

AFRICAN UNION

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**STATEMENT OF H.E MOUSSA FAKI MAHAMAT  
CHAIRPERSON OF THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION  
AT  
THE AU-EU COLLEGE TO COLLEGE MEETING**

Addis Ababa, 27 February 2020

**Madame President of the European Commission,  
Deputy Chairperson of the AU Commission,  
Distinguished EU and AU Commissioners,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Dear Ursula, it is an honour for us to welcome you once again to the premises of the African Union. You have already done us the privilege of reserving your very first official trip outside of Brussels. You are returning today leading a large delegation for this 10<sup>th</sup> College to College meeting, the very first for our two teams. All of this illustrates the importance that our two entities give to our partnership. We are delighted and wish you a cordial and warm welcome to the Headquarters of the Commission.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

We are meeting as partners to take up new global challenges and find innovative solutions for our collective security and the progress of our peoples. Consequently, the interest in our partnership should be translated concretely into the consideration of a certain number of issues on which we shall reflect together all this day and which will constitute the domains of our cooperation. They are among others the issues of:

**1. Démocratie, de la Justice et des droits de l'homme.**

Nous convenons tous que le système démocratique, la justice et le respect des droits humains élémentaires, sont les fondements de toute société humaine et que rien ne peut justifier leur remise en cause.

**1. Democracy, Justice and Human Rights.**

We all agree that the democratic system, justice and observance of basic human rights are the foundations of any human society and that nothing can justify calling them into question.

Africa has made remarkable efforts in these areas, even if all kinds of political and social constraints sometimes hamper this development.

The African Union appreciates the important support the EU gives to these values, which are essential for the establishment of the rule of law.

## **2. On Peace and Security**

It is a bit of the millstone tied to the foot of Africa and which prevents it from advancing, especially in recent years, with the emergence of terrorism, transnational crime, trafficking of all kinds, xenophobic violence, identity retrenchment and the rise of communitarianism. These phenomena have redirected the priorities of African leaders who are devoting enormous resources and energy to combat them. The EU and its Member States have been the biggest investors in peace programmes in Africa, with more than 3 billion Euros invested so far.

This is an opportunity to commend this often decisive support of the EU in the fight waged by the States, both bilaterally and multilaterally. This security issue is of such importance to us that we made it the theme of the year 2020 with the slogan "**Silencing the guns**".

## **3. On Environment and Climate Change**

Part of the difficulties facing Africa also emanates from the effects of climate change, the impact of which on development and social balance is evident. The scarcity of resources induced by these phenomena is a source of recurrent conflicts, exodus and migration. Resolving these issues requires concerted consideration, not partial, bilateral solutions.

## **4. Commercial, Industrial and Infrastructure issues**

Africa has just established a Continental Free Trade Area which intends to be one of the largest markets in the world, and the economy of Africa depends largely on the benefits it can derive from this Area.

Regional integration requires not only trade policies, but also an environment conducive to investment, industrialisation, strong infrastructure connectivity, as well as new technologies that meet the needs of future African markets.

The EU is largest trading partner of Africa. This is explained by our proximity, our historical ties and our comparative advantage.

The African Union and its Member States sincerely wish to strengthen these trading and investment links so as to attract responsible investment, create value, skills and jobs on both continents.

## **5. On Women and Youths Issue**

This question is at the centre of our concerns. Africa is devoting multiple projects and programmes to these two entities, given their potential for development.

The AU Commission makes the centrality of investment in youths and women, as agreed in Abidjan, one of the pillars for the attainment of Agenda 2063. To support the empowerment of women, the African Union decided to dedicate the Decade 2021-2031 to the financial inclusion of women.

## **6. On Migration**

We have made significant progress in our dialogue on migration. Africa has adopted a common political framework and an African Common Position on migration and mobility. It is important that we further develop our cooperation in this area, because migration is a 100% cross-border phenomenon which cannot be dealt with bilaterally, without continental planning.

## **7. ON Multilateralism**

Africa observes with some concern the weakening of multilateralism, one of the consequences of which is the worsening of conflicts, the rise in international tensions and the lack of concerted action in the face of the major crises threatening the planet: climate change, poverty, exclusion.....

The EU is a good example of multilateralism, but this value must be shared by the entire international community.

**Mme President of the European Commission,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Our meeting today is important for two reasons: it prepares our meeting in Kigali, Rwanda, for next May and our Summit in late October in Brussels. 2020 will be a particularly busy year and we hope, even more fruitful, for our relations.

The AU appreciates this multifaceted partnership with the EU because it is guided by shared values and common interests and because it is based on equality and respect. Certainly, we have some differences: **International criminal justice, sexual orientation and identity, death penalty, centrality of the African Union in some crises etc.**

These differences are normal, given our cultural, sociological and even spiritual diversity. Only the recognition and acceptance of these differences, the language of frankness will allow us to remove the obstacles that may hinder our cooperation.

As you collectively take off with the start of your mandate, we are starting to land with the end of the term of the current Commission in 2021. The one that will take over next year will result from the institutional reform initiated in 2017.

We would like to bequeath it with a more efficient structure, mobilised around more appropriate objectives. Of course, our partnerships will occupy an important place in the new system, that with the EU will remain central.

I thank you.