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**OUTCOMES OF THE SANDTON MINISTERIAL RETREAT OF
THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL ON THE FIRST 10-YEAR
IMPLEMENTATION PLAN OF AGENDA 2063**

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A. INTRODUCTION

1. Following the recommendations of the first Ministerial Retreat of the Executive Council of the African Union that was held in Bahir Dar, Ethiopia, in January 2014, it was decided to convene regular Retreats. The holding of regular Ministerial Retreats is premised on the need to provide the Executive Council the opportunity to interrogate issues of strategic nature confronting the continent, early enough in order to enable them exchange views and opinions and more importantly internalize those views before the commencement of the formal session of the Council. The recommendations also established the Bahir Dar Ministerial Retreat follow-up Committee, to oversee the implementation of decisions of the Retreat.
2. Since then, two meetings of the follow-up Ministerial Retreat have been held of which reports were submitted to the Executive Council at its meeting of January 2015 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, which decided to convene the next Ministerial Retreat during the June 2015 AU Summit in South Africa.
3. Opening remarks made by H.E. Simbarashe S. Mumbengegwi, Chairperson of the Executive Council, and H.E. Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, Chairperson of the African Union Commission emphasised the need for Africa to look inwards towards efforts geared at realizing the goals of Agenda 2063.
4. The Retreat focused on priority areas aimed at positioning the African Union towards delivering on the expectations of the AU Agenda 2063 with a clear outline of the first ten years implementation plan.
5. The Retreat amongst others, committed to pursuing all processes that would enable the realization of Africa's Continental Free Trade Areas (CFTA), develop its internal market and redefine its tariffs regime on both imported goods and Africa's raw materials. There was an understanding that free movement of people, goods and services enhanced by enabling means of movement and trade would accelerate Africa's development and trade; The Ministerial Retreat discussed critical issues that will enhance the realization of Agenda 2063 and deemed necessary for the realization of Africa's development and integration goals.
6. In furtherance of its development and integration agenda, the Retreat agreed on the need for the Executive Council to constantly meet to develop strategies on how best to streamline the AU Summits for utmost productivity and manage better its working methods. The Retreat identified mechanisms that should ensure harmonization of dynamics of Africa's higher education and qualifications in order to provide a common process, acceptability and recognition of credentials, which will make easy, transferability in terms of knowledge, skills and expertise within the continent;

7. Issues relating to Africa's interaction at the multilateral level as well as the need for Africa to develop strategies that would give greater impetus to the United Nations Security Council inter-governmental negotiation process were deliberated upon.

8. The Ministerial Retreat concluded with outcomes that are forward-looking and with a roadmap deemed necessary to enhance the realization of the African development and integration goals.

9. The detailed deliberations on these issues are further elaborated in the paragraphs below.

B. DELIBERATIONS AND OUTCOMES OF THE MINISTERIAL RETREAT

FREE MOVEMENT OF GOODS AND SERVICES

10. The Session underscored the developments within the international economic system beginning with the Marrakesh Treaty in 1944, trade facilitation, sequencing, and the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) expected to come into force in 2017, as an engine of growth and development for the continent. They indicated that intra-African trade currently stands at 12%, and Africa's share of global trade at a meagre 3%, thus urging Member States to implement the CFTA, which should be premised on best practices and based on a "variable geometry". It was also pointed out that COMESA has developed a huge array of trade facilitation mechanisms, which should be replicated at the continental level.

11. Following the discussions, the Retreat agreed as follows:

- i) Member States should promote Intra-African trade and issues of productive capacity for regional growth and development and fast track the establishment of the Continental Free Trade Area, (CFTA) and its operationalization;
- ii) Member States should urgently review their tariff regimes and dismantle all non-tariff barriers;
- iii) There is need to promote women empowerment in order to facilitate inter-border trade through issuing women traders with special identification cards that allow them to access the market in other countries, and effectively reduce drudgery at border posts to enhance border trade;
- iv) Member States should focus on investment in value chains, and give preferential treatment to investors in Africa, and promote African brands (made in Africa) for Africa in order to join the global value chains. In that regard, encourage respect for the rule of law in Member States in order to create the needed confidence and trust among investors;
- v) There is need to ensure the protection of Intellectual Property Rights to safeguard African innovation and strengthen standards;

- vi) There is a need to establish an African Economic Forum for African Business people to hold periodic meetings so as to engage in discussions that promote understanding and forge ties with the private sector across the continent. To facilitate this process establish a trade observatory for the free flow of trade information, as well an African Business Council;
- vii) Member States should sensitize their African Ambassadors in Geneva on issues related to negotiations at the World Trade Organization (WTO) in order to forge an African Common Position with a view to changing the WTO rules and make them less cumbersome, and urgently propose mechanisms for the holding of an African Trade Conference similar to the WTO in Africa.
- viii) As Africa's strength lies in its unity, there is need to ensure that Africa speaks with one voice on issues related to WTO negotiations. In this regard, Ministers of Foreign Affairs should work closely with their counterparts in the Ministry of Trade to ensure effective coordination.

FREE MOVEMENT OF PEOPLE

12. The Session focused on issues relating to national migration policies and strategies, its opportunities and the importance of looking into challenges of enabling free movement of people within Africa. The Session also highlighted issues related to unwarranted fears of criminals, threats to national security, to name but a few have affected in negative terms the support of African countries to fast track the implementation of free movement within Africa.

13. Following the discussions the Retreat agreed as follows:

- i) Member States should be encouraged to start offering visas to Africans on arrival at ports of entry and in practical terms embark on the principle of reciprocity where those countries that offer free movement should receive the same gesture;
- ii) Member States should begin to offer to all Africans the same opportunities they have accorded to the citizens of countries within their respective Regional Economic Communities (RECs);
- iii) Member States in collaboration with the Commission should engage in the process of developing capacity to manage the flow cross border migration, as this is set to increase, especially among women and the youth;
- iv) The Commission should ensure that the Agenda 2063 framework includes a component that Free Movement of people should have explicit inclusion of gender and empowerment of vulnerable groups (women, youth and people with disabilities);

- v) The Commission should undertake a comprehensive research on free movement of people to generate empirical evidence to inform the development of the AEC, its structure, resources and other requirements, etc. for its implementation;
- vi) The Commission in collaboration with the Permanent Representative Committee (PRC) should urgently organize a Retreat of the Executive Council to consider the issue of free movement of people in Africa.
- vii) The Commission should organize a High-Level Experts Meeting to validate the Study and explore effective implementation of the Findings.

HARMONIZATION OF QUALIFICATIONS AND HIGHER EDUCATION IN AFRICA

14. The Session highlighted the efforts made in promoting and strengthening the harmonization and standardization of education in Africa but also clarified the difference between the two.

15. Following the discussions, the Retreat agreed as follows:

- i) Member States should establish a harmonized mechanism to ensure that higher education in Africa is compatible, comparable, with acceptability and clear recognition of credentials that will facilitate transferability of knowledge, skills and expertise. In addition, there is need to harmonize teacher education and set up quality assurance processes, which should spell out how higher education should be managed, with emphasis on diversity;
- ii) To establish a mechanism on practical modalities for the empowerment of African women and youth in education and, encourage their sustained growth in knowledge acquisition. In the same vein, ensure that issues relating to tradition, the state and relevance of education in various African countries are taken into consideration in the process of harmonizing education;
- iii) To include exchange programmes and self-employment in the education curriculum, while ensuring that the process of harmonization is also used as a tool to fight language barriers;
- iv) The Commission should ensure that issues of harmonization of education are constant features on the agenda of the Specialized Technical Communities (STCs) so as to enable concerned Ministers to make inputs and receive feedback;
- v) Member States and the Private Sector should support the funding of research in key fields of knowledge especially in sciences and technology, which will enable Africans to find solution to African problems;

70TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE STATE OF MULTILATERALISM

16. The Session underscored the basic principles of multilateralism, which should be predicated on equity, inclusivity, sustainable development and improved human conditions. In addition it was emphasized that Africa's voice must be heard on issues of interest to the continent, stressing that the Ezulwini Consensus must be marketed, and not be subjected to negotiations.

17. Following the discussions, the Retreat agreed as follows:

- i) On the importance of the multilateral system underlined by the principle of equity, inclusivity, sustainable development, improvement of human conditions based on the equality of States
- ii) The Executive Council should meet to evaluate progress made in the United Nations Reform process and urgently develop clear strategies and tactics that would ensure that the historical injustice against Africa in respect of the two permanent seats, with veto power, in the UN Security Council is redressed.
- iii) Africa to continue to work together, speak with one voice and play an even greater role in giving impetus to the Intergovernmental Negotiations within the context of the United Nations General Assembly in New York.
- iv) To continue to speak with one voice and work together on strategic issues such as Financing for Development, the Post 2015 Development Agenda, Climate Change and the International Conference on Trade;

STREAMLINING OF THE AU SUMMITS AND THE WORKING METHODS OF THE AFRICAN UNION

18. The Session focused on the Streamlining of the AU Summits particularly on issues related to among others, the number of Invitees; the length of the Agenda and Opening Ceremony; the number of Decisions and Parallel Events; and the methods of work and the Rules of Procedure of the Policy Organs; the organization of Summits in relation to the Policy Organs and the Specialized Technical Committees (STCs) as it relates to delineation of functions, on Summit decisions, on the conduct of opening ceremonies of the Summit, Invitations and invited guests to the Summit, On meetings of the Sub-Committees of the Assembly and on Side/Parallel Events on the margins of Summits, relations with RECs, as the Building Blocks of the Union and lastly the issue of streamlining the Rules of Procedure and Working Methods of the Union. The Retreat recommended that the Report of the Comparative Study on the Working Methods of the African Union be referred to the Ministerial Follow-Up Committee on the Implementation of Agenda 2063 for its consideration before it is presented to the next Ministerial Retreat and subsequently to the Executive Council.

19. Following the discussions the Retreat agreed as follows:

- i) Reaffirmed the importance of holding Retreat at Ministerial Level at least once (1) a year, as a mechanism for consensus building among Ministers;
- ii) Reaffirmed their decision that the Executive Council should meet to follow up on the implementation of decisions;
- iii) The need to improve time management of their Sessions to ensure efficiency and effectiveness as well as ensuring that their meetings are attended at the appropriate level to ensure a higher commitment to decisions taken and effective implementation thereof;
- iv) Decision making between the Executive Council and the Assembly should be clearly delineated, and the Assembly to delegate decision making powers and mandate the Executive Council to take decisions, except on key strategic issues.
- v) The Specialized Technical Committees (STCs) be empowered to take final and binding decisions on issues falling under their competence, unless where there are attendant financial and structural implications.
- vi) The Summit should focus on strategic policy issues such as Peace and Security, Governance and Financial matters; and that decisions taken at the Executive Council are not repeated at the Assembly.
- vii) In so doing, the Assembly may wish to consider holding “closed sessions” meetings to discuss some strategic issues accompanied by one or more members of their delegations, as the issue to be discussed may require; In this regard, the Assembly may also decide to convene in a Retreat format to afford sufficient time to deliberate on strategic issues and to interact.
- viii) Regional Economic Communities should be allowed to fully participate in the deliberations of the Summits to share experiences, successes and constraints, in the advancement of the continental integration agenda;
- ix) Important to continue with the two Summits, however they should be streamlined with one focusing on Policy Issues with participation of partners in accordance with the Rules of Procedure; and the other Summit to focus on the implementation of decisions;
- x) Subcommittees of the Assembly should report to only one session of the Assembly in a year; and the membership of these sub-committees to rotate in 2 – 3 years to allow for burden sharing;
- xi) The Opening Sessions of the Assembly should be conducted in a business-like manner and in accordance with the Rules of Procedure, with ONLY the Secretary General of the United Nations and the President of the Palestine Authority based on historical African solidarity with their struggle, being allowed to address the Assembly in-Person;

- xii) Other Invited Guests should be provided with alternative platforms, other than the Opening Sessions, to address the Heads of State and Government;
- xiii) There is need to allocate additional resources for interpretation and translation in order to increase the number of personnel in the Directorate and ensure documents are properly translated and are ready on time.

FIRST TEN-YEAR IMPLEMENTATION PLAN OF AGENDA 2063

20. In relation to the Ten-Year Implementation Plan, the Session emphasized the need for its alignment with existing Continental frameworks and national visions and stressed the need for inclusivity, particularly in terms of the involvement of Women and Youth and taking on board the issues of small island States as well as the need for strengthening ownership and domestication by Member States and Regional Institutions.

21. The lack of capacity in implementing Agenda 2063 was noted as well as the need for greater clarity on the roles and responsibilities of Continental and Regional Institutions. In addition, it was recognized that there is a need for measures that enhance change in mind-set through education and knowledge acquisition.

22. Following the discussions, the Retreat agreed as follows:

- i) The Assembly should adopt the First Ten Year implementation Plan of Agenda 2063, taking into account input from Member States and with the understanding that the document will undergo continuous refinement, taking into account the need for alignment with existing Continental frameworks and national visions, inclusivity, particularly in terms of the involvement of Women and Youth, the needs of small island States, emerging risks and threats, existing capacities and available financing;
- ii) The importance of ownership of Agenda 2063 and Ten Year Implementation Plan by Member States and the RECs and therefore the need to take measures to popularize Agenda 2063 and facilitate its domestication in national plans and regional frameworks. The Commission should continue to work with Member States and the RECs on the domestication of the First Ten-Year Implementation Plan;
- iii) The need to come up with a comprehensive strategy to address the capacity deficit at all levels for the implementation of the Ten Year Implementation Plan;
- iv) The Commission should continue to engage in actions necessary towards expeditious finalisation of the capacity assessments work, including at the important level of Member States towards a consolidated Capacity Assessment Document and a Capacity Development Plan;

highlighting critical skills and training required as well as arrangements to involve Universities and the role of youth and women; for consideration at the next Summit in January 2016;

- v) ACBF and other institutions, such as UNECA and AfDB should continue to provide necessary support on capacity building dimensions for Agenda 2063
- vi) Member States should provide adequate financing and human resources that would enable the implementation of the First Ten Year implementation Plan of Agenda 2063.

CLOSING

23. The Ministerial Retreat ended with remarks by the chairperson of the Executive Council, H.E. Simbarashe S. Mumbengegwi and the Chairperson of the AU Commission H.E. Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, expressed their appreciations to all Ministers and participants for their valuable contributions, and to the Government of the Republic of South Africa for the hospitality and excellent facilities provided for the success of the Retreat.

24. It was underlined that the outcomes of the Retreat will be presented and considered by the Executive Council during its 27th Ordinary Session, from 11-12 June 2015 in Sandton, South Africa.

2015

Outcomes of the Sandston ministerial retreat of the executive council on the first 10-year implementation plan of agenda 2063

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