

AFRICAN UNION
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**SPEECH OF
H.E. MOUSSA FAKI MAHAMAT
CHAIRPERSON OF THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION
AT THE
40th ORDINARY SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

ADDIS ABABA, 2 FEBRUARY 2022

Madam Vice-Chairperson of the Executive Council,

Honourable members of the Executive Council,

Madam Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission,

Commissioners,

Madam Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Africa,

Heads of AU Organs,

Executive Secretaries of the Regional Economic Communities,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In these first weeks of the New Year, it is with great pleasure that I wish you health, happiness and prosperity for yourselves and for your respective countries. It is my fervent wish that 2022 will strengthen us in our common determination to continue our efforts to build Africa, despite the uncertainties and obstacles that litter our path.

This determination has inspired the immense work done by your Council throughout the past year, in an environment made difficult by a combination of negative factors.

Barely four months separate this 40th session from the 39th held in October of last year, resulting in an accelerated pace of work which, despite the damaging shortcomings in the work of the specialized technical committees, your Council has been able to accommodate with flexibility and dedication, under the patient and methodical leadership of H.E. Christophe LUTUNDULA APALA, Vice Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Chairman of the Executive Council.

Madam Vice-Chair, allow me to pay a well-deserved tribute to the Chairman of the Executive Council for the quality of his leadership. The annals of the Union will remember that it was under your presidency that one of the major aspects of institutional reform took shape. It is about the entry in function of the new Commission whose one of the missions is to place on solid rails its new departmental structure.

**Madam Vice Chairperson,
Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

As I have just indicated, the context that has characterized the year 2021 can be summed up as a hodgepodge of negative factors but also signs of hope for the future of the continent.

Peace and security is seriously threatened in several of our Regions and within some Member States. The threats are revealed in several forms: intra-state conflicts, the spread of deadly terrorism in the Sahel, the Horn of Africa, the Great Lakes regions and southern Africa, with a stated desire to destabilize States largely weakened by deficiencies in political, economic and social governance. The resurgence of unconstitutional changes of government that have dangerously multiplied in recent months...Indeed last night was a long one due to the situation that occurred in Guinea Bissau...The combined effects of these various negative factors with those linked to degradation of the environment due to climate change, are generating large flows of refugees and internally displaced persons, bringing humanitarian concerns to the forefront.

What can we say then about the Covid19 pandemic which, since its appearance more than two years ago, has not ceased to try to hold in check our various response strategies through the permanent mutation of its different variants?

The socio-economic impact of the pandemic on African economies has been reflected in the recession that the continent is facing for the first time in decades. It should be noted that Africa has experienced a decline in activity of about 2%, aggravated by increased inflation and a growing debt burden, all of which could jeopardize the envisaged post-Covid-19 economic recovery. According to studies conducted by the African Development Bank, Africa will need to mobilize US\$154 billion to effectively respond to the economic crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Under these conditions, our expectations for achieving the ambitions of Agenda 2063 will undoubtedly be revised downwards.

At the international level, individualism and national egoism constitute a serious threat to multilateralism. Indeed, they reduce and weaken any impulse of international solidarity.

**Madame Vice-Chairperson,
Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen**

In spite of this gloomy picture, the Commission and the other organs of the African Union continue to carry out the tasks assigned to them by the deliberative organs in the exciting perspective of advancing Agenda 2063. In this regard, I would like to bring to your kind attention the essence of the activities carried out during the year 2021.

The implementation of the annual theme devoted to Arts, Culture and Heritage as Levers for Building the Africa We Want is proceeding satisfactorily. However, it must be noted that this theme, which is essential for the affirmation and projection of the African personality, cannot be confined to the one year dedicated to it. The centrality of this theme in the Agenda deserves the continuation of activities to give it the place it deserves. In this spirit, the Luanda Biennale will continue to be the crucible of this will of affirmation in addition to many other national initiatives going in a similar

direction. We must undoubtedly accelerate the effective implementation of the project of the Great Museum of Africa in Algiers.

In terms of the fight against HIV/AIDS, the Commission, particularly through Africa CDC, which is well advanced in its first phase of operation, has continued to implement the joint AU-REC-Member State response strategy. Communication on prevention measures has been ongoing and intense. Screening through testing, treatment of infected persons, training of health personnel in Member States and the ongoing vaccination campaigns are all actions aimed at controlling infection levels.

At present, progress in vaccination against Covid on the Continent remains low. Only 10% of the African population have completed a full vaccination cycle, while 11% are partially vaccinated. We remain convinced that the production of vaccines in Africa, already quite advanced in some of our Member States, will facilitate the reversal of this negative trend by making vaccines readily available to the vast majority of our populations.

Beyond the Covid-19 pandemic, we are called upon to improve our health systems. The advent of the African Medicines Agency (AMA) is therefore to be welcomed. The treaty establishing the Agency has already received the required number of ratifications. The Special Envoy that I have appointed to promote this important agency is working with skill to ensure its operationalization as soon as possible. I would like to pay him a well-deserved tribute and congratulate him for his commitment, while reiterating my full support for his advocacy work on behalf of the Agency.

As for the institutional reform process, it has made remarkable progress in its most expressive components. The technological system guaranteeing total transparency as well as respect for gender and youth criteria in the recruitment of staff has been put in place, along with the Selection Committee for applications. The recruitment process for the new departmental structure of the Commission, which began with the effective assumption of duties by the Director-General and some directors, is scheduled to end in September 2022. This deadline could have been brought forward, had it not been for the imponderables related to the effects of Covid-19.

In the same vein, software has been installed to increase the effectiveness of the audit functions by automating the conditions for transparency in the management of financial resources, thereby placing accountability at the heart of administrative and financial practice. In the context of this new management system, which is based on the values of transparency and integrity, the previous recommendations made by both the internal and external auditors have been implemented at a very high execution rate. A system has also been put in place for the computerized monitoring of the implementation of audit recommendations.

The main positive effects of the budgetary and financial reform have been the respect of the Golden Rules in the preparation of the 2022 budget and the prudent management of the financial resources allocated under the 2021 budget.

Maintaining this course presupposes that the Union can count on predictable financial resources and that the Member States pay their statutory contributions within the set timeframe. We will also have to significantly reduce our financial dependence on our partners.

Institutional reform will continue in the other specialized bodies, institutions and agencies that are not yet restructured.

**Madam Vice Chairperson,
Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen**

Regional integration has made significant progress with, among others, the operationalization of the African Continental Free Trade Area. The anchoring of this Zone requires an increase in the mobility of people on the Continent. To this end, it is appropriate to congratulate those of our Member States that have considerably relaxed the conditions for granting entry visas or even completely liberalized access to their respective territories.

These measures are certainly to be commended. The effective implementation of the provisions of the Protocol to the Abuja Treaty on the Free Movement of Persons and the Right of Establishment would reinforce this mobility. Pending ratification since its adoption in 1990, this Protocol has so far received only four of the 15 ratifications required for its entry into force.

It is obvious that without the entry into force of this Protocol, the functioning of the African Continental Free Trade Area will reach its optimum with great difficulty. Therefore, I thought I would submit a proposal to the consideration of the policy organs to appoint a Champion at the highest level who will be responsible for advocating to our governments and parliaments for the ratification of this important Protocol.

It is high time that all the required energies be deployed to operationalize African financial institutions. Their effectiveness will facilitate the mobilization of financial resources that are indispensable for the implementation of our various programmes.

In the area of Education, Science and Innovation, several programs have been implemented, including the Continental Education Strategy for Africa, the Digital Education Programme and the harmonization of academic qualifications on the continent. In the sphere of Science, Technology and Innovation, priority should be given to the African traditional knowledge and science sector, which devotes its activities to the exploitation of traditional pharmacopoeia with a view to identifying active principles against the Covid-19 virus and other viral or infectious diseases.

The Commission also continued to implement programs related to Infrastructure, Energy, Transport, Agriculture, the Blue Economy and the Environment.

On the social front, efforts to emancipate and empower women in Africa were reflected, among others, in the launch of the concept of "Positive Masculinity" discussed at a high-level meeting organized by the Chairperson of the Union, H.E. Felix TSHISEKEDI TSHILOMBO, President of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Major campaigns for the Elimination of Violence Against Women were organized, complemented by online training.

As part of the institutional representation of Youth within the Union, a new Special Youth Envoy was appointed to replace the previous one whose mandate had come to an end and to whom I pay a well-deserved tribute.

As for the Office of the Women, Peace and Security Envoy as well as that of the Youth Envoy, it would undoubtedly be appropriate to consider their institutionalization by integrating these positions into the organigramme of the Commission.

**Madam Vice-Chairperson,
Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen**

In our fight against Covid-19 and our project for the structural transformation of our economies, we rely on our endogenous efforts while making the most of the diversified contributions of our various partners. I would like to take this opportunity to commend the work done by AU representations abroad with our partners. We must strengthen coordination in the management of our partners to avoid weakening ourselves through the absence of a well articulated common position regarding our main strategic objectives.

Our meetings are always sanctioned by Decisions whose implementation ensures the execution of programmes that contribute to the achievement of the set objectives. Unfortunately, the implementation rate of these Decisions is still very low, as shown in the Report on this issue. We must reflect on the solutions to be brought to the causes of this notorious deficiency. These causes are, essentially, inadequate financial resources, lack of coordination between the various actors involved, the non-categorization of the Decisions treated by the Assembly in January 2018, shortcomings in the respect of the requirement to speak with one voice and, above all, the too large number of programmes decided exclusively on a voluntary basis.

**Madam Vice Chairperson,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I would like to conclude by recalling the 20th anniversary of the creation of the AU and announcing the 40th anniversary of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.

These anniversaries will be celebrated in an African context characterized by numerous human rights violations and by the disturbing resurgence of military coups, which not only do not send out a positive image of our Continent, but are sources of socio-political instability that are highly detrimental to all peaceful development efforts.

In this regard, I would like to call for the full implementation of our relevant instruments in this area to combat institutional deviance and impunity in all its forms throughout the Continent.

I have no doubt that your Council will propose to the Assembly relevant and courageous draft Decisions on key issues on the agenda of your Session, to which I wish you every success.

I thank you for your kind attention.