



**Speech of H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat**  
**Chairperson of the African Union Commission**

**21<sup>st</sup> Extraordinary Session of the Executive Council by  
Videoconference**

**2 December 2020**

**Madame Naledi Pandor, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of South Africa, Chairperson of the Executive Council,**

**Honourable members of the Executive Council,**

**Madame Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa,**

**Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission,**

**Commissioners,**

**Executive Secretaries of the Regional Economic Communities,**

**Chief Executives of the AU Organs,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Your Council is meeting again, still within the context dominated by COVID, to respond once again to the urgent African issues.

The Executive Council will have to consider, under the authority of our sister Dr. Naledi Pandor, its Chairperson, the two themes on its agenda. These relate to the operationalisation of the African Continental Free Trade Area and the mobilisation of relevant means with a view to Silencing the guns on our Continent. These two major issues constitute vital questions for the successful deployment of the Development plan of the Continent contained in Agenda 2063.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

With regard to the African Continental Free Trade Area, its two main bodies, the Meeting of African Ministers of Trade and the Council of Ministers responsible for negotiations, worked with remarkable dedication to establish the necessary conditions for the effective launching of the of trading operations in the Zone as from 1 January 2021.

As such, the Ministers of Trade endeavoured to finalise, at their level, all the indispensable legal instruments for this operationalisation. The Council of Ministers in charge of the negotiations played the important role of verifying the readiness of the States Parties to give a concrete and living existence to the Treaty. In so doing, the Council decided to facilitate, by all the necessary measures, the start of

commercial operations within the Free Trade Area as from 1 January 2021.

This immense work carried out by the different actors is submitted for the consideration to your Council through the Reports. Two important documents are annexed to these Reports, namely the Draft Decision, the provisions of which explain all the technical modalities to be observed for the purposes of the effective operationalisation of the Free Trade Area and a Draft Declaration, known as the Johannesburg Declaration. Your views on all these documents will determine the decision the Assembly will take when it convenes on this matter.

I would, therefore, like to appeal to the Executive Council to adopt a consensual position on the technical issues on which, for national interests, the experts continue to diverge. The effective operationalisation of the AfCFTA remains for the "Africa we want" an imperative need, not only a major one, but also unavoidable.

For the sake of efficiency, it is highly desirable that the institutional mechanisms in charge of this process, including the meeting of the Ministers of Trade and the Council of Ministers, be harmonised to avoid any duplication and any frustration.

I remain convinced that such an operationalisation, under its expected ripple effects on our economies, will play a significant role in the range of actions that challenge us in our efforts to silence the guns in Africa.

### **Honourable Ministers,**

"Silencing the guns", another issue before your Council, is more than topical given the number of armed conflicts which continue to afflict the Continent and to divert its resources. Retained in 2013 as a new start, the year 2020 was presumed to be the year of a peaceful Africa, without war, terrorism or violent extremism.

During its deliberations, the Council will take note, on the one hand, of the actions taken and efforts made to silence the guns on the Continent and, on the other hand, of the State of implementation of the Plan of Action drawn up to this end. Following the consideration

of these two Reports, Council will have to consider the Draft Decision as well as the Draft Declaration, called the Johannesburg Declaration.

While welcoming the sustained efforts of the AU, through its Member States, for its ardent desire to reduce armed conflicts, if not eradicate them, I would like to stress the need to review our strategies in order to think of them in a more global approach, that associates with the military dimension, the concerns related to various aspects of human security. For this, our priorities will now have to focus on concrete actions as shields against the enrolment of our young people into terrorism and violent extremism.

While wishing you fruitful deliberations, I thank you for your kind attention.