

OPENING STATEMENT DELIVERED BY

H.E. Dr. MONIQUE NSANZABAGANWA

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION (AUC),

HEAD OF THE AUC DELEGATION

AT THE JOINT AU-EU SENIOR OFFICIALS MEETING

25 OCTOBER 2021

KIGALI, RWANDA.

- **Excellency, Amb. Jean-Leon Ngandu, Chairperson of the AU Permanent Representatives Committee;**
- **Ms. Rita Laranjinha, Managing Director Africa of the European External Action Services;**
- **Ms. Clementine MUKEKA, Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Republic of Rwanda;**
- **Excellencies, Distinguished Representatives for the EU and the AU Member States;**
- **Excellences, dear Colleagues AU and EU Commissioners;**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is a real honour to participate in my first Joint AU – EU Senior Officials’ Meeting since I took office in March this year, as the Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission. I am all the more honored that this meeting is taking place in Kigali, my home city. I would like to therefore use this opportunity to thank each and every one present here today, for accepting to participate in this important Senior Officials’ Meeting at such a challenging time in the world.

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the world as we know it, has changed rapidly, with far-reaching consequences we are still trying to ascertain. The fact that we are able to gather physically for this meeting is a

testament to our common resolve and determination to bring an end to this enemy that has ravaged every aspect of our lives and reversed some of the progress we had made as human-kind.

Allow me to also thank the Government and people of Rwanda for accepting to host this meeting physically and for the excellent reception we have all enjoyed since we arrived in this beautiful city of Kigali.

Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are gathered here today as a result of a Decision taken by our Heads of State and Government in Abidjan, in 2017, during the 5th AU-EU Summit, requesting both sides to meet regularly at the Ministerial level to take stock of the implementation of the outcomes of the Summit as well as review the progress made in our cooperation. Since this Decision was taken, both sides met in 2019, in Brussels, for the 1st AU-EU Ministerial Meeting, and now here for the 2nd Ministerial Meeting.

I am convinced that the Ministerial Meetings have brought a new practical dimension to our partnership in the sense that we have a framework to jointly reflect on the progress achieved in the implementation of our priorities outlined in the Abidjan Declaration and to reiterate our commitment to promote an effective multilateralism and a rules-based global order.

As we take stock of our achievements during this meeting, a core element of our deliberations will focus on finalizing the Joint Communiqué, which will be adopted by our Ministers in their Meeting tomorrow. As AU Commission, we have facilitated the consultations that have occurred between both sides especially within the context of the Joint Steering Committee of the Partnership. A lot of work, both at the technical and policy level, has gone into the development of the draft Communiqué as well as the thematic papers before you.

It is our desire that we can finalize the few outstanding areas of the Communiqué, to ensure that our Ministers are able to conduct their meeting without any hitches or delay.

Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As I conclude my remarks, I would like to stress the importance of our partnership with the European Union for the development trajectory of our continent especially within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Indeed, Africa would require all the necessary support from its closest partners and allies to bounce back and build forward better from the damaging consequences caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Africa is equally ready to

make its contribution in shaping a more sustainable path to prosperity for all.

I therefore reiterate the commitment of the Commission to continue facilitating the work of our partnership and to ensure that our relationship is built on the principles of equality, respect and that it is mutually beneficial.

I wish us all fruitful deliberations and a successful Meeting.

I thank you.