

**STATEMENT BY H.E HOPE TUMUKUNDE GASATURA,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF RWANDA
TO THE AFRICAN UNION AND CHAIRPERSON OF THE
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE'S COMMITTEE (PRC)**

36th SESSION OF THE PRC

25 June 2018

- **Your Excellency, Thomas Kwesi Quartey, Deputy Chairperson,**
- **Mr./Ms the Representative of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania (If applicable)**
- **Excellencies Commissioners,**
- **Excellencies Ambassadors, Members of the PRC**
- **Representatives of Regional Economic Communities,**
- **AU Commission Staff,**
- **Invited Guests,**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

On this important occasion of the opening of the 36th Ordinary Session of the Permanent Representatives Committee, it is both an honour and privilege for me to address you and welcome you all to this session which is going to be held here in Nouakchott from today 25th to tomorrow 26th June 2018.

At the outset, let me, on behalf of the PRC and my own behalf, take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the Government and people of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, for the warm reception, hospitality accorded to us since our arrival in this beautiful city of Nouakchott as well as for the commendable tireless efforts made towards preparation of the Summit meetings.

I also wish to take this opportunity as the chair of the PRC, to commend you the PRC for the support, collaboration and most importantly availability since Rwanda assumed the Chairmanship in January 2018.

Your continued support is highly appreciated.

I wish to thank you for the work that has already been accomplished in Addis Ababa with regard to the agenda and the role that you played to prepare for this Summit.

I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to H.E Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the Commission, for his tireless efforts to ensure the efficient and smooth running of the Union agendas.

You will recall that, H.E the Chairperson himself, during the Joint African Union Commission – Permanent Representatives Committee (PRC) Retreat, held in Cairo from 10 to 11 December 2017, committed and has been holding monthly interactions with the PRC and the PSC. Both organs are grateful for his availability and guidance!

Allow me to also thank all the Commissioners and the entire staff members of the Commission especially the Secretary General for all their hard work and support to the PRC.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our Heads of State and Government decided to dedicate this year to the fight against corruption as stipulated in the theme “Winning the Fight Against Corruption: A Sustainable Path to Africa’s Transformation.”

In this regard, I would like to call upon all of us to support all the efforts of H.E. Mahmoud Buhari, President of Nigeria and leader on the theme.

It is also important that at national level, the fight against corruption should be made a priority.

As you are well aware, corruption is one of the biggest challenges that Africa is confronted with today in achieving her development endeavors. It is therefore our collective responsibility to fight and win it.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we come together here today, I believe it is fitting to recall the hard work we have together engaged in during the last six months and important strides we continue to make .

Together we have done much these last six months and I congratulate everybody in the entire family of the African Union from the committed staff and leadership of the Commission, to the PRC and the entire leadership of the Union!

If we look back from January, in the spirit of Cairo retreat, the PRC has maintained regular meetings, some of the sub-committees are doing a great job and more importantly, the Chair of the Commission interacts with the PRC on a monthly basis. I would therefore urge all of us to keep the momentum and do even better because we still have a lot to do and time is not on our side!

The AU has registered key achievements during these last six month. These include the following key flagship projects which are expected to bring renewed hope and optimism to the future of Africa's socio-economic development and transformation. Congratulations to all who have contributed to the realization of these initiatives!

1. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) agreement was launched in Kigali in March this year and signed by almost all Member States. Ratification of the same has started, with now 6 member states ratifying the agreement and a number of others in advanced in the process.

Member States who have completed the ratification process and those that have begun the journey to do so are much appreciated. I encourage others who have not so to start their internal process to ensure this important Agreement enters into Force. I hope that we will soon reach the required number of ratifications and domestication and implementation will follow immediately. Let's spare no efforts to realize this big dream of Africa. I would also like to commend the work done by H.E the President of the Republic of Niger and champion of this initiative.

2. The Protocol to the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community Relating to Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment also signed by many needs more awareness for effective implementation so that citizens of our continent enjoy their benefits of integration. So far, one Member State has ratified the protocol. I would also urge all of us to mobilize our respective governments to look into this.

3. The Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) launched in January 2018 in Addis Ababa during the 30th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government is also another flagship project under the Agenda 2063 of the AU, which aims at liberalising and unifying the African skies. This initiative which has so far 26 signatories is expected to contribute to the objectives of the Action Plan for Boosting Intra-African Trade and the African Continental Free Trade Area. We will continue to advocate for its full implementation.

4. Progress is being made on the AU institutional reforms and self-financing of the African Union but much needs to be done to speed the process. We have the commitment of our principals; let's play our advisory role correctly in the spirit of pan-africanism.

5. The Executive Council also adopted a decision on the 'the African Common Position for Negotiations of a New Agreement of Cooperation with the European Union on the future of African Union/European Union relations Post 2020' in Kigali in March. On this matter, Africa needs to speak in one voice as negotiations are going on.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Last month, we had a fruitful joint retreat of the PRC and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights in Nairobi on 4th and 5th as mandated by the Executive Council in January 2018 to find modalities for enhanced coordination and collaboration between the Commission and organs of the Union. A report will be submitted to the Executive Council.

At the partnership level, we have had the 2nd Ministerial Review Conference of the AU-Turkey Partnership in Istanbul, on 12 February, the Senior Official's Meeting of the Coordination Committee of the African Union-League of Arab States Partnership in Cairo on 24th and 25th April, 2018. More still needs to be done with respect to the evaluation of partnerships and to coordinate better participation in the partnership meetings in line with reform of AU.

Highlighting these achievements doesn't mean that we are doing well in all aspects. We should look back and see where things are not moving and endeavor to improve on them.

I would therefore call on all of us to take serious measures towards the implementation of decisions of our Union! Especially with regards to the flagship projects that will make our continent rise up.

Specifically to the PRC, I wish to urge all sub-committees to improve on the way they handle their businesses.

Although it has been said many times before, I dare to reiterate that we have a Commission with a huge number of very complex tasks, coupled with additional pressures placed upon staff from within the commission or from member States. This issue must be dealt with diligently, may be not in this meeting but we need to equip our commission with adequate resources. But again, to the departments of the Commission, I say it is time we start doing things correctly. Respect the rules and deadlines, choose the correct priorities, ...! Let's work together to improve our work methods!

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before I conclude, let me, once again, reiterate our appreciation to the Government and People of Mauritania for the very cordial reception and hospitality.

It is our expectation that the outcome of our 2 day session would lay the ground for the 33rd Ordinary Session of the Executive Council and subsequently the 31st Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union. I would therefore call on each one to contribute meaningfully towards the success of our deliberations.

I will conclude by wishing us all a productive meeting.

Thank you very much for your kind attention!