

AFRICAN UNION

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STATEMENT DELIVERED BY
H.E. DR. MONIQUE NSANZABAGANWA
DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMMISSION
AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE 2nd AU – EU MINISTERIAL MEETING

26 OCTOBER 2021

KIGALI, RWANDA

- **Your Excellency, Mr. Christophe Lutundula Apala Pen' Apala, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Chairperson of the African Union Executive Council;**
- **Your Excellency Mr. Josep Borrell, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission;**
- **Your Excellency, Mr. Vincent Biruta, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Republic of Rwanda, our Host;**
- **Your Excellencies, Ministers and Heads of Delegation;**
- **Distinguished Participants;**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen.**

I hereby express my sincere greetings to all of you on this day.

It is a pleasure to gather in this beautiful city of Kigali, physically, while bearing in mind the heavy impact of Covid-19 and the difficulties for Africa to bounce back.

As we have witnessed in recent days, access to Covid-19 vaccines remains a dire need, as less than 6% of the African population is fully vaccinated.

Important steps were achieved by Team Europe in providing vaccines to the African continent through the COVAX facility and through bilateral initiatives. These have been particularly useful as we roll out vaccinations across Africa through home-grown initiatives such as AVAT.

To support these vaccination efforts, the recognition by our European counterparts, of vaccines and vaccination certificates issued by Member States authorities in conformity with Africa CDC recommendations is pertinent. This will allow our sister continents to be able to continue engaging productively particularly at the economic level.

In the same vein, we anticipate your support in the on-going appeal on the TRIPS Waiver at the World Trade Organization.

The financing of our economic recovery partly through the historic decision on the Special Drawing Rights would cement all efforts.

Furthermore, we look forward to the reallocation of unused SDR allocations through the World Bank and International Monetary Fund to increase access to finance by developing countries, the most in need of which are found on the African continent.

In so saying, I wish to recognize and welcome the important initiatives taken by President Macron to organize the Summit on Financing African Economies held in May this year in Paris; and the G20 Compact with Africa Summit held in August 2021 championed by Chancellor Angela Merkel. All these including enhanced efforts in eliminating illicit financial flows from Africa will contribute to the recovery of our economies.

**Your Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

As you are well aware, this meeting is a build up to the 6th European Union – African Union Summit which will be held early next year 2022, in Brussels.

We will be reviewing our current areas of cooperation. These are: investing in people with special focus on education, science, technology and skills development; strengthening resilience, peace, security and governance; migration and mobility; and, mobilizing investments for African structural and sustainable transformation.

Let me also underline the fact that Africa and Europe are close neighbours with long historical relations. The task ahead is to deepen continent to continent cooperation for mutual benefit. In order to do so, I would like to suggest three joint exercises:

- 1) Commission a study to undertake impact assessments of the Economic Partnership Agreements and bilateral free trade agreements on the implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area;
- 2) Finalize the readiness assessment towards the African Customs Union, which, according to the timelines of the Abuja Treaty should be in place by 2023;
- 3) Based on the findings of these studies, put in place a joint working group of experts to work out modalities for continent to continent cooperation in matters of trade, investment, economic integration and inclusive sustainable development anchored on the African Customs Union.

Our collaboration would, in this respect, be fully aligned with our efforts to implement the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area as it moves us towards deeper continental economic integration.

Your Excellencies;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

In the areas of Peace and Security, I wish to stress the critical necessity for our partnership to guarantee durable peace across Africa. The situations in the Sahel Region, the Horn of Africa, the Lake Chad Basin and several other conflict situations across Africa will greatly benefit from this partnership.

Equally important, our trilateral cooperation with the United Nations should be consolidated. Among others, it would greatly contribute to attaining financing modalities that are predictable and sustainable for AU-led peace support operations.

We take note of the transition from the African Peace Facility (APF) to the European Peace Facility (EPF). Since 2003, with the support of the APF, the African Union was able to strengthen its conflict prevention and mediation efforts, deploy African led peace support operations and operationalize the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). It is our hope that this new instrument will continue to reinforce multilateralism and contribute to our shared agenda of silencing the guns on the African continent.

As I conclude, allow me to emphasize on the importance of global supplies of vaccines to attain global herd immunity in the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic. This is critical to opening up across countries, global health security and global swift economic recovery. Global vaccine supplies would also be a distinct mark of global solidarity to fight a common enemy.

I look forward to this meeting crafting an implementable action plan that would meet the expectations of our leaders when they meet early next year and

strengthen as well as consolidate Europe-Africa partnership for shared prosperity, solidarity and resilience.

I will stop here and thank you all for your attention.