



OPENING REMARKS

LESLIE RICHER

DIRECTOR OF INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION

AU MEDIA FELLOWSHIP EU STUDY, BRUSSELS

10TH JUNE 2024

Mrs. Lisa Hiemer-Maqoma Team Lead Digital Governance & Innovation,
GIZ Office to the African Union

Mr. Nicole Bellomo, Head of Pan African Affairs Division, European
External Action Service of the European Union

Mr. Mark Gray, Head of Unit, Political Strategy & Communication -
Directorate General for International Partnerships of the European Union

Distinguished AU Media Fellows and Mentors

Ladies and Gentlemen, all Protocols observed.

It's my pleasure to welcome to this opening session of the AU Media fellowship Europe study tour hosted by the European Union. The presence here today of the AU Media Fellows in this city that is the seat of the EU is a reflection of the dynamic and evolving relationship between the African Union (AU) and the European Union (EU); which is a partnership that stands as a testament to the power of collaboration and mutual respect in achieving shared goals for development and prosperity and with the AU Media Fellowship, we see an extension of our collaboration to support African youth in the media space to enhance their desire to be purveyors of balanced narratives and fostering a common understanding of the aspirations of the people of Africa and Europe.

The AU and the EU share several foundational similarities that provide a solid basis for synergising our efforts to promote people-to-people cooperation and peer-to-peer learning. Both regional bodies aim to enhance political and economic integration, ensure peace and security, and foster sustainable development among our member states; and this common ground can facilitate a more unified approach in addressing global challenges and promoting closer ties between our people. As regional bodies tasked with driving the aspirational goals of our citizens, the AU and the EU recognise the need to work on initiatives that address critical issues to drive the development agenda aimed at creating inclusive and sustainable growth and opportunities for all.

One of the most powerful tools we have in promoting the AU-EU partnership and its successes is the media.

Media, in its various forms, plays a crucial role in shaping public perception and fostering understanding; and the AU Media fellowship presents an opportunity for thoughtful and accurate storytelling, which can highlight the positive impacts of AU-EU initiatives, showcasing how these joint efforts are transforming lives. By sharing stories of innovation, resilience, and cooperation, the AU Media Fellows can inspire others and build a narrative of hope and progress by shedding light on the collaborative projects that promote sustainable development such as our partnership to improve infrastructure through implementation of the Agenda 2063 Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA) or promoting the use of space technology under the Global Monitoring for Environment and Security (GMES) which is in line with the Agenda 2063 flagship programme, the Africa Outer Space Strategy. In the area of Economic Integration and Trade, both the AU and the EU emphasise economic integration as a means to enhance development and prosperity. The AU's African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) aims to create a single continental market, much like the EU's single market and these efforts can provide a basis for joint continental economic initiatives and trade partnerships.

Both Unions can leverage their rich cultural diversity to promote mutual understanding and appreciation among their peoples. Joint cultural exchange programs, artistic collaborations, and cultural festivals, can help build interpersonal connections and break down stereotypes; and the media, especially the youth in this sector, as represented by the AU Media Fellows can serve as a bridge, bringing African and European communities closer together by sharing success stories in the cultural arena as has been witnessed in the innovative Africa-Europe Maisha Cultural Exchange Programme.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we must encourage media professionals to delve deeper into the narratives emerging from both our continents, to explore and report on the real-life impacts of our partnership. In doing so, they can help to dispel misconceptions and foster a sense of unity and shared

purpose. The AU Media Fellowship is a critical tool in our endeavour to achieve this goal.

The African Union and the European Union, with their shared goals and institutional similarities, are well-positioned to synergise their efforts in promoting people-to-people cooperation. Through investment in programmes that promote economic development while also leveraging cultural exchange, educational partnerships, youth empowerment, civil society collaboration, digital connectivity, and joint development projects, we can build stronger ties between our populations. This cooperation not only enhances mutual understanding and respect but also contributes to global stability and prosperity.

The partnership between the African Union and the European Union is a beacon of what can be achieved through solidarity and cooperation. Let us leverage the power of media and programmes like the AU Media Fellowship to illuminate our shared achievements, identify opportunities for mutual development and to advocate for a brighter, more equitable future for all. Together, by advocating programmes, such as the AU Media Fellowship, that bring together and harness the creativity and innovativeness of youth in the media, to use the power of storytelling, we can empower our youth to be at the centre of charting the destinies of their people and inspire the world to believe in the possibilities of collective progress.

I Thank you.