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UNION AFRICAINE
UNIÃO AFRICANA
UNIÓN AFRICANA

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia P. O. Box 3243 Telephone: +251 115 517 700 Fax: +251 115 517 844

Website: www.au.int

KEYNOTE

H.E. Amb Selma Malika Haddadi,
Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission

16th Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP16) of the Africa Risk Capacity Ministerial Session

“Strengthening Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration in Africa’s Climate Action”.

Thursday 9 April

Excellencies,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour to join you today at this high-level consultation convened on the margins of the Africa Risk Capacity's Sixteenth Session of the Conference of the Parties, here in Addis Ababa.

This meeting is dedicated to a theme that is both timely and consequential: *"Aligning for Sovereignty: Strengthening Continental Member States Collaboration Towards African Solutions to Africa's Climate Change Challenges."*

Allow me also to express the sincere appreciation of the African Union Commission to the Government and people of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia for hosting this important consultation, and for their continued leadership in advancing Africa's climate action agenda.

I also wish to commend the Africa Risk Capacity for its leadership in convening this timely dialogue.

Excellencies,

Climate change is no longer a distant threat to Africa. It is an immediate and lived reality. Across our continent, we are witnessing increasingly frequent and severe droughts, floods, and biodiversity loss — with profound social and economic consequences that threaten livelihoods, food security, and hard-earned development gains.

The numbers tell a sobering story. Africa contributes less than 4% of global emissions, yet we lose around 5% of our GDP annually to climate impacts. And despite this disproportionate burden, the continent receives less than 3% of global climate finance.

At COP29, Africa called for climate finance at a scale of USD 1.3 trillion annually by 2030. What is currently being mobilized does not match that level of need.

I want to be clear about the nature of this gap. Africa is not lacking in vision. Member States already have Nationally Determined Contributions in place. Continental frameworks are being aligned.

The biggest constraint we face is at the level of implementation and sustainable financing. Until that gap is addressed, Africa will continue

to respond to climate shocks rather than systematically prepare for them.

This is precisely why the theme of this consultation — aligning for sovereignty — is the right conversation at the right moment.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Strengthening coordination among Member States is both a strategic and an operational imperative. The African Union continues to support this through platforms such as the African Group of Negotiators, amongst others — ensuring that Member States are aligned in how they define priorities on climate resilience, adaptation, and finance, and that Africa engages global processes with clarity and unity.

We are also working to further institutionalize the African Group of Negotiators for Multilateral Environmental Agreements, to ensure continuity and coherence across climate-related processes.

But coordination must translate into delivery. The AU Climate Change and Resilient Development Strategy and Action Plan 2022–2032 provides the framework that connects national, regional, and continental efforts — supporting Member States to align their NDCs with continental priorities, strengthening coordination through Regional

Economic Communities, and integrating climate resilience into development planning at every level.

Institutions such as the Africa Risk Capacity are enabling Member States to move from fragmented responses toward coordinated, risk-informed action.

The Great Green Wall is another concrete example of coordination becoming implementation — across borders, across communities, and across ecosystems.

Colleagues,

I want to emphasize, that continental institutions must play an equally decisive role in aligning financing, policy, and implementation. Climate action must support — not constrain — Africa's structural transformation.

This means ensuring that climate policy is aligned with industrial policy, with trade frameworks such as the AfCFTA, and with long-term development planning under Agenda 2063 — so that the transition supports value addition, competitiveness, and job creation within the continent.

We must equally be deliberate about shaping the financial and regulatory environment in which African economies operate. Africa cannot build resilience on externally driven finance alone.

Continental institutions must support Member States in strengthening financial markets, developing investable pipelines, and creating instruments that allow African capital to finance African priorities. And we must advance harmonized ESG frameworks and sustainability benchmarks that reflect African realities while remaining globally credible — because if Africa does not shape these standards, African firms will continue to operate within systems defined by others.

One area of particular concern is the emergence of climate-labelled trade measures, including the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism. The intention may be climate-related.

The implications for Africa are economic. Current analysis indicates that the continent could face losses of up to USD 25 billion annually as a result of CBAM.

As part of the ongoing AU–EU Summit process, the African Union remains in direct and structured dialogue with the European Union to advance a mitigation-focused engagement on this issue and will continue to do so.

Climate action must not translate into new constraints on Africa's development and industrialization.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

African solutions must remain at the center of our efforts. Indigenous knowledge must be valued alongside modern science. Women, youth, and vulnerable communities — those most affected by climate impacts — must be full participants in designing and delivering the solutions. Inclusivity is not a courtesy; it is a condition for lasting resilience.

This consultation also provides an important opportunity to align Africa's voice ahead of upcoming global climate engagements, ensuring the continent continues to speak with unity and with influence. Agenda 2063 tasks us to be a global player. We must live up to that expectation.

I take this opportunity to congratulate the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia on its confirmation as host of COP 32 in 2027.

The African Union Commission remains fully committed to supporting a successful COP 32 process.

Having witnessed Ethiopia's commitment to the climate agenda — from the Green Legacy Initiative to its leadership in convening this very consultation — I have no doubt that COP 32 will mark the moment Africa moves decisively from dialogue to action.

And to make that transition real, we must be deliberate.

The African Union Commission will continue to bring together Member States, development partners, and the African private sector, in dialogue and in action, to accelerate the mobilization of climate finance for resilience — by Africa, for Africa.

Financing conversations must be tied to implementation grounded in Africa's priorities. African capital must be more effectively mobilized alongside international support.

Because delivery will not come from dialogue alone. It will come from aligned action, backed by coordinated financing.

Excellencies, as the famous adage goes, a house divided cannot stand, and if it does, it cannot stand strong. In this spirit, let us align our policies across borders, mobilize our resources — public and private — and act collectively toward a climate-resilient and sustainable Africa.

Together, through unity, alignment, and sovereign action, Africa can transform its climate challenges into opportunities for resilience, innovation, and growth.

I thank you.