WELCOME REMARKS BY
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AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION

AT THE TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE VIRTUAL MEETING

COVID-19 PANDEMIC: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR
TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE IN AFRICA

Addis Ababa, 03 JUNE 2020
Excellencies,
Distinguished Panelists and Participants;
Ladies and gentlemen, all protocol observed.

As we are converging from different time zones, I would like to commence my welcome remarks with good morning, good afternoon, and good evening to you all.

I welcome you and thank you for creating time out of your busy schedules during these challenging times of COVID-19 pandemic, to be part this Transitional Justice Virtual Dialogue organized under the theme COVID-19 Pandemic: Challenges and Opportunities for Transitional Justice in Africa.

I express my gratitude to our transitional justice experts/speakers for their contributions to this meeting. I note the diversity in our panel of speakers, which come from different Transitional Justice backgrounds, namely, the civil society, academic and practitioners from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Distinguished participants;

Let me from this outset congratulate my colleagues of our long-standing partner on transitional justice in Africa, the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR), for co-organizing this pertinent and timely meeting.

As I would not be able to continue the meeting with you to the end due to another equally important task, permit me to quickly highlight the following three points for your reflection;

Firstly, the challenge of COVID-19 Pandemic has impacted negatively the transitional justice programmes in our Member States and we must ensure that this does not erode the gains that have been made on
Transitional Justice in these countries. Some of our Member states like the Republic of the Gambia, Sudan and South Sudan to mention but a few, have temporarily postponed some of their Transitional Justice processes and mechanisms. It is therefore pertinent to remind all our Member States implementing Transitional Justice that COVID-19 should not block the wheels of ongoing successes on justice, national reconciliation and accountability in Africa. These achievements are immensurable in our quest to reverse the deficit of democratic structures, where it might be necessary, and guaranty fairness and impartiality.

**Secondly, as we all know that COVID-19 has affected virtually every one of us in one way or the other. The impact of the pandemic, has nonetheless doubled the plight of the victims of human rights violations in countries implementing transitional justice.** To this end, special care and attention should be paid to the victims of human rights violations in all the AU Member States implementing transitional justice programmes.

**Thirdly and in conclusion,** I am pleased to inform you all that the African Union Transitional Justice Policy and the Report of the African Commission on Human and People Rights on transitional justice in Africa provide us with the requisite opportunities to constructively reshape our Transitional Justice interventions during and after the COVID-19 pandemic in Africa.

To this end, the Department of Political Affairs is currently finalizing the Implementation Roadmap of the AU Transitional Justice Policy and we are optimistic that these efforts will further promote impactful implementation of transitional justice initiatives during and after the COVID-19 pandemic in our Member States.

I wish you all fruitful and impactful deliberations.

I thank you.