

**AFRICAN UNION**  
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Addis Ababa, ETHIOPIA P. O. Box 3243 Telephone: 251 11 518 20 75 Fax: 251 11 5517844  
Email: [www.au.int](http://www.au.int)

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**Pan African University Council Meeting**  
**25 January 2022 (14:00 Addis Ababa time)**

**WELCOME REMARKS**  
**H.E. Prof. Mohammed Belhocine**  
**Commissioner for Education, Science, Technology and Innovation**

- The President of the Pan African University Council, Prof Kenneth Matengu;
- The Vice President of the PAU Council; Prof. Nthabiseng Ogude
- Distinguished members of the PAU Council;
- The Directors of the PAU Institutes;
- Staff of the PAU Rectorate;
- Representatives of the PAU Partners;
- Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me join the President of the PAU council to wish you all a Happy New Year and to also welcome you to the first meeting of the PAU council for this year, which happens to be my first meeting at the Council, as Commissioner for Education, Science, Technology and Innovation. I assumed office just last Friday, and indeed this is basis upon which I take the floor.

It is for me the opportunity to congratulate the president of the PAU Council, Prof. Kenneth Kamwi MATENGU, elected for a three-year mandate, following the Executive Council's Decision. I understand that the executive council in its next session of 2-3 February, 2022 will elect the new vice-president of the Council. Our gratitude goes to Professor Ogude for having served her term as Vice president.

Allow me to give a couple of word on my career

I am a medical doctor by background and I taught medicine for 20 years in my country, Algeria. Before joining the international civil service with WHO in 1997, I was elected President of the Scientific Council of the Faculty of

Medicine in Algiers. With WHO, I assumed the duties of Director non communicable diseases division in the regional office for Africa, before going to Nigeria then Tanzania as the WHO Representative. Then I jumped to UNDP and became the UN Resident Coordinator in Tunisia for four years before my retirement in 2013. Later, in 2015, I lead again the WHO country team in Guinea, spearheading the response to the Ebola epidemic. And recently, I was advising my own government in the Response to the Covid 19 Pandemic.

### **Distinguished Members of Council,**

As all know, the PAU is an important flagship of the African Union contributing to the development of qualified, well-trained high caliber African professionals with a strong science, technology and innovation orientation for achieving the Africa We Want as outlined in our long-term AU Agenda 2063, which emphasizes the importance knowledge generation and knowledge society. PAU has a unique opportunity through a well thought-out Research Agenda to bring its contribution to the development of Africa.

The principal aim of establishing the Pan African University was to create a high quality continental institutions that promote training, research and innovation within Africa, ensuring a steady nurturing of new ideas and also a continuous injection of highly skilled human resources to meet the developmental needs of the continent. And I committed to achieving this objective.

Colleagues,

The Pan-African High-Level Conference on Education (PACE), held in 2018, recognized that Africa's transformation requires increased and concerted efforts to move towards a knowledge-based society, through progress in Higher Education, with a particular focus on relevance and equitable access, strengthening research, teaching and learning in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

Higher education as a vector for the development of our societies, plays a key role in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: underpinned in the SDGs, as well as the African Union Agenda 2063 (The Africa we want).

The AU's vision of building an integrated Africa requires quality higher education underpinned by intra-Africa mobility and skills portability. The Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) recognizes that 'Harmonized higher education and training systems is essential for the realization of intra-Africa mobility and academic integration through regional cooperation'. Heads of State and Government of the African Union have further institutionalized their appreciation of the role of higher education in achieving the AU vision, by taking a Decision calling for mechanisms for harmonization and quality assurance of African higher education to ensure quality and comparability.

Colleagues,

My engagement in some activities of PAU prior to my assumption of duty as Commissioner gave me an idea on the challenges facing this continental program -issues ranging from retired Rector; Structure not yet revised or fully staffed; limited funding amongst others. We all agree that PAU should be unique Higher Education and Research Institution that is different from the existing national universities and as such, adding value to continental endeavors to solving African developmental challenges. We agree that PAU should be unique and different from the other universities. The pertinent question is how do we steer PAU to achieve such objectives. Meeting the current and emerging challenges is a daunting goal, but this Council, with the impressive array of constituencies represented and the experience and wisdom each of you brings, makes the path forward seem ever more possible to chart effectively.

Let me reaffirm my commitment to contribute to resolving these challenges and build the PAU to become the center of excellence in higher education and research that meets the 21<sup>st</sup> century demand; and a Pan African University that is desired by stakeholders through a process that is participatory, inclusive, forward-looking and informed by policies, strategies and past successful and documented cases.

As already stated by the President of Council with whom I agree very well, let this meeting be an introductory meeting, let's take stock on what has been done, the challenges facing the organization and come up with a road map that will guide our collective action to bringing PAU to be an effective, efficient and high performing continental institution in ESTI.

As I am concluding I wish to express gratitude of the commission to all the members of the PAU Council in your respective ranks and qualities, for accepting to take part in this meeting. I thank you for your multifaceted contributions to the advancement of PAU. We count on the support of each and every one to move PAU to the next level.

Now it's time for all of us together to "walk the talk", with commitments and determination.

I thank you.