

AFRICAN UNION

الاتحاد الأفريقي



UNION AFRICAINE

UNIÃO AFRICANA

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**STATEMENT DELIVERED BY ALBERT M. MUCHANGA, COMMISSIONER
FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE FIRST
INTRA-AFRICAN TRADE FAIR HELD IN CAIRO, EGYPT ON 11 DECEMBER,
2018**

YOUR EXCELLENCY MOSTAFA MADBOULY

PRIME MINISTER OF THE ARAB REPUBLIC OF EGYPT,

YOUR EXCELLENCIES VICE PRESIDENTS HERE PRESENT,

YOUR EXCELLENCY PROFESSOR BENEDICT OKAY ORAMAH, CHAIRMAN
OF THE BOARD AND PRESIDENT OF THE AFRICAN EXPORT IMPORT BANK,

YOUR EXCELLENCY DR. OLUSEGUN OBASANJO, CHAIRMAN OF THE
ADVISORY COUNCIL OF THE FIRST INTRA AFRICAN TRADE FAIR,

YOUR EXCELLENCY ENGINEER AMR NASSAR,

MINISTER OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY OF THE ARAB REPUBLIC OF EGYPT,

YOUR EXCELLENCIES HONOURABLE MINISTERS HERE PRESENT,

MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS,

EXHIBITORS, BUYERS AND SELLERS,

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

I STAND HERE ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION DR. MOUSSA FAKI MAHAMAT WHO CANNOT NOT BE WITH US DUE TO OTHER URGENT ENGAGEMENTS AT HEADQUARTERS.

THE FIRST INTRA AFRICAN TRADE FAIR IS THE FIRST DELIVERABLE OF THE AFRICAN CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA, EVEN BEFORE THE AGREEMENT HAS ENTERED INTO FORCE.

THIS DEMONSTRATES THE STRONG COMMITMENT THAT AFRICA HAS TOWARDS THIS EVENT WHICH IS A COMPONENT OF THE CLUSTER ON TRADE INFORMATION OF THE ACTION PLAN ON BOOSTING INTRA AFRICAN TRADE ADOPTED BY THE ASSEMBLY OF THE AFRICAN UNION HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT IN 2012. IT WAS THAT ACTION PLAN WHERE AFRICAN UNION HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT COMMITTED THEMSELVES TO ACCELERATE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE AFRICAN CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA BY THE TARGET DATE OF 2017.

NEGOTIATIONS ON THIS HISTORIC UNDERTAKING WERE LARGELY COMPLETED BY DECEMBER, 2017, PAVING THE WAY FOR SIGNATURE OF THE AGREEMENT ON 21ST MARCH, 2018, IN KIGALI, RWANDA.

YOUR EXCELLENCIES,

WE ARE HOLDING THE TRADE FAIR IN ULTRA MODERN EXHIBITION HALLS.

I CONGRATULATE THE PEOPLE AND GOVERNMENT OF THE ARAB REPUBLIC OF EGYPT FOR PROVIDING US THESE EXCELLENT FACILITIES.

THE STANDARD THAT HAS BEEN SET, BOTH IN TERMS OF THE HIGH QUALITY OF EXHIBITION HALLS AND THE TURN OUT OF EXHIBITORS ABOVE TARGET IS THE BENCHMARK FOR FUTURE TRADE FAIRS.

THANK YOU EGYPT, YOU HAVE DONE US PROUD.

YOUR EXCELLENCIES,

THE AFRICAN EXPORT IMPORT BANK, ABLY LED BY THE HARD WORKING, VISIONARY AND HIGHLY EFFECTIVE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD AND PRESIDENT DR. BENEDICT OKEY ORAMAH BOTH MOOTED THE IDEA OF THE INTRA AFRICAN TRADE FAIR EDITIONS AND PUT ADEQUATE FINANCIAL RESOURCES TO BE WHERE WE ARE TODAY.

WHEN DR. ORAMAH CALLED ME THAT WE TEAM UP, I READILY AGREED BECAUSE WAY BACK, I HAD IN 2012 SOLD THE IDEA OF RE-LAUNCHING THE ALL AFRICA TRADE FAIR SERIES WHICH COLLAPSED BECAUSE OF THE WEAK PRODUCTION BASE FOR AFRICAN MANUFACTURED GOODS AT

THAT TIME. I COULD NOT GET ANY SUPPORT. THE CALL FROM DR. ORAMAH WAS A PERFECT MEETING OF MINDS.

THAT WE ARE OVER-SUBSCRIBED IN TERMS OF EXHIBITORS AND TRADE DEALS IS TESTIMONY TO THE STERLING PERFORMANCE OF THE WOMEN AND MEN OF THIS STRONG AND RELIABLE PAN AFRICAN FINANCIAL INSTITUTION.

THANK YOU AFREXIMBANK.

THANK YOU DR. ORAMAH AND YOUR TEAM.

WE ARE EQUALLY PROUD OF YOU.

WE GREATLY APPRECIATE YOUR VISION TO TRANSFORM AFRICA THROUGH TRADE.

IT IS ALREADY YIELDING DIVIDENDS.

YOUR EXCELLENCIES,

AS WE START THE FIRST EDITION OF THE INTRA AFRICAN TRADE FAIR SERIES THAT WILL TAKE PLACE EVERY TWO YEARS, WE ARE ALSO CELEBRATING THE EMERGENCE OF ONE AFRICAN MARKET THAT WILL OPEN LIMITLESS POSSIBILITIES TO THE ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION, STRUCTURAL TRANSFORMATION AND PROSPERITY OF AFRICA.

THE LARGE AND INTEGRATED MARKET THAT WE ARE CREATING IN THE AFRICAN CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE ARE WILL STIMULATE INCREASED INVESTMENTS, OUTPUT AND EFFICIENCIES.

OVER TIME, FIRMS OPERATING IN OUR MARKET WILL PRODUCE AT LOWER COSTS WHICH WILL ALSO TRANSLATE INTO REDUCED CONSUMER COSTS AND RISING WELFARE OF THE AFRICAN PEOPLE.

THIS IS WHAT THE AFRICAN PEOPLE EXPECT.

THIS IS WHAT THEY DESERVE.

YOUR EXCELLENCIES,

WE ARE EVERYDAY GETTING NEARER TO THE ENTRY INTO FORCE OF THE AGREEMENT ESTABLISHING THE AFRICAN CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA.

SO FAR, WE HAVE THIRTEEN RATIFICATIONS IN TERMS OF PARLIAMENTARY APPROVALS OUT OF WHICH WE AT THE AFRICAN UNION HAVE RECEIVED NINE DEPOSITS OF THE INSTRUMENTS OF RATIFICATION.

WE ARE IN REGULAR CONTACT WITH AFRICAN UNION MEMBER STATES TO FIND OUT THEIR PROGRESS IN FACILITATING RATIFICATION'S.

THE PROGRESS IS ENCOURAGING.

THE FEEDBACK WE ARE GETTING SHOWS THAT TWELVE OF OUR MEMBER STATES ARE IN ADVANCED STAGES OF OBTAINING PARLIAMENTARY APPROVALS.

AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND, WE ARE CONFIDENT THAT WE SHALL HAVE THE MINIMUM NUMBER OF TWENTY TWO RATIFICATIONS BY THE TIME THE ASSEMBLY OF THE AFRICAN UNION HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT MEETS IN FEBRUARY, 2019.

WHEN THIS RATIFICATION MILESTONE IS ATTAINED, NOT IF, BUT WHEN, IT WILL BE A SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT IN THE SENSE THAT ON AVERAGE, IT TAKES FIVE YEARS FOR AFRICAN UNION LEGAL INSTRUMENTS TO ENTER INTO FORCE.

THE AFRICAN CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA AGREEMENT WILL BE ABOVE AVERAGE IN THIS REGARD.

THIS IS AS IT SHOULD BE.

TO ATTAIN FAST AND BROAD-BASED PROSPERITY, AFRICA MUST SET AND SUSTAIN A NEW STANDARD OF PERFORMING ABOVE AVERAGE.

IN THIS RESPECT, WE CALL ON ALL OUR SIX MEMBER STATES THAT HAVE NOT YET SIGNED THE AFRICAN CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA AGREEMENT TO DO SO AS A MATTER OF URGENCY.

IN THE SAME VEIN, WE CALL ON ALL THOSE MEMBER STATES THAT HAVE NOT YET RATIFIED TO DO SO AS A MATTER OF URGENCY AS WELL.

I MAKE THESE CALLS BECAUSE IF WE ARE TO CREATE ONE AFRICAN MARKET, IN LINE WITH THE VISION OF THE AFRICAN CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA, ALL AFRICAN UNION MEMBER STATES MUST SIGN AND

RATIFY THE AGREEMENT ESTABLISHING THE AFRICAN CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA. IN THIS WAY, ITS LANDSCAPE WILL BE FULLY INTEGRATED.

I AM GLAD THAT THE AFRICAN UNION MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE TRADE ARE HERE.

I AM SURE THEY WILL DO THE NEEDFUL AND TAKE US CLOSER TO REALIZING THE VISION OF THE AFRICAN UNION AND AGENDA 2063 WHICH IS: 'AN INTEGRATED, PROSPEROUS AND PEACEFUL AFRICA, DRIVEN BY ITS OWN CITIZENS, REPRESENTING A DYNAMIC FORCE IN THE GLOBAL ARENA'.

THIS VISION IS THE GUIDING STAR OF CREATING THE AFRICA THAT WE WANT.

WITH THIS POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT, THE CHALLENGE IS FOR INVESTORS, MANUFACTURERS AND TRADERS TO BE READY TO MOVE IN AS SOON AS IT STARTS OPERATING TO ESTABLISH COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE AND THRIVE.

WE PLAN TO HAVE THE SHORTEST TRANSITION BETWEEN ENTRY INTO FORCE OF THE AGREEMENT AND OPERATION OF THE MARKET.

BEFORE CONCLUDING, I WOULD LIKE TO ADD THE FOLLOWING POINTS TO MY STATEMENT.

MY FIRST POINT IS TO THANK THE EXHIBITORS, BUYERS, SELLERS AND PARTICIPANTS IN THE CONFERENCE SEGMENTS OF THIS FAIR. TOGETHER WITH THE VISITORS AND THE RICH ARRAY OF EXHIBITIONS, YOU ARE THE LIFE OF THE TRADE FAIR. TODAY AND THE COMING SIX DAYS PROMISE TO BE LIVELY.

WE THANK YOU FOR GIVING LIFE TO A DREAM COME TRUE.

MY SECOND ONE IS TO INVITE THE BUYERS AND VISITORS IN THIS FAIR TO APPRECIATE THE WIDE RANGE OF CONSUMER CHOICES THAT WILL BE OFFERED UNDER THE AFRICAN CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA. THE RANGE WILL BE WIDER IN THE ACTUAL MARKET WHEN IT STARTS OPERATING NEXT YEAR.

I MAKE THIS INVITATION BECAUSE INCREASED PRODUCT VARIETY WILL ALSO CONTRIBUTE TO THE WELFARE GAINS TO BE ENJOYED BY CONSUMERS IN THE AFRICAN CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA.

MY THIRD POINT IS TO DEEPLY APPRECIATE THE PRESENCE OF OVER FORTY COUNTRIES IN THE 2018 INTRA AFRICAN TRADE FAIR.

SOME OF THEM ARE COMING FROM OUTSIDE AFRICA.

THIS SHOWS THE POWER OF SOLIDARITY AMONG NATIONS.

I INVITE US ALL TO CONTINUE THIS SPIRIT OF SOLIDARITY. THIS IS CRITICAL GIVEN THE FACT THE MULTILATERAL TRADING SYSTEM IS CURRENTLY FACING ENORMOUS CHALLENGES.

TO CAPSTONE MY STATEMENT AND THIS IS MY FOURTH AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST POINT I WOULD LIKE TO APPRECIATE THE DYNAMIC ROLE PLAYED BY THE ADVISORY COUNCIL OF THE 2018 INTRA AFRICAN TRADE FAIR IN PROVIDING EFFECTIVE OVERSIGHT TO THE PREPARATORY PROCESS. I PARTICULARLY SALUTE THE CHAIRMAN OF THE ADVISORY COUNCIL AND HIS DEPUTY FORMER PRESIDENT AND BABA OBASANJO AND FORMER PRESIDENT EKRA RESPECTIVELY.

I HUMBLY REQUEST THEM TO RISE AND PLEASE, GIVE THEM A VERY GENEROUS ROUND OF APPLAUSE FOR THEIR EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP.

THANK YOU.

I WOULD LIKE TO END HERE AND THANK YOU ALL FOR YOUR KIND ATTENTION.