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Opening Speech

On behalf of the African Union Commission

delivered by

Amb. Amr Aljowaily

Director, Citizens and Diaspora Directorate (CIDO)

African Union Commission

at

9th Pan-African Congress – Lomé, Togo

Please check against delivery

**Theme: “Renewal of Pan-Africanism and Africa’s Role in the Reform of Multilateral
Institutions: Mobilizing Resources and Reinventing Itself to Act”**

Your Excellency, President of the Council of the Republic of Togo

Mme Vice president of the Republic of Colombia

Your Excellencies Heads of State and Government

Honourable Speakers of Chambers of Parliament

Honourable Ministers,

Distinguished Representatives of the Diaspora and Afro-descendant Communities,

Esteemed traditional Leaders, Youth Leaders, Scholars, Artists, and Custodians of African Cultures,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

It is with deep honour and humility that I address you today at this historic 9th Pan-African Congress, here in the beautiful city of Lomé.

Allow me at the outset to express, on behalf of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission H.E Mahamoud Ali Youssouf, who could not join today due to unforeseen pressing engagements, profound gratitude to His Excellency Faure Gnassingbé the President

of the Council of the Republic of Togo, to the Government and the People of Togo, for hosting this gathering with vision and generosity.

A Congress Mandated by the Assembly, Rooted in Legacy, Driven by Urgency

Our august gathering today is mandated by three Summit decisions in a row culminating by Dec.913(XXXVIII) in 2025 approving the proposal of the Togolese Republic to organize the 9th Pan-African Congress under the theme: "Renewal of Pan-Africanism and the role of Africa in the reform of multilateral institutions: mobilizing resources and reinventing ourselves to act", as part of the activities of the "2021-2031 Decade of African Roots and the African Diaspora". We commend here the distinguished leadership of H.E PROF. ROBERT DUSSEY Minister of Foreign Affairs, Cooperation, African Integration and Togolese Abroad – Togo as Chair of the High Committee in charge of the Decade, with the valuable participation of the ten ministers representing the African Union's five regions. We are honored to support the Committee through the secretarial role of the Citizen and Diaspora Directorate of the African Union Commission.

This endorsement at the highest level by the African Summits of the convening of the Congress and the work of the High-Level Committee is a clear recognition of the significance of this important event and its central contribution to reinforcing the vital ties with the African Diaspora and People of African Descent. It is also a culmination of elaborate process of consultations and preparations. We therefore seize this opportunity to welcome the successful organization of the regional thematic preparatory conferences, which extended throughout the five regions of the African Union as well as for the diaspora in Brazil.

This engaging preparatory process extended to salient themes for our continent and the diaspora ranging from Pan-Africanism, Sciences, Knowledges and Technologies, Diaspora, Afrodescendants and Development, Pan-Africanism and Migration : Morocco, Economic Pan-Africanism African emergence, and Africanophonie, Cultures, Education and Pan-African Identity, Pan-Africanism, Memories, Restitutions, Reparations and Reconstructions. It complements, and builds on, initiatives for over a century of Pan-African Congresses who contributed valuably to the intellectual foundations for our collective efforts. All platforms which foster the spirit of pan Africanism are highly valued and merit our support and active engagement.

Today, the 9th Pan-African Congress responds to challenges as decisive as those faced by our forebearers—an unequal global order, structural vulnerabilities, climate injustice, external dependencies, and threats to peace and constitutional order. But this moment is also filled with unprecedented promise: Africa is the world's youngest continent, and home to the largest free trade AfCFTA in the globe, and set to achieve its Agenda 2063.

Renewal of Pan-Africanism: A Vision for the 21st Century

Pan-Africanism has evolved—from resistance, to liberation, to integration, to transformation. The Congress agenda—dialogue between youth, scholars, spiritual leaders, private sector actors, and policymakers—symbolizes another step in a continuous journey of renewal as it addresses Africa and the Reform of Multilateral Institutions.

We recall here that our Heads and States and Government reaffirmed that in the context of the claim for reparatory justice there is a need to address the inequities which characterise the current international economic and political systems, necessitating the reform of the global financial and trade architecture, as well as the United Nations Security Council; and in

the same context of reparatory justice, they recognized the need to address the consequences of transatlantic-enslavement, colonialism and apartheid, which have persisted in many forms including, among others, debt burden, illicit financial flows, and climate injustice. This was the guidance we received from the Summit in the decision that designated the Theme of the Year as “Justice for Africans and People of African Descent through Reparations”. The deliberations of the theme of this 9th Pan African Congress are therefore an indispensable contribution to reparatory justice not only for this year, but for the Decade to be launched in the upcoming Summit in February 2026.

Reparations do have a structural dimension in global governance. The persistence of power imbalances is starkly evident in institutions such as the United Nations Security Council, where Africa remains under-represented despite bearing the brunt of many decisions. The Congress is therefore a timely opportunity reiterate that genuine reparatory justice must encompass the full implementation of Common African Position, as contained in the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration, including at least two permanent seats for Africa, with all prerogatives and privileges, including the veto while it exists. This is not a plea for favour; it is a demand for historically grounded equity and for a multilateralism that reflects today's realities, not yesterday's injustices.

Excellency, Mr. President,

Excellencies and distinguished participants,

The choice of the eight commissions for the Ninth Pan African Congress is most wise in addressing the Africa of the 21st century, including through resources mobilization and self-centered development, Mind decolonization and self-reinvention, Reparations and Restitution of African cultural property, the struggle of African and Afro-descendant peoples against racism in the light of the Durban Declaration of 2001 and Program of action, the contribution of Women in the Pan-African movement, and the Decolonization of Knowledge and Promotion of Pan-Africanism. Together these themes form a solid base for a renewed vision of Pan-Africanism.

As the Congress calls on Africa to reinvent itself to act, we recognize that this call agenda is inherently transcontinental and diasporic and extends to Peoples of African descent. We therefore recall the Addis Ababa Declaration on Transcontinental Partnership for Reparatory Justice adopted by the Second Africa CARICOM Summit on 7 September 2025 and welcomes the presence of CARICOM, as well as the deliberations of the First AU CELAC ministerial meeting held in New York this past September, which was chaired by Vice President of Colombia H.E Francia Márquez, whose presence here we warmly salute.

We are committed to deepening joint Africa–Caribbean–Diaspora legal strategies, advocacy platforms for cooperation. In that context, talks are underway to host, for the first time, an annual session of the United Nations Permanent Forum of the People of African Descent at the premises of the African Union in Addis Ababa. This is a continuing partnership as we contributed to the Forum’s fourth session dedicated to Artificial intelligence and digital justice, an important topic which we invite this Congress to also address, in a cross cutting perspective, given its centrality in shaping the future.

In relation with the diaspora with people of African descent, the Atlantic Ocean is only a geographic reality, historically and culturally, it is a river that binds both its shores.

Excellency, Mr. President,

Excellencies and distinguished participants,

The Congress addresses the fundamental questions of culture, knowledge and identity. The role of African women and youth could not be overemphasized in this regard. Africa has suffered from past Colonial rule that involved systematic looting and destruction of African cultural, intellectual and spiritual heritage, as well as the deliberate erasure and distortion of African histories. The convening of this Congress is yet another confirmation thus of the unconditional right of African peoples to the restitution of artifacts, manuscripts, sacred objects, archives and ancestral remains, in line with the Common African Position on the Restitution of Heritage Resources and the AU Model Law on the Protection of Cultural Property and Heritage.

Education and knowledge production are central to decolonization. The thematic sessions of this Congress on “Mind decolonization and self-reinvention” are an opportunity to highlight the imperative to reform curricula, support African scholarship, and invest in archives, documentaries and artistic works that tell our stories with accuracy and dignity in a way that highlights African contribution to global culture and knowledge. The AU Commission will continue to promote initiatives that embed Pan-African consciousness, historical truth and reparatory justice into formal and informal education across the continent and the diaspora. In this context, we have participated this last October in the launch of two new encyclopedic volumes of UNESCO’s General History of Africa, one on Africa and her diaspora and the other on Global Africa. We will continue our efforts in this direction and invite all participants to join hands in these promising projects and valuable references.

A Congress of Action

Our Congress convening this week holds the promise to deliver, through this unique multistakeholder network, actionable, inclusive, and forward-looking outcomes towards multilateral reform, resource mobilization, cultural restitution and reparations, a youth and women recognition, mechanisms for diaspora engagement, and an African narrative agenda. As we begin the work of this Congress—its commissions, panels, cultural sessions, youth dialogues, and high-level consultations—the AU Commission looks forward to the outcome, which we will be honored to carry further in the upcoming multilateral forums. May this Congress mark another important step towards the Africa we want, and the continent we aspire for!

I thank you.