

AFRICAN UNION  
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**THIRTIETH ORDINARY SESSION  
OF THE ASSEMBLY OF THE UNION**

**28-29 JANUARY 2018  
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA**

**SPEECH OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE  
COMMISSION OF THE AFRICAN UNION**

**H.E. MOUSSA FAKI MAHAMAT**

**Excellency Current Chairman,**

**Excellencies, Heads of State and Government of the Union,**

**Mr. Secretary General of the United Nations,**

**Excellency, President of the Palestinian Authority,**

**Monsieur le Secrétaire général de la Ligue des Etats arabes,**

**Representatives of the Diplomatic Community,**

**Invited Guests,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Our Summit is being held within a context marked not only by the acute challenges facing our Continent but also by the uncertainties weighing heavily on the international system. The situation is such that it makes many say that we are at crossroads.

There are strong expectations from this Ordinary Summit of January, which is also an opportunity for the handing over from one Current Chairman to another. I would like to pay a well-deserved tribute to President Alpha Conde of Guinea, who led our Union with determination and conviction in 2017.

Mr President, your PanAfrican commitment and your dynamism have been for us, in the Commission, for me and my colleagues, in particular, an invaluable source of inspiration and motivation. You leave the seat, certainly, but your support, I'm sure, will not fail us.

That seat you ceded to your brother, President Paul Kagame. The commitment, the reformist spirit and the managerial talent of President Paul Kagame rouse enthusiasm in us. There is no doubt that the torch will be held high.

**Excellencies,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

We are meeting at a time when multilateralism is in serious decline, even though its principles seemed to be built on solid foundations.

The past months have witnessed a number of developments attesting to the seriousness of the risks we face. This is evidenced by the multiplication of unilateral measures that have the potential to dangerously weaken the capacity of the international community to respond effectively to the complex challenges it faces, the rise of national selfishness, the trivialization of xenophobia and the rejection of the other. So many signals indicative of a decline in the values of equality, solidarity and justice.

We must express our concern about these developments and reiterate our commitment to the values of solidarity, tolerance and mutual respect. The survival of humanity is at stake.

This particularity of the international context is coupled with the internal trials and tribulations that our Continent is going through. Violence continues to be a reality that afflicts the lives of millions of Africans in different conflict areas.

In addition, there is the scourge of the scourge of terrorism, which continues to wreak havoc on the Lake Chad Basin, the Sahel and the Horn of Africa.

Furthermore, our economic situation is not up to the exigencies of our development. Indeed, while Africa recorded a 5% growth rate from 2000 to 2014, the outlook seems less good for 2017-2018, in a context of low diversification of our economies, insufficient governance and lack of social inclusiveness, neglecting millions of Africans without education, jobs social protection, exposed to poverty.

This fact reminds us, with dazzling clarity, the imperative need to strengthen the unity of our continent and the urgency of resolutely translating our words into deeds. Our respect, our dignity and the defence of the well-understood interests of our peoples are indisputably at this price.

**Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I welcome the prompt reaction of many Member States, personalities and ordinary citizens to the despicable images of African migrants ill-treated by criminal networks in Libya.

The Commission has left no stone unturned to help cope with this situation, including through the repatriation of thousands of migrants. This is an opportunity for me to commend the close cooperation between the African Union, the United Nations and the European Union, within the framework of a tripartite partnership for effective and rapid action.

The lasting resolution of the problem of irregular migration, however, requires that we go much further. We need to create opportunities for young people who are embarking on the adventure of crossing the deserts and oceans in search of an illusory paradise on the other side of the Mediterranean

That is why the Summit declared 2017 the Year of Youth, with the goal of harnessing the demographic dividend by investing in this category of our population. I would like to express my gratitude to President Idriss Deby Itno, in his capacity as Champion of this theme, for the commitment with which he has discharged this responsibility.

Over the past twelve months, the Commission has taken a number of measures and initiatives to give concrete form to the Year of Youth, whether in the field of employment, vocational training or volunteer work. The efforts made must obviously go beyond 2017.

I call upon the Member States to translate the commitments made by them into reality. In this respect, it is crucial that all Member States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the African Youth Charter. Let us set July 2017 as a deadline, with the convening of the Nouakchott Summit, to achieve this goal and thus make this instrument universal on the continent.

For my part, I intend to appoint, in the coming weeks, a Special Envoy for youth. At the same time, within the institutional reform of our Union, we have made a number of proposals to broaden the space given to young people, including through a quota system.

The attacks on human dignity observed on our continent indicate, if need be, how much the fight for human rights remains valid, how much it remains an imperative need. The commemoration of the centenary of Nelson Mandela, this great son of Africa, whose determination and commitment to our ideals will forever be engraved in the annals of history, affords us the opportunity to renew our commitment to endeavour for the scrupulous respect of texts that we have freely adopted.

With this conviction, I reiterate my full support for all PanAfrican institutions in charge of human rights issues and encourage them to persevere in their action. Their effectiveness and independence are the surest guarantee of the fulfillment of our human rights aspirations.

### **Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen**

The message that echoes from all regions of the Continent and all the social categories that make up our peoples, is simple and unique: accelerate the reform of the Union, our tool for our struggle; speed up integration, a necessary step to our development; intensify efforts to promote peace, justice and inclusion as essential conditions for social cohesion.

In this regard, it is a pleasure to note that the first phase of the negotiations on the Continental Free Trade Area has been successfully completed. It is expected that the Summit will adopt the Agreement and will adopt the recommendations of the Champion of this initiative, President Mahamadou Issoufou.

Another flagship project of the First Ten Year Implementation of Agenda 2063 is the launch, at this Summit, of the Single Market for Air Transport in Africa. This is an initiative whose execution has been long awaited.

In the same vein, I call for the adoption by the Summit of the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons and the African Passport. In doing so, it is to ensure that our citizens, who are experiencing so many difficulties and are often subjected to countless humiliations to move out of Africa, finally cease to be foreigners on their own continent.

Over the past 12 months, the African Union has carried out many other activities in areas as diverse as industrialisation, infrastructures, agriculture, environment, food security, health, education, gender equality and governance.

It is clear that all these efforts should be better known to our fellow citizens. Their lack of visibility undermines the legitimacy of our Union and perpetuates the unfair perception of an institution that would be nothing more than a forum for discussion without real impact.

There are two other issues that I would like to stress. First, the fight against illicit capital flows out of Africa. The report of the High Level Panel led by President Mbeki stated the scale of this scourge. Stopping this haemorrhage is an imperative. Member States must make this fight a priority.

In a related way, we must seize the opportunity of the theme of this year on the fight against corruption, to take decisive action against this scourge that impedes development and undermines social cohesion. I am convinced that President Muhammadu Buhari, who is coordinating this theme, will give the necessary impetus to this fight.

Then, the need to operationalise, as soon as possible, our PanAfrican financial institutions, including the signing and ratification of the related instruments. Their implementation will strengthen the financial and monetary sovereignty of the Continent.

**Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The persistence of conflicts and their disastrous consequences on the lives of African peoples continue to mobilise us to the highest degree.

In Somalia, the efforts must continue to enable the completion of the current transition between AMISOM and the Somali forces.

In South Sudan, how can we not repeat that we cannot understand the insane violence that the belligerents inflict, with indescribable cruelty, on a population that has suffered too much. The time has come to impose sanctions on those who obstruct peace. I reiterate the support of the African Union to IGAD.

In Burundi, the parties must encourage dialogue, the only way to end the crisis.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the tensions and violence of recent days have, once again, illustrated the urgent need for the implementation, in good faith, of the New Year's Eve Agreement, with a view to organising elections in December 2018

In the Central African Republic, every effort must be made to ensure the successful completion of the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation, launched under the auspices of the African Union.

In Mali, the implementation of the Peace and Reconciliation Agreement must be accelerated, in parallel with the mobilisation of greater support for the G5 Sahel Joint Force.

Efforts must be redoubled in Libya to put an end to the ordeal of the population. Africa must take its rightful place in the search for a solution, together with the United Nations and other partners concerned.

With regard to Western Sahara, I can only express my hope that this situation will finally be solved. Africa can contribute positively, in support of the United Nations. The resolution of this persistent conflict will undoubtedly help the long-awaited reactivation of the Maghreb construction project.

At the same time, we must also strengthen our action in the fight against terrorism and organised crime.

I call upon all the Member States and other stakeholders concerned to pool efforts to find solutions to these crises and thereby attain the objective of silencing the guns by 2020.

**Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen**

Aware of the fact that Africa and the rest of the world are in a state of interdependence and that our destinies are linked, we have given sustained attention, over the past year, to the promotion of our strategic partnerships.

An agreement on the Strategic Framework for Peace and Security was signed with the United Nations in April 2017. It has just been supplemented by an agreement on the implementation of Agendas 2063 and 2030. I am pleased to point out that a trilateral cooperation is gradually being established between the African Union, the United Nations and the European Union.

Like all of you, I welcome the success of the African Union-European Union Summit, to whose success the Commission contributed with all its capacity. I reiterate our appreciation to President Alassane Dramane Ouattara and his Government for the arrangements made for the smooth running of the Summit.

I note with satisfaction the continued efforts to deepen our partnerships with the Arab world, China, Japan, Turkey and many others. These are all areas that we are now working on with greater care and know-how.

This effort contributes to a more global action to promote multilateral approaches, the only ones that will enable the international community to find lasting solutions to the many challenges it faces. It is in this spirit that the Commission has taken a stand on important issues of international concern, particularly Jerusalem and the Agreement on the Iranian nuclear programme.

Africa must, by conviction and interest, be in the forefront of the fight for multilateralism and a fairer and more equitable world. It is in this spirit that I intend to convene, in the coming months, a conference on Africa and multilateralism.

**Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The institutional reform of our Union has made significant progress. President Paul Kagame and I presented the broad outlines at the Closed Session.

Obviously, we are moving forward on this matter. The ever-increasing number of States which apply the 0.2% levy on eligible imports is a striking proof, as are the unprecedented contributions to the Peace Fund.

Other areas of reform and not least, especially the division of labour between the African Union and the Regional Economic Communities, must imperatively take shape, to enable the latter to fully play their role as pillars of integration.

It goes without saying that the success of our efforts is strongly tied to our degree of cohesion. And our cohesion itself is determined by the frankness of our discussions and the intensity of our consultations on the way forward.

There is no need for me to remind that at the stage we are now, we have only two choices: to move resolutely forward in the implementation of the reform or to pave the way for failure, once again, whose consequences will seriously undermine the image

and credibility of the valuable tool of unity, freedom, integration, development and democracy, which is the African Union.

I have no doubt that your commitment to Africa and your great wisdom will bring out of this Summit decisions that will carry forward the reform. In so doing, you will definitely place our organisation at the exalted levels of hope that it raises among the African peoples and their friends in the world.

I thank you for your kind attention.