flagship projects of Agenda 2063: "*Silencing the Guns on our Continent by 2020*".

Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your session is being held at an intense moment in the Institutional Reform of our Union. The time has come for your Committee will debate the new structure of the Commission, its different ramifications as well as its financial implications.

This exercise, you know as much as we do, is not easy. It is the demanding effort of an ingenious and methodical adaptation of our institutions and our means to the ambitions of the gradual implementation of the prescriptions of Agenda 2063 and its Ten-year Plan.

The relevant services of the Commission worked closely with the appropriate PRC Sub-Committee on the analysis of the Budget 2020, which will have to be adopted, for the first time, by the Executive Council, by the authority delegated to it by the Assembly of the Union, within the framework of these same reforms. It is, quite rightly, a transitional budget towards that of 2021, the adoption of which will coincide with the establishment of a new reformed Commission, in accordance with the decisions of the last Extraordinary Summit of November 2018. At this juncture, we are fully engaged in the implementation of the administrative and financial reforms adopted by the Extraordinary Summit as well as the relevant recommendations of the Internal and External Audit Reports.

In this regard, I would like, but as you already know, to assure you of our continuous cooperation and readiness to ensure the full success of the very first Summit of Coordination, scheduled for 8 July in Niamey.

Niamey will also witness the historic launch of the ACFTA by our Heads of State and Government meeting in an Extraordinary session on 7 July 2019. This will be an opportunity to solemnly thank the 23 Member States that have already ratified the Free Trade Area Agreement and appeal to all other Member States to do so at their prompt convenience. It behoves you, Excellencies, to engage yourselves forcefully with your capitals to obtain the maximum number of ratifications for the purpose of building this ACFTA on solid baptismal font. These same efforts must be made to promote the ratification of the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, which has been ratified by Rwanda and Mali only. Such a situation, you will agree, is not likely to establish the credibility of the decisions we make.

Mr Chairman,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your 38th Ordinary Session will also allow you to take stock of the situation of partnerships.

The objective is the implementation of the orientations given by the Assembly which lay down the principles of ownership of our programmes and their complementarity. In this way, the partners will only be in support of our own development efforts, which is reflected in the fact that 75% of the Programme Budget is funded by 2020, in accordance with the decision of the Johannesburg Summit of June 2015.

In the same vein, the choice of financing for African peacekeeping operations has made progress. I welcome the fact that 51 Member States have heeded the appeal, since to date we received contributions to the tune of 115 million Dollars, which makes it possible to hope that by 2021, we will have reached the noble objective. I appeal to the States that have not yet done so to join in this collective effort of sovereignty, responsibility and dignity, so that together, in this domain, Africa will give the proof of its will to seek and find African solutions to African problems.

During your deliberations, you will also have to make proposals for the themes of the years 2020 and 2021, reflecting the priorities of the time inscribed in Agenda 2063. By choosing the themes, year after year, the AU and its Member States are involved in the collective effort for consistent and significant progress through concrete and quantifiable achievements in the chosen themes.

I am sure that you will draw on your intellectual reservoir so that the themes that will be chosen correspond to pertinent imperatives, both saving grace and achievable. Indeed, such choices should not be fashionable and, even less so, mere slogans and simple pinch of conscience. We want them to be true flag bearers for collective wide ranging exemplary action in the much desired covenant of speech with deed.

With these words of ardent wish, I wish you fruitful deliberations on all the agenda items, a guarantee for a thorough preparation of the forthcoming Ordinary session of the Executive Council in Niamey on 4 and 5 July.

I thank you for your kind attention.