

**THIRTY THIRD ORDINARY SESSION OF THE ASSEMBLY
OF THE AFRICAN UNION**

**STATEMENT OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMMISSION OF THE
AFRICAN UNION, H.E. MR. MOUSSA FAKI MAHAMAT**

Addis-Ababa, 9 February 2020

**Excellencies Heads of State and Government,
Honourable Ministers,
Invited Guests,**

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to this crucible of African unity where we collectively build, year after year, the future of Africa. At the same time, I would like to seize this opportunity to express to you my sincere wishes for a Happy New Year for yourself, for your States, for our peoples and for our Continent.

اسمحوا لي قبل اي حديث ان اعرب عن عظيم التقدير لفخامة السيد

عبد الفتاح السيسي رئيس جمهورية مصر العربية للعمل الجبار الذي قام به طيلة توليه رئاسة اتحادنا السنة

المنصرة. و انها لسانحة متميزة لاثمن عاليا طيب العمل مع فخامته و حسن تعامله معنا خدمة لقضايا القارة ولدفع مختلف مشاريعنا ذات الصبغة الاستراتيجية

انني لامل ان نظل نستفيد من تجربته و حكمته في المستقبل

I wish to congratulate His Excellency President Cyril Ramaphosa on his election as Chairman of the Union for the year 2020 and assure you of my full support. As we are in the Mandela Hall, the spirit of Madiba is watching over us. I imagine him telling you, Cyril, you are loyal to our struggle for Africa. You know that Africa needs leadership and I look forward to you doing your best.

I seize this opportunity to warmly congratulate the Right Honourable Prime Minister of Ethiopia, Dr. Abiy Ahmed, for the distinction for being chosen as the Nobel Peace Prize Laureate

**Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The year that just ended has not been a year full of peace and harmony across the world. The one that has dawned does not announce that we are at the end of our troubles. It calls upon us to constantly mobilise all energies to take up the arduous challenges.

At the Eastern front of Africa, the tension around the Red Sea and especially the straits where almost a third of world trade transits, cannot leave us indifferent, given the seriousness of these tensions and their proximity to Africa.

These intense international tensions remind us of the precariousness of the world in which we live and the futility of the international commitments which were made to spare mankind the horrors of war.

The case of Palestine best illustrates the fragility of international commitments. The American-Israeli plan, described as "deal of the century", designed without any international consultation and worse still, in the absence of the main actors concerned, the Palestinians, is an umpteenth violation of the multiple resolutions of the United Nations and the African Union and an additional disdain for the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.

It is to be feared that this plan, which purports to want resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, will, on the contrary, contribute to heighten tensions in the region and beyond.

The persistence of the hotbeds of terrorism in many regions of the African continent and their worrying development, is a stark reminder that this cancer is far from being eradicated. The hydra remain active, threatening to cause the collapse of some States. It has taken root in the heart of the Continent as evidenced by the heinous crimes committed by terrorist groups, against the civilian populations in Mozambique, Tanzania and in Eastern DRC where the main victims of their barbaric acts are women and children.

The Horn of Africa, the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin are at war today, a real war in which dozens of soldiers and civilians die almost every week. Thousands of children have seen their schools closed either because they are destroyed or because both teachers and pupils have been forced to flee.

In the response to this particularly bloodthirsty and blind enemy, the deficit of African solidarity is truly disconcerting. How can we escape the unbearable question about our silence in the face of the situation of these brotherly countries? To put it bluntly, apart from the victim countries themselves, Rwanda and the announcement made by ECOWAS and Rwanda, no African country, to the best of our knowledge, including those of our Union with significant economic, financial, industrial, logistical and military potential, has made the gesture of solidarity that our brothers, in danger, should have the right to expect.

This deficit of solidarity is a weakness of our resistance and our overall continental resilience systems.

This resilience is also being put to the test on the occasion of different natural disasters: floods in Zimbabwe, Malawi and Mozambique, locust invasion in Ethiopia, Uganda and Kenya and threats of famine in some areas of Southern Africa.

So it is at this moment that our compassion is firmly with our friends in the People's Republic of China, grappling with the terrible pandemic of CORONAVIRUS, and to whom we address our solidarity.

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our countries are making significant efforts to meet the expectations of a growing and demanding youth. These efforts deserve to be maintained and strengthened, in order to prevent these young people from taking the perilous paths of immigration or seek refuge in extremist doctrines.

To supplement the initiatives taken by each of our member States, which I would like to salute here, I intend to pay attention, in consultation with the Advisory Council for Youth and my Special Envoy Ms. Aya Chebbi, to the issue in the programme of the Union, through the “1 million by 2021 Initiative”. This Initiative, which I launched in April 2019, aims at offering one million young people opportunities in the fields of education, employment and entrepreneurship by the year 2021

The empowerment of women on the Continent and fighting for gender parity and protection from the violence they endure, is a key concern of the African Union.

The Year 2020 is a pivotal year for gender equality and parity on which my Special Envoy, Mrs Bineta Diop is working. Our member States have made great strides: Women empowerment through access by women entrepreneurs to procurement contracts, the agricultural value chain and through laws promulgated including solutions proposed to eradicate violence against women. To succeed in this struggle, I will support Member States to declare the 2020-2030 the decade of the financial inclusion of African women. Women are rightfully demanding it and I fully support them.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

A third scourge disrupting the harmonious development of many African countries and calls into question our ancestral social balance, is the phenomenon of inter-community conflicts. This revival of communitarianism

has itself thrived on the weakness of the State and various amplifying factors.

The deterioration of climatic conditions and the dislocation of traditional economic systems increase the competition for the resources needed for survival and their decreasing availability fall way below the needs of human beings.

The combination of these factors with the manipulations and desire of some elites to utilise these phenomena for political ends, just as the terrorists are doing, create the conditions for real disaster among our populations. This problem is not only a challenge for political leaders but it is also one that is a preoccupation for the continent's academics, researchers and academicians.

To the global challenges, of which the preceding ones are only illustrative and not exhaustive, I would like to add two specific questions which add new ardent obligations to our responsibilities. It is about the issue of the Western Sahara and the fate of Libya.

The Western Sahara conflict remains the oldest unresolved conflict on the Continent and is a source of concern for both the functioning of our Organisation and the populations. I am determined to pursue my efforts for an effective implementation of the Nouakchott decision which asks the Troika to "give an effective support to the efforts made by the UN" to whom the parties have voluntarily entrusted the search for a lasting and fair solution to the dispute.

On Libya, Africa has constantly clearly and consistently reminded of its rejection of any military solution to the crisis, and our preference for a genuinely inclusive political process that is Libyan-owned to decide on their national destiny, within the framework of their Continental organisation.

I welcome and support the decision of the AU High Level Committee of Libya to launch a peace and reconciliation initiative in Libya, in accordance with the principle of African solution to African problems, far from outside interference that have rival and perilous agendas for Africa.

In affirming these principles, we have never ceased to stress that Africa should play its full role in finding a solution to this crisis, in active and effective cooperation with all our international partners, in particular the United Nations.

Obviously, such an orientation can only succeed if the Continent is united and speak with one voice.

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen,

If the past year was characterised by formidable challenges, some of which I have just described, it was also a year of great achievements.

In the area of peace and security, we pursued our efforts, in consultation with IGAD for peace-building and reconciliation in South Sudan, where the parties were strongly encouraged to accelerate the process of pacification and reconciliation in the country. The formation of a Government of national unity, within the time allotted to the protagonists, is an exigency and a necessity for the establishment of peace.

In Somalia, AMISOM, continues to deploy in a particularly difficult context in the fight against terrorism while supporting the stabilisation and reconstruction efforts made by the federal government. Here I would like to pay tribute to the civilian and military members of our existing mechanism and to the Troop Contributing Countries for the sacrifices made and the results obtained.

In the Central African Republic our efforts, together with those of the Government and the United Nations, intensified to ensure the rigorous application of Peace and Reconciliation Agreements. I am delighted to see that significant progress has been made despite the incidence of acts violence recorded recently.

In Cameroon, notwithstanding the organisation of the National Political Dialogue, the situation in the country deserves sustained attention. The Commission is ready to support the process of peace-building and reconciliation.

In Sudan, the African mediation process scored a resounding success with the Agreement that led to the establishment of the institutions of the Transition, particularly the Sovereign Council and the civilian Government, which are expected to work henceforth in a concerted manner. This experience shows that when Africans, in all independence, address the solution to their problems, in harmony with our international partners, Africa makes the difference.

The new Sudanese authorities have embarked on a courageous negotiation process with the armed groups. We fully support them in this process and call upon the international community to redouble its efforts in support of the democratic and consensual transition in Sudan. It is in this spirit that we call upon the United States of America to join this effort by removing Sudan from the list of States supporting terrorism.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On the Institutional Reform process, 2019 was a year of significant progress. This progress includes the restructuring and the accountability mechanisms of the Commission, governance and policy coherence between the different organs, the division of labour between the Commission and the Regional Economic Communities, the issue of partnerships and the implementation of the new financing system of the Union.

This quest for budgetary independence goes hand in hand with increased rigor in administrative and financial management, which was translated into the application of sanctions against those responsible for abuses and irregularities - investigations are continuing – and a corresponding decrease in the volume of the budget for 2020.

The third project where progress is worthy of mention is the Agreement on the African Continental Free Trade Area. It is a historic Agreement in that it fulfills one of the great dreams of the Founding Fathers of our Organisation and is at the very heart of the aspirations for the economic integration of the Continent.

The success flagship project of Agenda 2063 depends on the development of its thematic pillars including the pivotal area one of infrastructure. In spite of the efforts made there is still a gap to fill. To this we need to add the free movement of persons and goods. The Protocol on the Free movement of persons and goods has only been signed by 33 States and ratified by only 4 States. I implore member states which have not yet done so, to sign and ratify this Protocol diligently.

The real mission of the Secretary-General of the CFTA, whom we must appoint without delay and install in the Accra Headquarters, will be to operationalise this great achievement. At this point, I would like to express, on your behalf, our infinite gratitude to the President of Ghana, His Excellency Nana Akufo-Adoh, who graciously offered the premises to host the General Secretariat.

The African integration that we want also depends on the facilitation of trade, especially by air. It is for this reason that we have established a Single Air Transport Market in Africa. 30 States have committed to its establishment while 18 have decided to implement it.

At the political level, 2019 has witnessed profound transformations in institutional matters. In 2019 and 2020, 40 pluralist elections will have been organised or will be organised in 31 countries of the Continent.

The organisation of peaceful elections is a decisive lever in our strategies for a peaceful development of the Continent, hence the vital importance of conducting them timeously and in compliance with the Constitutions, far from manipulation that deviates from the popular will. It is high time that here again Africa attests to an authentic institutional modernity.

Mr Chairman,

Excellencies Heads of State and Government,

Invited Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

2020 is the last year of the term of the current Commission. We solemnly pledge to redouble our efforts so that the next leaner Commission, endowed with better identified powers, will find a healthier situation conducive to new achievements on the path laid down by the Agenda 2063 for a united, peaceful and prosperous Africa.

Excellencies Heads of State and Government;

Invited Guests,

Ladies and gentlemen

2020 has also been proclaimed the year of "**Silencing the Guns on the Continent**". How to succeed in this feat in a continent grappling with significant phenomena such as terrorism, inter-community conflicts, pre and post electoral crises or even disputes between States? By acting concretely on all these issues and their root causes, by giving ourselves the political, military and diplomatic means, the challenge of silencing the guns can be won.

I thank you for your kind attention.