

AFRICAN UNION

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

H.E.MR. MOUSSA FAKI MAHAMAT,

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE THIRTY THIRD SESSION
OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF THE AFRICAN UNION**

NOUAKCHOTT, 28 JUNE 2018

Madame Louise Mushikiwabo, Chairperson of the Executive Council,

Honourable members of the Executive Council,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to join Mr. Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, in welcoming you to this 33rd Ordinary Session of the Executive Council.

I congratulate the Government and people of Mauritania on the organisation of this Summit, their generous hospitality and the quality of our working conditions. Huge sacrifices have been made to ensure the success of our meeting. This is a testimony of the strength of the commitment of Mauritania.

Honourable Minister, we request you to convey our grateful thanks to your high authorities.

A Founding member of the Organisation of African Unity, under the leadership of the late President Mokhtar Ould Daddah, whose memory we salute, Mauritania has been at all meetings for the promotion of the PanAfrican programme. In deciding to hold this Summit here in Nouakchott, the Assembly of the Union wanted to express its appreciation for this contribution.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This Summit is the third I had the privilege of preparing with my colleagues of the Commission. The experience thus acquired strengthens our conviction of the imperative need for ever greater mobilisation for the effective implementation of the decisions taken by our Union. We must take full responsibility for the commitments made and ensure their diligent implementation.

The institutional reform in which our Union is engaged has made the improvement of the level of implementation of our decisions a priority of our action. This imperative need must be understood within the context of a well-defined division of labour according to the principle of subsidiarity at national, regional and continental levels.

I chose to introduce my statement with these remarks, because this is our major challenge as a Union, to sustainably consolidate our credibility and build the Africa we want.

As of next year, the July Summit will have limited participation and will be devoted to the coordination between the Union and its Regional Economic Communities, as well as the assessment of the implementation of our decisions. We must actively prepare ourselves to consider our performances without any complacency.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

During the period under consideration, the Commission pursued and intensified its efforts to execute the flagship projects of Agenda 2063.

The Extraordinary summit, held in Kigali in March 2018, was certainly a success. Forty-four Member States have signed the Agreement on the African Continental Free Trade Area and 31 the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment.

Seven Member States have already ratified the Free Trade Area Agreement, of which four of which Kenya, Ghana, Rwanda and Niger, have deposited the relevant instruments. One Member State, Rwanda, ratified the Protocol on Free Movement and deposited its instrument of ratification.

I urge the Member States that have not yet done so, to make the necessary arrangements to become parties to these instruments. It is equally important that the Member States that have not yet done so to join the Single African Air Transport Market.

I would like to stress here the crucial importance of the free movement of persons.

As I have had the opportunity to say it on many occasions, it is high time that Africans cease to be foreigners on their own continent. I congratulate those Member States that have already taken steps to ease visa procedures or simply abolished them for African citizens.

I seize this opportunity to stress that it is important, for our collective credibility, that Africans be treated with dignity and respect across the continent.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Over the past months, the Commission pursued the initiated within the context of the reform of our Union. A comprehensive report on this issue is submitted to Heads of State and Government.

I am delighted at the consensus reached by Member States on this issue. We must persevere on this path, as it is true that without reform there is no salvation for our Union.

One of the important aspects of the institutional reform is the financing of the Union. Although the road ahead is still long, we can legitimately take pride in the progress made. Indeed, 23 Member States already apply or are about to apply the 0.2% levy on eligible imports.

It cannot be repeated enough: without financial autonomy, our ambitious Agenda 2063 will be nothing more than a catalogue of good intentions and our claim to continental leadership and African ownership will be nothing but wishful thinking.

The commitment of the Member States to make greater contribution to the financing of the Union must go hand in hand with a rigorous management of our resources, based on the most transparent, demanding and credible accountability.

This was the message of the Kigali Summit in July 2016. This is the demand that came out of the deliberations of the preparatory meeting of the Permanent Representatives Committee which just concluded here in Nouakchott.

I am committed to strengthen the internal governance of the Commission, which must be in line with this exigency and the expectations of our peoples, building on the measures already taken. The Commission, including the elected officials and the organs of the Union must lead by example and be a model of virtue, probity and devotion in the service of the continent.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This Year has been declared "Year of the Fight against Corruption". This is the theme of this Summit.

We must redouble our efforts to eradicate this scourge. A multiform action is required.

May I seize this opportunity to stress, once again, the importance of following up the recommendations of the Thabo Mbeki Panel on illicit financial flows. Africa loses at least \$ 50 billion a year because of these illicit flows. It is obvious that if these resources were kept on the continent it would greatly help finance its development.

We must go beyond incantations to mark our commitment to fight corruption with the stamp of concrete action. Member States are strongly challenged to take the measures demanded by the situation and to meet the aspirations of our peoples for good governance.

If corruption is not aggressively combated, the cohesion of our societies and the viability of our States will be permanently affected.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The objective of silencing the guns by 2020 must fully mobilise our energies. I urge all the Member States still facing the scourge of conflicts and political crises to commit themselves to dialogue and compromise.

By mentioning the conflicts that plague the continent, we cannot avoid being challenged by the untold suffering inflicted on civilian populations: from South Sudan to central Mali, going through the Central African Republic, these populations pay a high price for violence.

Within this framework, nothing is more urgent than the organisation of peaceful, free, fair, transparent and inclusive elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo at the end of this year; the conclusion of the reconciliation process in the Central African Republic; the successful conclusion of the political dialogue in Burundi; measures to defuse the crisis in western Cameroon as well as the reactivation of the negotiation process in Western Sahara.

These are so many measures whose concretisation will bring us closer to fulfilling our ambition for a stable and peaceful Africa.

It is encouraging to note the commitment that Ethiopia and Eritrea are demonstrating to normalise their relations.

Similarly, recent progress in South Sudan is a source of optimism. I pay tribute to the leaders of the region, especially Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and Presidents Omar Hassan Al Bashir and Yoweri Museveni, for their efforts.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

During this Summit, you will consider the budget of the Union for 2019. We have prepared within the ambit of the innovations introduced by the institutional reform of the Union. Its consideration will, therefore, be greatly facilitated, especially with the careful hard work done by the PRC and the Subcommittee on Budget, as well as by the F15. I thank these organs and their members for the dedication with which they have discharged their responsibilities.

The Commission will demonstrate greater budgetary and financial orthodoxy and will endeavour to rationalise its activities around priority programmes and projects.

In conclusion, I would like to point out that for the second time since I have taken up office, I submit to your august Council an Introductory Note to the reports of the Commission. The objective is to bring to your attention a number of urgent issues, but also others of strategic importance for the long-term future of our Union.

I wish you fruitful deliberations and a pleasant stay in Nouakchott.

I thank you for your kind attention.