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Avenue Gustave Demey, 72-74 1160 Bruxelles (Belgique) Tel: (322) 346.97.47/48 Fax: (322) 346.97.28
Email: africanunion@skynet.be Website : www.au.int

UA/BRU/GR.AFR./146/Cr.

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 146TH ORDINARY SESSION OF THE AFRICAN GROUP OF AMBASSADORS IN BRUSSELS ACP HOUSE – 14 MARCH 2012



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1. The African Group of Ambassadors in Brussels held its 146th ordinary session on 14th March 2012 at ACP House. The meeting was chaired by H. E. Mr Eltigani Saleih FIDAIL, Ambassador of Sudan.

I. PARTICIPATION

2. The following member States participated in the session :

Algeria, Angola, Benin, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape-Verde, Congo (DR), Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritius, Mauritania, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome & Principe, Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic, Senegal, Sierra-Leone, Sudan, Swaziland, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zimbabwe – COMESA (See attendance list).

II. Introduction of the new Ambassador of Niger in Brussels

3. The Chairman opened the meeting. He then introduced H. E. Mr Issaka DJIBO, the new Ambassador of the Republic of Niger in Brussels.
4. After introducing him the Chairman welcomed him to the Group in his own name and on behalf of the Group. Referring to his Curriculum Vitae, he stressed his conviction that the African Group will clearly benefit from the qualifications and experience of Ambassador Issaka DJIBO. He also assured him of the availability of all the members of the Group to offer him all the assistance and collaboration needed for the successful achievement of their respective missions.
5. H. E. Mr. Issaka DJIBO thanked the African Group for its welcome and delivered a message of thanks that H. E. Mr Mahamadou ISSOUFOU, President of the Republic of Niger has addressed to all the African Union member States to acknowledge the AU's assistance and support to his country, thus facilitating the restoration of peace and stability. He underscored that Niger had recovered its place on the international scene and is ready to contribute to the consolidation of peace and development through international cooperation. In conclusion, he expressed his readiness to contribute to the action of the African Group of Ambassadors in Brussels to defend and promote Africa's interests.

III. Adoption of the agenda

6. The following agenda was adopted:

1. Adoption of the agenda
2. Adoption of the minutes of the 145th session
3. Matters arising from the minutes of the 145th session
4. Report of the meeting between the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Luxembourg and the African Group of Ambassadors in Brussels
5. Progress report on the preparations for the celebration of Africa Day 2012
6. Briefing on the preparatory meeting for the Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development
7. Outcome of the Joint EU-Africa Task Force meeting (8 - 9 March 2012)
8. Outcome of the meetings on the ACP-EU dialogue on migration and on the Africa-EU Partnership on Migration, Mobility and Employment
9. Session of the ACP Parliamentary Assembly and inter-session meeting of the ACP-EU Parliamentary Assembly (19 – 22 March 2012)
10. Any other business - Communication by the following countries: Namibia, Rwanda, Lesotho, Burundi

IV. Adoption of the summary record of the 145th session

7. The summary record of the 145th session of the African Group of Ambassadors in Brussels was adopted without amendment.

V. Matters arising from the summary record

8. No matter was raised. However, the delegation of Eritrea clarified that its statement at the 145th session related to the Resolution reflecting the United States' hostility against Eritrea and not to the situation in Somalia.

VI. Report on the meeting between the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Luxembourg and the African Group of Ambassadors

9. The AU Permanent Representative presented the report.

10. The Chairman of the African Group of Ambassadors expressed his satisfaction about the visit of the African Group of Ambassadors in Brussels to Luxembourg. He recommended that similar visits be organised to other EU Member States to promote Africa's interests.
11. The Zimbabwe delegation enquired about the AU's position on the financial transactions' tax referred to in the report. In his response, the Permanent Representative said that for the time being, the AU had no position on the issue; he however intends to propose that it be an item of the agenda of the next AU Member States' Ministers of Finance meeting to be held in Addis Ababa.

VII. Progress report on the preparations for the celebration of Africa Day 2012

12. The Chairman introduced the report. He dwelled on the various contacts and efforts made by the Mission, pursuant to the mandate that it was given to look for a more appropriate venue than the Palais des Colonies for the reception to be organized to celebrate the event. He listed the pros and cons of each of the newly identified venues including: the Brussels City Hall Ballroom and the Heysel King Baudouin stadium banquet hall.
13. The exchange of views which followed did not lead to a choice of either one of the two venues. The Brussels City Hall Ballroom, while very prestigious, has the disadvantage of not allowing the use of any type of fire device including dish warmers, in addition to the hardly sufficient space, the very difficult access and the absence of a parking facility. The King Baudouin stadium banquet hall while having a big space for parking lacks the grandeur required for hosting as prestigious events as diplomatic ones are expected to be given that they reflect the image of the organizers.
14. The Mission was requested to continue prospecting. However, in view of the deadline required for the reservation of venues, it was agreed that should the Mission fail to identify an appropriate venue, the Organising Committee should agree to hold the reception at the Palais des Colonies as usual while continuing to reflect on an alternative solution for next year. It will also be necessary to select a definite date, 31st May or 6th June, in view of the deadline required for the reservations.

VIII. Briefing on the preparatory meeting on the Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development

15. The AU Permanent Representative presented the project and the ongoing preparations for the meeting scheduled to be held on 27 March 2012 in Brussels.
16. In the exchange of views which followed, some delegations enquired about the value addition of such a conference, given that the negotiations for the Rio+20 Conference are taking place in New York; this again raised questions about whether it would not be more appropriate for the African Group of New York to deal with the issue rather than the Brussels Group. They also underlined the need to clarify whether it is a conference or a workshop given that the two are different and that both terms are used in the presentation of the project.

17. The Permanent Representative clarified that it is indeed a workshop and not a conference. The conclusions thereof will be sent to the Permanent Representatives Committee (PRC) in Addis Ababa and to the AU Commission as a contribution to the elaboration of the position that the AU is to submit to the New York Conference on Rio+20. He added that the drafted aide-memoire will be sent to Embassies by 15 March at the latest.

IX. Outcome of the Joint Africa-EU Task Force meeting (8 - 9 March 2012)

18. The AU Permanent Representative introduced the item. He pointed out that the draft report had been distributed to the Embassies of the AU Member States in Brussels and added that the final report will be distributed as soon as it is available.

X. Outcome of the meetings on the ACP-UE political dialogue on migration and on the Africa-UE partnership on Migration, Mobility and Employment

19. The Permanent Representative underlined that the report relating to this item had already been distributed. He explained that rather than present it, he would rather make observations on the proceedings of the 3rd meeting of Ambassadors on the ACP-EU dialogue on migration (2nd March 2012):

- **Participation**: not only did very few ACP Ambassadors participate in the meeting but their counterparts on the European side were merely civil servants;
- **Topics discussed**: rather than engage in negotiations worthy of that name, the EU side simply presented to the ACP side its policies and implementation measures and requested the ACP side to assist in the implementation process.

20. The Chairman underlined that in future, the African Group which constitutes the majority within the ACP Group should organize itself better to prepare for such meetings.

XI. Session of the ACP Parliamentary Assembly and intersession meetings of the ACP-EU Parliamentary Assembly (19 – 22 March 2012)

21. The Chairman introduced the item. He stressed that at its meeting on 27 February 2012, the Bureau of the African Group had agreed to seize the opportunity of the meetings to interact with the African MPs with a view to sensitising them to Africa-EU cooperation and to the AU's positions on issues addressed in that framework. It was proposed that the meeting would be followed by a reception hosted by the African Group of Ambassadors in Brussels.

22. At the end of the following exchange of views, it was agreed that a preparatory meeting of the Bureau of the African Group enlarged to the Chairmen of the ACP Sub-Committees would be convened on Friday 16 March 2010 at 10 A.M to agree on issues to be discussed with the MPs.

XII. Any other business

23. The following delegations spoke under this item:

- **Namibia:** The Southern African region called for an intense lobbying with the EU Member States against EU Regulation 1528/2007 aiming to end the negotiations if the EPAs are not signed in 2014.
- **Lesotho:** On 28 February 2012, the National Parliament announced the creation of a new party, the Democratic Congress led by Prime Minister, Dr Pakathali Mosisili. 45 of the 66 members of Parliament belonging to the Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD), the former party in power, have joined the new party.
- **Burundi:** On the occasion of its 2nd participation in the International Exhibition on Tourism in Berlin, Germany, Burundi won all the awards and was declared « the best amongst the best » of 180 countries represented. The Government of Burundi would like to seize the opportunity to invite investors to come and take advantage of the benefits offered by Burundi's new policy of openness and economic liberalization aiming to further enhance business activities, particularly in the tourism sector which has a huge potential.
- **Rwanda:** On 7 April 2012, there will be a commemoration of the genocide which affected the country in 1994. The AU Commission commemorates the event in Addis Ababa. Embassies of EU Member States in Brussels are invited to attend the various ceremonies taking place in Brussels on the occasion according to the following programme :
 - Morning: official ceremony at the commemorative stele in Woluwe Saint-Pierre
 - Afternoon: Time for reflecting and film projection, 14h – 17h at ACP House
 - Evening: Torchlit procession from place Bopale to the Palais de Justice (Law Courts) of Brussels, followed by a commemoration ceremony at the Centre culturel d'Auderghem (Auderghem Cultural Centre).

24. The meeting was adjourned at 17h30.

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