

AFRICAN UNION

الاتحاد الأفريقي



UNION AFRICAINE

UNIÃO AFRICANA

Addis Ababa, ETHIOPIA P. O. Box 3243 Telephone : 517 700 Fax : 517844/512622

35th ORDINARY SESSION IRE OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

NIGER (NIAMEY)

4-5 JULY 2019

STATEMENT OF H.E. MOUSSA FAKI MAHAMAT

CHAIRPERSON OF THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION

Mr. Chairman of the Executive Council,

Honourable Ministers,

Deputy Chairperson of the Commission,

Commissioners,

**Ambassadors, Members of the Permanent Representatives
Committee,**

Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

Invited Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like first of all discharge a pleasant duty, that of expressing my deep gratitude to H.E Issoufou Mahamadou, President of the Republic, to the Government and the people of Niger for the brotherly and warm welcome as well as for the efforts made for the organisation of this Summit in your beautiful capital. Indeed, Niamey has beautified itself with all the architectural, logistical and organisational assets to host our meeting.

I would also like to welcome all the Ministers, members of the Executive Council, present here. Your presence in large numbers is an eloquent testimony of your commitment to the advent of the Africa we want, this Africa whose broad features are outlined in Agenda 2063.

Over the past six months, the Commission, in close cooperation with the Permanent Representatives Committee and the Experts from our Member States, has continued to work tirelessly to give greater visibility to the implementation of

the flagship projects identified by Agenda 2063 and officially launched since 2018 by the Heads of State and Government.

It goes without saying that the most emblematic of these projects is the African Continental Free Trade Area, which we are about to take out from the baptismal font in a few hours.

Indeed, the AfCFTA aims at intensifying trade across the Continent and to establish ultimately an integrated continental market. It should be recalled that the idea of its establishment goes back to the inaugural session of the OAU in 1963, which had instructed the economic committee of the time to carry out a study. Despite the delays, the Founding Fathers must be happy and bless us from where they are.

This is a remarkable achievement that can even be called historical in which the AU Commission, the Trade Ministers, the Regional Economic Communities, our traditional partners, which are the ECA, AfDB, UNCTAD and a battery of experts made available by the Member States, have invested themselves, with unparalleled dedication. This extensive technical work was accomplished under the political leadership of H.E Issoufou MAHAMADOU, President of the Republic of Niger and Champion of the African Continental Free Trade Area, to whom I pay a high tribute.

As you are aware, the 22 instruments of ratification required for the entry into force of the Protocol establishing the Free Trade Area have been deposited by Member States in a relatively short period of one year.

This unusual promptness is part of the dynamics initiated in Kigali, where a strong desire to accelerate the pace of continental integration was shown with the adoption of the ACFTA.

We should, therefore, deal with all the outstanding issues, whether of a technical or political nature, with the necessary urgency. In fact, at the technical level, many operational tools are still to be developed. At the political level, the ratification of the Protocol to the Abuja Treaty on the Free Movement of Persons and Goods and many others for Regional integration, remains an urgent challenge for all of us. I, therefore, call upon all the Member States to ratify the Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons, which is an indispensable supplement to the economic and social integration to which we aspire.

Furthermore, I would like to recall, in conformity with the new multidimensional index of African integration, that eight dimensions have been chosen to follow up and evaluate the level of Regional integration, namely trade integration, free movement of persons, political and institutional integration, monetary integration, financial integration, social integration and management of the environment.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dans le cadre de la réforme institutionnelle, la Conférence vous a donné mandat d'adopter le budget de l'Union. L'élaboration du budget 2020 s'est faite en étroite collaboration avec les trois entités que sont la Commission, le COREP représenté par ses sous-comités compétents et le F15 dans le cadre des règles d'or et des normes convenues pour une réduction graduelle de notre dépendance financière par rapport aux partenaires extérieurs. Dans cette optique, le budget a connu une baisse significative assortie du plafonnement des budgets des différents organes et des départements de la Commission à des niveaux préétablis, conformément aux orientations prescrites par les organes délibérants. Ledit budget est donc soumis à votre examen. Eé »(--

Within the framework of the institutional reform, the Assembly has mandated you to adopt the budget of the Union. The preparation of the 2020 budget was done, in close cooperation with the three entities: the Commission, the PRC, represented by its appropriate sub-committees and the F15 within the framework of the golden rules and agreed standards for a gradual reduction of our financial dependence on external partners. In this vein, the budget has been reduced significantly, coupled with ceilings on the budgets of the various Organs and Departments of the Commission at pre-established levels, in conformity with the directives given by the Policy organs. The said budget is, therefore, submitted for your consideration.

On this matter, I would like to point out that the major difficulty still faced by the Commission and the other AU Organs lies in the late payment of contributions by the Member States, a delay often aggravated by large backlogs of statutory contributions. The combination of these two factors does not facilitate the continuation of the implementation of programmes and projects, which in turn leads to a low level of implementation.

The Commission, aware of the contribution efforts of the Member States, ensures a rational and responsible management of the funds allocated, although the Reports of both internal and external auditors continue to point out bad practices that we pledge to resolutely fight.

In full cooperation with the PRC and its appropriate Sub-committees, the Commission commits itself to strengthen control measures on the use of budgetary resources allocated to the operation and implementation of programs. These measures flow naturally from the accountability of all fund managers.

In full collaboration with the PRC and its relevant subcommittees, the Commission is committed to strengthen control measures on the use of budgetary resources allocated to the functioning and implementation of programmes. These measures flow naturally from the accountability of all the funds managers.

In this regard, I would like to inform your Council that I have personally been involved in taking steps to implement, without delay, the relevant recommendations of internal and external audits, in particular through:

1. The establishment of a Task Force to identify immediate measures to give effect to these recommendations;
2. The injunction to faulty managers to submit answers within a given period of time, under pain of sanctions;
3. The sending of notification letters concerning fifteen serious specific cases deserving immediate administrative action
4. The issuance of letters of suspension to four officials in cases where investigations had been conducted and where there was prima facie evidence of fraud and financial irregularities;
5. The decision to establish the Disciplinary Board to strengthen the zero tolerance for impunity;
6. The preparation by the Commission of the Terms of Reference of the Forensic audit requested by the PRC.

I will present to you a detailed Report on this important issue at this session.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Agenda 2063 has rightly characterised the Africa we want through the triptych : Integration - Prosperity - Peace. So it is obvious that no prosperity, no integration is possible without peace and prosperity.

Hence the importance of the Peace Fund, whose establishment and current level of contribution, a little more than 116 million Dollars out of the 400 million programmed, is another indicator of the avowed political will of the Member States. I would, therefore, like to commend the appreciable efforts of our Member States which, in just a few months, have mobilised this important amount.

I sincerely wish that all Member States maintain their contribution efforts with the assurance that all the governance tools necessary for the transparent management of the Fund, namely the Governing Board, the Management Committee, the Fund Manager, will enable an efficient and effective use of the financial resources made available. This Fund will operate as an instrument of sovereignty that gives Africa the opportunity to assert its active presence in theatres of conflict but especially work upstream in conflict prevention. It will also be a powerful lever for action in the direction of the UN Security Council, which has the institutional responsibility to ensure peace on a global scale.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The institutional reform process of the African Union is continuing resolutely. More attention will be paid to greater consultation at all levels.

I would like, therefore, to seize this opportunity to thank the PRC and the Executive Council for their joint action for the success of the reform.

The Assembly also gave you the authority to adopt the new structure of the Commission. The Reform Unit submitted its work to the PRC to bring it to your high attention. I would like to stress the diligence required to put the new structure in place within the given deadlines.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you are aware, another aspect of the institutional reform is the convening of the inaugural session here in Niamey of the Coordination meeting between the African Union and the Regional Economic Communities, pillars of the Continental integration. The institutionalisation of this meeting will, I am convinced, enable a better division of labour between the national, regional and continental levels with the effective implementation of our integration programmes.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On the agenda of this Council is also the assessment of the management of the partnerships.

An assessment thereof is necessary in the light of our desire to speak with one voice at the international level. We need to wonder about the relevance and nature of these different partnerships to adjust them to our priorities. It must be pointed out, however, to the high attention of the Executive Council that the debates on partnerships continue to be weighed down by the question of the participation of all the Member States in meetings and summits, a question which is faced with the interpretation of the various decisions taken by your Council on this matter.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before concluding, I would like to reiterate my personal commitment and the readiness of all services of the Commission to work together with the other Organs, particularly your Council, to continue our joint action to implement the guidelines of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government. In this perspective, our joint action in a spirit of frank cooperation and complementarity, will guarantee a collective success in attaining the Africa we want.

I thank you for your kind attention.