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**WELCOMING REMARKS BY**

**H.E. AMB. MOHAMED EDREES**

**AFRICAN UNION PERMANENT OBSERVER MISSION TO THE UNITED  
NATIONS**

**On the Occasion:**

**AFRICAN UNION HIGH-LEVEL SIDE EVENT AT CSW 70**

**THEME: EXPANDING OPERATIONALISATION OF THE AU ACCOUNTABILITY  
FRAMEWORK TO STRENGTHEN LEGAL AND COMMUNITY JUSTICE  
SYSTEMS TO PROTECT GIRLS AGAINST CROSS-BORDER TRAFFICKING,  
VIOLATIONS, AND EXPLOITATION**

**NEW YORK, MARCH 17, 2026**

**H.E. Ambassador Amma Adomaa Twum-Amoah, AU Commissioner for Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development**

**Honourable Betty Amongi Akena, Minister of Gender, Labour and Social Welfare, Republic of Uganda**

**Honourable Mary Navicha, Minister of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare, Republic of Malawi**

**H.E. Ambassador Liberata Mulamula, African Union Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security**

**Madam Cecile Mazzacurati, Gender Programme Liaison Branch-UNFPA HQ**

**Distinguished Representatives from Member States and Governments**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

On behalf of the African Union Permanent Observer Mission to the United Nations, it is my honour and privilege to welcome you to this High-Level Side Event on the margins of the 70th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

I extend a particularly warm welcome to my sister, Her Excellency Ambassador Amma A. Twum-Amoah, AU Commissioner for Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development, who has travelled with her team from Addis Ababa to join us. Your Excellency, we are deeply honoured by your presence and leadership.

**Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The theme we gather to address today could not be more urgent: *Expanding the operationalisation of the AU Accountability Framework to strengthen legal and community justice systems that protect girls against cross-border trafficking, violations, and exploitation.*

We meet at a pivotal moment. As our continent has strengthened its laws within borders, criminal networks have adapted. They exploit the jurisdictional grey zones between our nations, the porous borders, the legal inconsistencies, the spaces where national authority is stretched thin. In these spaces, our girls remain uniquely vulnerable to trafficking, child marriage, FGM, and the full spectrum of violations that rob them of their dignity and future.

But we are not here merely to diagnose. We are here to act.

The African Union Accountability Framework on the Elimination of Harmful Practices represents our collective commitment to closing the gap between our progressive policies and the lived reality of our most vulnerable citizens. Today, we focus specifically on how this Framework can strengthen the continuum of justice, from the community courtyard where a survivor first seeks help, to the courtroom where her rights must be vindicated.

**Excellencies, distinguished delegates,**

To our Member States, our development partners, our civil society organisations, and our traditional and religious leaders, you are essential to this endeavour. The solutions we seek cannot be imposed from above; they must be forged in partnership with those who guard our community justice systems and those who speak for the voiceless.

Let me end by wishing us all productive and insightful deliberations as we work together towards our shared goals.