

Statement by H.E Bankole Adeoye, Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security on behalf of H.E Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the AU Commission on the occasion of the AU reflection forum on unconstitutional changes of government of the continent

March 15th ,2022- Accra ,Ghana

- Your Excellency Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, President of the Republic of Ghana & current Chairman of ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government;
- Hounr Shirley Ayorkor Botchway, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration Chairperson of the ECOWAS Council of Ministers,
- Excellencies;
- Distinguished Guests;
- Distinguished Participants;
- Ladies and Gentlemen.

I wish to begin by thanking the Government and People of Ghana for kindly offering to host this strategic reflection forum on unconstitutional changes of government

I am particularly grateful to President Akufo-Addo for gracing the occasion with his presence and doing us the honor to officially open the Forum. Your Excellency, this is a further testimony of your commitment to the ideals and vision of the African Union which at the very least dates back to the time when you were Minister of Foreign Affairs . I recall the leadership you provided to the ministerial committee that led to the landmark AU Declaration known as the Ezulwini Consensus. Also worthy of note is your decisive initiative taken to have the Republic of Ghana ratify all AU instruments by January 2018

Excellencies , distinguished guests,

The leadership of Africa and our citizens are genuinely very concerned about what appears to be the resurgence of unconstitutional changes of government in Africa, particularly the recent developments in this part of our continent. The then OAU and now the AU have, over the decades, sought to effectively respond to the challenges of unconstitutional changes of government . Relevant normative and policy frameworks have been adopted by the AU and RECs over the years Yet, it is becoming increasingly

evident that the incidences of unconstitutional changes of government have evolved and become more complex in recent times.

This session is therefore designed to mount a platform for broad stakeholder brainstorming on the key issues pertaining to this phenomenon. In many ways, this not meant to be an event. It is part of ongoing efforts to anchor effective multi-stakeholder collaboration so that the African Union Commission can incrementally deliver on its mandate. It is a commitment we have made together with the other AU institutions.

For instance in recent times, the AU Department of Political Affairs, Peace & Security has started preparing to launch what is called the I-RECKE knowledge platform. It will bring together the departments of Political Affairs, Peace & Security of Regional Organizations, sister AU institutions, our non-State Actor think tanks and individual experts, to periodically reflect on effective early warning, early response, conflict prevention and synergy building between stakeholders, vertically and horizontally. And there are other similar initiatives.

Secondly, this Forum is part of a process to feed into the AU efforts to respond robustly to challenges of governance, security and socio-economic development, particularly, resilience building in an increasingly complex global environment. Accordingly, a key activity planned is the AU Extraordinary Summit scheduled for next May in Malabo to address these issues of security and governance. Tackling complex political transitions and critical security challenges like terrorism and violent extremism will be the focus. The Forum outcomes will therefore be very useful to feed into the Summit.

I would therefore like to commend the AU Peace and Security Council for this initiative and AU Political Affairs, Peace & Security Department, for facilitating our collaboration with Ghana by bringing together such a rich array of personalities and experts for the purpose.

I entreat you distinguished participants, to help us with concrete proposals using the problem-solving and innovative approaches. But in doing so, let us not forget that we already have rich instruments and mechanisms which, if properly interrogated, can be improved to either be effectively operational or deliver better.

Excellency, Distinguished Guests and Participants,

To that end, I would entreat the Forum to have an eye on the following AU Vision 2063 Aspirations without in any way minimizing the importance of the others and their inter-connectedness:

- Aspiration 3: An Africa of Good Governance, Respect for Human Rights, Justice and the Rule of Law;
- Aspiration 4: a peaceful and secure Africa;

- Aspiration 6 : An Africa whose Development is people-driven , relying on the potential offered by African People, especially Women and Youth, caring for children and full gender equality in all spheres of life;
- Aspiration 7: An Africa as a strong, united , resilient and influential global player and partner.

This is indeed why we are here today. We have made some modest progress but certain gaps in implementation, coupled with persisting and emerging political, socio-economic as well as security challenges, combine to make the environment more complex and responses more daunting. However, from the existing normative frameworks and mechanisms, we should be able to brainstorm on what is working, what is not and why, and therefore what solutions.

We should also interrogate why sometimes, despite the modest successes chalked, consistency remains a challenge and what exactly needs to be done at the different tiers of government, local, national, regional , continental and global, to build institutional resilience on anchored and shared values. A knowledge approach and stakeholders total mobilization are key if we are to weather the storms and build resilience moving forward.

This Reflection Forum is thus timely and strategic for us at the AU and also for the other institutions at different tiers government. If we fail to build institutional resilience based on our African heritage values and complemented by best practices from elsewhere, we shall be compromising our match to attaining our shared vision.

Our citizens expect a lot more from us. But let us not make a mistake. The cup is not half empty. It is either a quarter or half full. Ours is to start by recognizing that and together, endeavor to do more. No democratic governance is delivered by some or State Institutions only. All stakeholders, State and Non-State alike, have roles to play that may be different but definitely complementary and mutually reinforcing. If this is not the case, if there are gaps, and I believe there are, let's seek to understand why in all humility, and proffer smart and effective solutions.

Excellency, distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On this note, let me reiterate our sincere appreciation to the Government and People of Ghana, for making available to us such wonderful facilities and privileges in order to ensure help ensure the successful organization but with this Reflection Forum. I am also grateful to our partners especially UNDP, International IDEA , Institute for Security Studies, and Elections Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa, for the continued support and partnership in this specific event. To all our participants we appreciate that you have taken the time for this critical exercise.

I wish you very fruitful deliberations and look forward to the Forum outcomes.