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KEYNOTE SPEECH
BY

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COMMISSIONER,
HUMAN RESOURCES, SCIENCES AND TECHNOLOGY
AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION

ON THE OCCASION OF

CEREMONY OF THE SECOND AU TEACHER AWARD

21ST DECEMBER, 2020

VIRTUAL

Mr. Thomas Huyghebaert, Head of Cooperation of the EU Delegation to the AUC,

Dr. Yumiko Yokozeki, Director UNESCO-IICBA,

The Director and Staff of HRST – AUC,

Esteemed Partners of Education,

Distinguished Award Winners of the AU Teacher Award 2020,

Distinguished delegates,

Colleagues,

Distinguished Participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Special thanks to all African Union Member States, EU and Education Partners who have supported the Department in reaching a conclusion in selecting the outstanding teachers that will be awarded during this event. Please accept greetings from the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, H.E. Dr. Moussa Faki Mahamat.

It has been noted that, Africa in particular is facing unprecedented challenges that affect the sustainable economic systems from an ever-increasing and urbanized world population to deteriorating natural resources and loss of biodiversity, to climate change impacts.

This has brought the AU Agenda 2063 which has a strategic framework for the socio-economic transformation of the continent over the next 50 years, which build on, and seeks to accelerate the implementation of past and existing continental initiatives for growth and sustainable development. Part of this growth is Teacher Development in Africa. Madiba, H.E. Nelson Mandela once said, “Education is the great engine of personal development. It is through education that a daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that a son of a mine worker can become the head of the

mine, that a child of farm workers can become the president of a country. The person who facilitates education is the Teacher.

The Teacher is seen as a prime mover in the Agenda 2063 quest for an education and skills revolution for achieving an integrated, peaceful and prosperous Africa, which is unpacked in the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16-25), with Teacher Development as the first of its Strategic Objectives.

It is beyond doubt that education and skills revolution, that is called for by Agenda 2063 cannot materialize except with a focus on Teacher Development; and part of this Teacher Development is the mobility of teacher, teacher motivation, qualification framework and the Teacher prize where the outstanding teachers in the continent are recognized, and the reasons why we are here today.

The Teacher Prize is an important activity that contributes to the success of Agenda 2063 and the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA), to enhance visibility and status of the Teacher in Africa at all levels - Pre-primary, Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary including TVET; Promote Teaching as a profession at all levels; Celebrate and encourage outstanding teachers; this second AU Continental Teacher Award, still focus on Secondary Teachers.

It is to be noted that, every profession is developed through a Teacher and the status accorded to teachers has to move from the decline state to a higher state, contrary to how it used to be; the teaching as a profession should not be seen as a last resort career, even among unemployed graduates. It is on this premise that the African Union Commission embarked on a study to assess the living and working conditions of teachers in Africa. The study, which is already completed, serves as the baseline for which our interventions and responses to strengthening the teaching profession on the continent and as an implementation of the strategic objective 1 of CESA.

The African school age population is growing at an exponential rate. In fact, UN reports that for every 100 children of primary age and every 100 of secondary age in 2014, there will be 138 and 148 respectively in 2030. This means that the need for more teachers, teaching and learning materials and the required infrastructure to ensure a safe and conducive environment for teachers and learners alike must be met well ahead of time. For example, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics reports that, Africa requires 20 million teachers to shore up the deficit and achieve universal primary and secondary education by 2030.

Often when we talk about the challenges of African Education systems, the higher education sector is often not amplified as it should. Higher Education experts believe that both national governments and higher education institutions are responsible for providing effective and appropriate degree programmes that reduce the skills mismatch, make young academics better fitted to employment in the private sector and foster innovative and entrepreneurial skills. Policies for education and teacher training must work hand in hand with teaching programmes as they are both crucial for strategies for higher education development.

You will agree with me that African long-term economic prospects are inhibited by the severe shortage of skills in many key sectors. However, STEM education does require immediate and critical attention. Africa needs to build capacities and skills in STEM subjects if we are to realize progress towards sustainable and comprehensive growth. We need to ensure that the percentage of teachers trained and have the ability to deliver STEM subjects is increased. Therefore, incentives must be given to encourage interests and passion for STEM subjects.

The Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16-25); has called for revitalizing the teaching professions to ensure quality and relevance at all levels, to realize sustained quality education and training; essential in building skilled workforce and encourage innovation; essential in promoting societal values and responsible citizenship, and this calls for the African Union Heads of State and Government to be committed to strengthening teacher development in Africa. The Strategy is also operationalization

framework for SDG4 to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”.

Moreover, Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16-25), is a key policy tool for African Union’s Agenda 2063, aimed at fostering the skills, human capital, and education revolution in Africa. Realizing Africa’s potential and aspirations depends on the investments that are made today towards the development of Teachers in Africa as it is clear that the teacher is at the core of educating for the “***Africa We Want***”.

It is true that the costs of ensuring sufficient numbers of professionally qualified, highly motivated teachers are high, but this is unavoidable if we want to educate for innovation, entrepreneurship, and leadership for tomorrow. Teaching should not be seen as a profession at the bottom of the line, which calls for giving more incentives to teachers.

The adoption and validation of the Continental Framework of Standards and Competencies for the Teaching Profession; Continental Teacher Qualification Framework and Continental Guidelines for the Teaching Profession were done during the last year’s AU Teacher Award and the finalized documents have been uploaded on a dedicated site for member states to have access, for implementation.

Teacher professional standards is important in the development of Teaching Profession in Africa, in achieving the CESA Strategic Objective 1; “Revitalize the teaching profession to ensure quality and relevance at all levels”; and toward the overall achievement of AU Agenda 20163. It is seen as a description of what a teacher must know (knowledge) and exhibit (skills) as well as the values, attitudes and behaviour expected in all relevant circumstances. It provides a framework of principles that describes the knowledge, skills, and values inherent in teaching profession. These standards articulate the goals and aspirations of the profession. These standards convey a collective vision of professionalism that guides the daily practice of Teachers.

On the other hand, qualification has been seen in different ways, but

teacher qualification is about teacher education. When we talk about the professional standards, we focus on the teacher and competence, but when we talk about teacher qualification, we focus on teacher education and quality.

So, quality is the ability of teacher education to produce graduates that meet the professional standards, measured basically by programme outcome and graduate impact, and the relationship between the teacher education and the professional standards.

And under the Teacher Development, is the Guidelines for the Teaching Profession, which looks at the critical summary of the things required to put the teaching profession on a sound footing in any country in Africa. One of the most important elements here is the need to enact a law to make teaching a profession which also includes the establishment of a teaching regulatory authority. Other critical indices are entrenchment of the professional standards, teacher qualification framework, professional registration and licensure, professional salary structure, and so on.

The AU in its capacity has taken these issues into consideration and has engaged important education stakeholders to deal with them, and fortunately, our partners, AFTRA, UNESCO-IICBA and Education International, Africa Regional Office, have promised their assistance to guide the AU member States in implementing in year 2021, for ensuring quality instruments to empower the people of Africa to raise quality and Professional status of Teachers and to bring about transformation of Education system in accordance with the African Union Vision, to ensure quality and relevance at all levels of education for the *“African We Want”*.

This event will provide opportunities for nurturing networking and exchange in areas of Teacher Development in Africa. This event is therefore timely and significant for the AU in its endeavor to harness the demographic dividend for the continent’s development, by ensuring, among others, that the young people of Africa are well educated, trained and empowered for meaningful and dignified lives; they are able to think critically; ability to make choices concerning their careers and as well as to inculcate desirable

values, attitudes, competences and skills to contribute to the continent's vision of integration and prosperity. Young people growing old without quality education represent the biggest threat to achieving this vision of the ***“Africa We Want”***.

It is with immense pleasure and satisfaction, coupled with great emotions, that I present the outstanding Teachers for the Second AU Teacher Award.

I look forward to a successful event, and to new partnerships.

Lasting gratitude to all partners, AFTRA, UNESCO-IICBA, Education International, Africa Regional Office for walking the talk with us.

Thank you for your attention.