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MESSAGE OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION

MOUSSA FAKI MAHAMAT

ON THE OCCASION OF

THE PAN-AFRICAN WOMEN'S DAY

31 JULY 2019

Fellow Africans, dear sisters and brothers,

Today, 31st July, all of us as Africans come together in the spirit of solidarity to celebrate and acknowledge the Foremothers of Africa who gallantly fought for the liberation and development of this continent. I take this opportunity to honor these pioneers and women of fortitude, who mobilized to ensure that women's rights and gender equality are integrated in Africa's emancipation agenda. Many women leaders, we see across the continent today, stand on the shoulders of these women of valor, who dedicated their lives to Africa's advancement. It gives me great pleasure indeed to also acknowledge the efforts of all women across the continent and the Diaspora who continue to work very hard to build the Africa we want.

I am particularly honored to be part of the celebration of the 57th anniversary of the Pan-African Women's Organization (PAWO), the Specialized Agency of the AU dedicated to gender equality and women's empowerment.

Today's celebrations take place against the backdrop of the recently launched African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). I am convinced that, if implemented as envisaged, the African free market will benefit businesswomen and ease their burden to transact freely across borders. I wish to see equal participation of women in all aspects of the AfCFTA, including in national Committees. As we continue implementing other continental priorities as outlined in Agenda 2063, our collective path towards unity, shared prosperity and lasting peace, we must ensure that the best of our human capital is fully utilized.

African women continue to be the backbone of our economies as farmers, entrepreneurs, traders, scientists and leaders in many other sectors. However, key Agenda 2063 projects such the open skies, blue economy and infrastructure development cannot be realized without the full involvement of women and youth.

As the Chairperson of the Commission, one of my priorities remains the full implementation of the policy organs' call to have gender parity in the workforce of the AU by 2025. It is within this context that I recently appointed the first ever AU Youth Envoy who is a woman. I also continue to advocate for Member States to adopt and implement policies as well as create conducive environment for women to participate effectively, equally and fully in all sectors of society.

Immediately after my appointment, I visited different crisis and conflict zones across Africa where I witnessed the plight of displaced persons, the unspeakable suffering they experience and their resilience in the face of adversity. In 2019 as the AU Year of Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons and as a former refugee myself, I will continue to demand dignity and protection for all women and girls who have been forcibly displaced in Africa.

As Africans, it is our collective responsibility to hold ourselves and our leaders accountable to deliver on our gender equality and women's empowerment commitments.

Happy Pan African Women Day!