

**SPEECH BY HON DR RICHARD SEZIBERA, CHAIRPERSON OF
THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
AT THE 20TH EXTRAORDINARY SESSION
14TH NOVEMBER 2018.
ADDIS ABABA**

- **Your Excellency, Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the AU Commission;**
- **Your Excellences, Members of the Executive Council;**
- **The Deputy Chairperson of the AU Commission;**
- **Commissioners;**
- **Excellences Permanent Representatives;**
- **Heads of AU organs;**
- **Chiefs Executives of RECs**
- **Ladies and gentlemen;**

Good morning.

It is with a deep sense of humility and commitment, that I am addressing you today as a brother and colleague. In my new capacity as Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Rwanda, I am honored to be steering these discussions on the African Union Reforms, which I am sure we all agree on, are in many ways a rendez-vous for our continent's future, as well as our institution's.

- **Chers collègues;**

Ce rendez-vous avec l'Histoire, nous sommes déterminés à l'honorer. C'est donc avec un vif intérêt que je m'appête à travailler avec chacun d'entre vous, dans les mois à venir. À ce sujet, mon prédécesseur et votre Sœur Louise Mushikiwabo, aujourd'hui Secrétaire générale élu de l'Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie, n'a eu de cesse de m'affirmer que je pouvais compter sur votre soutien inestimable et le sens profond d'une solidarité toujours grandissante au sein de l'Union africaine. Ainsi, ce discours m'offre l'occasion souhaitée de vous remercier à nouveau, pour votre appui sans faille à la candidate du Rwanda et de l'Afrique.

As we like to say in Rwanda, Africa's unity and Africa's speaking with one voice, has proven to be a positively disruptive force on the international scene. We have witnessed this lately, both at the WHO's and Francophonie's elections. We should resolve that these results become the norm more than the exception.

Allow me to end this introduction by saying that I see many familiar faces in this room. Friends that I have known for years and worked with in the past, friends that I truly look forward to reconnecting with, in order to advance our common AU agenda for the benefit of the African people.

- **Excellences;**
- **Colleagues;**

We gather here today for an important task in the service of Africa. An efficient, fit for purpose AU, able to deliver on the Agenda we have agreed on, and flexible enough to innovate to meet the challenges of tomorrow.

The ongoing Institutional Reform is already registering progress in a number of areas, which AUC Chair Moussa Faki regularly reports on. I wish to commend him, the Reform Implementation Unit, and his entire team at the AU Commission, for the hard work put into seeing the reforms gradually come to fruition.

I also wish to thank Member States, for your support in ensuring that we are determinedly moving ahead. Without it, the reforms would not have reached the point at which they are today. We may have lengthy discussions at times, but they clearly remain healthy ones, aiming to achieve our objectives. We must then continue these constructive debates, while keeping in mind that time is of the essence. Let us not put off for tomorrow, what we can do today.

Excellences;

Our agenda today builds on exchanges held in this very room last September. The Permanent Representatives Committee (PRC) diligently prepared the current meeting, and it is only fitting that I thank our Ambassadors for providing recommendations, which we will consider in the next few minutes.

I understand that the Reform of the AU Commission (AUC) was extensively discussed, and strong support made in favor of a leaner, more efficient Commission with rationalized portfolios. I am told that the retreat in September also converged towards these same principles.

Further, we know that a lot of thinking was put into the design of recruitment and selection mechanisms, to ensure that the AUC can leverage the best minds and skills the continent has to offer, while involving Member States in the process.

In the same vein, strong accountability and performance systems are essential. Performance-based measures must be strengthened for the senior leadership and institutionalized across the entire organization, with adequate measures in place to address non-delivery.

As we design performance management mechanisms for our Commission, we must also commit to being more accountable ourselves as member States, to fulfilling our obligations, and being held to account when we don't.

Of course, as we reform the Commission, we know that self-financing our Union in a sustainable and predictable manner will be a key determinant of our accomplishments. I am told there has been a significant reduction in our reliance on partners' funding this year, with this trend expected to continue in the next few years.

However, for this to be sustained, we must create the necessary growth to enable us to continue to do so, starting with the ratification of the African Continental Free Trade Area; and by honoring our financial obligations, including by adopting the 0.2% levy through our national legislative bodies.

- **Excellences;**
- **Brothers and Sisters;**

An AU Reform process goes beyond the Commission alone, even if it has been the predominant focus of our talks this year. We know that the entire institutional architecture of our Union has to be addressed.

Whether it is about organs dealing with development matters such as the African Union Development Agency (AUDA) and its pressing need for a clear mandate; about those dealing with governance objectives, such as the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) and related financing modalities; or whether about a strategic division of labor among the AU, Member States, RECs and other key continental institutions, there is still much to be accomplished.

- **Excellences;**
- **Dear friends;**

Our work over the next two days will be demanding, but we can aim to complete our Executive Council Session with clear recommendations to our leaders on the AUC Reforms, AUDA's mandate, APRM's budget, and proposals on the division of labor among key African institutional stakeholders. We certainly owe our collective people that much.

Let me conclude with a special mention of the post-Cotonou Framework, which we will briefly discuss tomorrow and further submit for consideration to the Assembly of Heads of State. Africa needs to speak with one voice, and negotiate as one. That is the only fitting way for a vibrant Africa, finally taking her rightful place in the concert of nations.

Now we must get to work, and I wish us all fruitful deliberations.

END.