



AFRICAN UNION PARTICIPATION AT THE WORLD HUMANITARIAN SUMMIT

May 23 – 24 2016, Istanbul, Turkey

AIDE-MEMOIRE

THEME: One Humanity: Shared Responsibility



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WORLD HUMANITARIAN SUMMIT,
23 – 24 MAY 2016**

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“One Africa, One Voice, One Message at the World Humanitarian Summit”

1.0. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. The first-ever World Humanitarian Summit, set to take place in Istanbul on 23-24 May 2016, is a global call to action by the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. The Summit has three main goals: a). to reaffirm our commitment to humanity and humanitarian principles; b). initiate actions and commitments which enable countries and communities to prepare for and respond to crises and be more resilient to shocks; c). and to Share best practices which help save lives around the world, placing affected people at the centre of humanitarian action and alleviating suffering.
- 1.2. The Summit was called for by the Secretary General of the United Nations during the 68th Session of the UN General Assembly, in September 2013, as part of his [transformative Agenda](#) announced in 2012. This was in response to persistent failures experienced in the global humanitarian system, as a result of the rapidly changing humanitarian landscape.
- 1.3. To reach a consensus on what such an Agenda would entail, the World Humanitarian Summit consultations were carried out in all regions of the world, Africa inclusive. Based on the recommendations of global consultations, the Secretary General of the United Nations, has released a Report on the World Humanitarian Summit titled ***“[One Humanity: Shared Responsibility](#)”*** In the report the Secretary General has called for an ***“[Agenda for Humanity](#)”***, in five Core Responsibility areas, namely; *global leadership to prevent and end conflicts; uphold norms that safeguard humanity; leave no one behind; change people’s lives-from delivering aid to ending need and invest in humanity.*

2.0. CONTEXT

- 2.1. The World Humanitarian Summit is against a backdrop of a rapidly changing humanitarian landscape, with Africa facing growing impact of disasters.
- 2.2. In spite of the gravity of these crises, humanitarian response in Africa still relies heavily on a global system, whose character is complex and inefficient. This is because of the fact that the humanitarian system founded by [UN Resolution 46/182](#), 20 years ago is overstretched and requires fundamental reforms.
- 2.3. In light of the failures of the existing institutional architecture and/or lack of it in some instances, effective solutions will remain elusive unless fundamental reforms in

governance of humanitarian action are implemented, globally and on the African continent. In Africa such reforms are also needed to strengthen the role of States to predict and prevent humanitarian crises, and where crises occur to effectively respond and/or build resilience of communities to withstand shocks of future crises.

3.0. THE COMMON AFRICAN POSITION ON HUMANITARIAN EFFECTIVENESS

- 3.1. It is with this picture in mind that the Executive Council in its Decision [Ex.CL/Dec.817 \(XXV\)](#), called for a political process to define Africa's priorities and the changes it would like to see in a future humanitarian architecture.
- 3.2. This is not the first time Africa is calling for such changes. Africa's leaders as well as voices of its people and civil society, have reiterated the call for change in the way humanitarian response is carried out on the continent. The Common Position is a reminder of previous calls by Africa's leaders to put mechanisms in place to effectively respond to crises. Indeed numerous measures were deployed in the past, but for a number of reasons, these measures were not well orchestrated. As a consequence, solutions to address humanitarian crises on the continent remained ineffective.
- 3.3. The CAP which has been conceived in wider lenses of Africa's own long-term vision encapsulated in Agenda 2063, underscores need for a new discourse. The new discourse is premised on the conviction that Africa can find "***own solutions to its own problems***".
- 3.4. The Common African Position therefore represents Africa's appreciation and its understanding of the humanitarian landscape and the required intervention that is necessary for achieving sustainable solutions to humanitarian crises.
- 3.5. The Common African Position, emphasizes the primary responsibility of Member States in humanitarian response. It calls for strengthening of State capabilities particularly in ensuring that States play a central role in providing security to affected populations and relief workers and in guaranteeing humanitarian space.
- 3.6. The World Humanitarian Summit is therefore timely. Africa's leaders as a collective will join the rest of world in shaping a new humanitarian Agenda.

4.0. AFRICA'S COMMITMENTS AT ISTANBUL

- 4.1. It was therefore on the basis of this rapidly mutating context and failures experienced in the global system, that it was felt necessary for the African Union to present its case at the World Humanitarian Summit in shaping a future humanitarian architecture.
- 4.2. As underscored by the Executive Council and the Assembly of the Union, time is ripe, it is Africa's moment to orchestrate the long awaited change, to better serve people afflicted by humanitarian crises.
- 4.3. The Africa Union will seize the moment at Istanbul to reaffirm its future priorities and unequivocally call for an inclusive, transparent and fairer humanitarian system. Africa

will renew its call for mutually beneficial partnerships that seek to put humanity at the fore by enhancing collective ownership of the proposed **Agenda for humanity**.

- 4.4. In advancing Agenda for Humanity, the African Union will commit to five Core areas:
- a) Commitment to the humanitarian imperative, especially the recommitment to the humanitarian principles and principled humanitarian action,
 - b) Commitment to humanitarian effectiveness, particularly in ensuring timely protection and assistance of persons affected by humanitarian crises,
 - c) Commitment of the AU to strengthen the role of States in humanitarian action,
 - d) Commitments and undertakings of the AU to reform of the humanitarian architecture. In this regard, the AU will seize the opportunity to announce the establishment of the **African Humanitarian Agency**,
 - e) Commitments and measures of the AU to put in place predictable financing and alternative resource mobilisation for effective humanitarian response.

5.0. AFRICAN UNION AND MEMBER STATE PARTICIPATION AT ISTANBUL

- 5.1. Therefore, in light of the importance of this first ever World Humanitarian Summit to bring change, Africa's leaders need to be part of this process of change. This is not only for historical purposes but, to unequivocally voice Africa's concerns and aspirations. Africa's attendance at the highest level of the Union, the Commission, Member States and Regional Economic Communities, is therefore crucial.
- 5.2. At Istanbul, the African Union will present its Common African Position on *Humanitarian Effectiveness*, as its contribution to the Summit. It is of paramount importance that Africa speaks with one voice as called for by the Executive Council and the Assembly.
- 5.3. The Summit will be attended at the highest level of Heads of State and Government. This provides a good opportunity for Africa's leaders to demonstrate solidarity with affected people and join the rest of the world in taking forward the *Agenda for Humanity*.