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Statement by

H.E. Dr. Monique Nsanzabaganwa,

Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission

**At International Conference on Innovation, Intellectual Property and Technology
Transfer in Africa's Pharmaceutical Sector**

25 March 2024, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

- Excellencies;
- **Dr. Akinwumi A. Adesina, President of the African Development Bank Group,**
- **Dr. Tedros Ghebreyesus, Director General of the World Health Organisation, and**
- **Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Director General, World Trade Organisation (who are with us via video link),**
- **Prof. Banji Oyelaran-Oyeyinka, Senior Special Advisor, African Development Bank and Chairperson of the APTF Board**
- **Professor Padmashree Gehl Sampath, Chief Executive Officer, APTF**
- **Mr. Edward Kwakwa, Deputy Director General, World Intellectual Property Organisation,**
- **Dr. Michel Sidibé, Special Envoy for the African Medicines Agency,**
- **Distinguished Delegates,**
- **Greetings from African Union Commission!**

1. I am honored to address this important gathering, the International Conference on Innovation, Intellectual Property and Technology Transfer in Africa's Pharmaceutical Sector, as Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission, and as Board Member of the APTF, an extremely important and impactful institution that will shape the future of Africa's pharmaceutical capacity.
2. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the vulnerabilities of Africa's dependence on external sources for essential medicines and vaccines. However, it ignited a spirit of innovation and collaboration across the continent, and imposed the imperative for the African Region to build our own capacity to cater to health security needs of today, better address all emerging threats in the future, and improve health outcomes for ourselves, and for all, worldwide.
3. Since COVID-19, the African Union has played a key role in changing the situation.
 - We have taken the lead in convening the Africa CDC Conference on Public Health in Africa in 2021 that set out the New Public Health Order for Africa.

- We have empowered Africa CDC to lead the way on public health in Africa. Our leaders in May 2022 released an official communique requesting GAVI to ensure that at least 30% of the vaccines it procures be produced in Africa. This has now paved the way for the African Vaccines Manufacturing Accelerator that GAVI is proposing. In addition, the recent African Medicines Supply Platform announced by Africa CDC is expected to pave the way for a regional market and create a stable demand for our companies.
- Our AU Health Strategy and the Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Plan for Africa (PMPA) take the vision of health equity for all Africans further in laying the roadmap towards self-sufficiency in medicine production on the African continent.
- We have established and are operationalizing African Medicines Agency (AMA) that will play critical role in harmonizing regulatory frameworks across the continent, building regulatory capacity, and promoting research and development.
- The AfCFTA Intellectual Property Rights Protocol has been adopted by the African Union Assembly of Heads of State and Government held on 18 – 19 February 2023. Among other benefits, this IPR Protocol is expected to advance Africa's interests related to IP, promote the protection of African innovation and creativity as well as address the legal and institutional fragmentation on IP by promoting coherent IPR policy and enforcement of IPR in the Continent. In so doing, the AfCFTA has prioritized pharmaceutical sector as one of the key value chains to boost intra-Africa trade and production as part of private sector engagement strategy. Additionally, the AfCFTA Protocol envisions the establishment of an AfCFTA IP Office, to fill a critical gap in IP institutional governance in Africa by coordinating the IP related activities in the continent.

4. But this is not enough. Changing the technology environment, and ensuring that African companies and public sector research institutions are fostered to produce and innovate is a key cornerstone for Africa's success. This is why the African Union supports the African Pharmaceutical Technology Foundation. APTF will support commercialization of intellectual property rights by African companies, and its use for technology transfer, through licensing, sharing of tacit know-how and by building domestic production capacity. Working closely with Africa CDC, AfCFTA Secretariat and AMA, it will enhance our capacity to procure relevant technologies – both old and new – to build our pharmaceutical industry across the value chain.

5. This Conference could not be timelier. Its deliberations will help us address outstanding issues on intellectual property regimes, technology transfer and innovation in the African context. I welcome its inputs also to shape negotiations on the Pandemic-specific Treaty and amendments to International Health Regulations (2005), which are currently ongoing at the WHO in Geneva.

6. The African Union is firmly committed to supporting the development of a vibrant pharmaceutical sector in Africa. We recognize that access to safe and affordable medicines, vaccines, diagnostics, etc. is a fundamental human right. Together, let us leverage innovation, technology transfer, and effective partnerships, to build a self-reliant and innovative African pharmaceutical sector. Only then, can we ensure equitable access for all Africans. I look forward to fruitful deliberations.

Thank you for your kind attention!