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**REPORT OF THE THIRD MID-YEAR
COORDINATION MEETING HELD ON 16TH OCTOBER 2021**

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Third Mid-Year Coordination Meeting was inaugurated and chaired by H.E. H.E Felix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo, President of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and the Chairperson of the African Union. The meeting was held virtually on 16th October 2021.

2. The meeting was attended by Members of the Bureau of the Assembly of the AU and the Chairpersons of the RECs; President of the Republic of South Africa and AU Champion for the COVID-19 Regional Mechanisms; Chairperson of the African Union Commission; Representatives of Regional Mechanisms; the Chief Executive of the African Union Development Agency (AUDA/NEPAD); the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA); the President of the African Development Bank (AfDB), the former President of Niger as the Champion of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Agreement and the Secretary-General of the AfCFTA.

II. OPENING REMARKS

3. H.E Moussa Faki Mahamat underscored the importance of the Mid-Year Coordination Meetings which provide Heads of State, in their capacity as Heads of RECs, as well as the Bureau of the Assembly to exchange views and experiences that lead to the transformation of the continent and its integration. He highlighted the many challenges Africa is facing especially in the Health, Economic and Social sectors. He then proceeded to brief the meeting on the AUC's responses to such crises particularly through the Bureau of the Assembly, his office, Africa CDCs and the RECs. Further, he paid special tribute for the leadership of President Tshisekedi in this regard and H.E President Cyril Ramaphosa, the Champion in the fight against COVID-19.

4. H.E Felix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo, welcomed all the Heads of State and Government present and the invited participants including H.E the President of the AfDB and H.E Executive Secretary of the UNECA. He appreciated the efforts made towards the harmonization and coordination of the meeting. He stressed the centrality of the Abuja Treaty towards the realization of Africa's integration through *inter alia* the acceleration of free movement of persons, goods, labour and services as well as the AfCFTA.

5. Regarding the Division of Labour, H.E the AU President underscored the importance of eliminating duplication and fostering greater efficiencies in how Africa conducts its work through the AU, Member States, RECs and RMs.

III. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND PROGRAMME OF WORK

6. The Meeting considered and adopted the provisional agenda and programme of work and proceeded to examine the following key documents:

A. Presentation by H.E. Amb. Albert M. Muchanga, Commissioner for Economic Development, Trade, Industry and Mining, on the report of the Status of Integration of Africa in accordance with the Abuja Treaty.

7. H.E Muchanga introduced the report on the status of integration which is based on the African Multidimensional Regional Integration Index (AMRII). The latter is a composite index of 8 integration dimensions and 33 indicators with well-defined thresholds. He underlined the two parts of the Report that include the following:

- PART 1 - An assessment of the Status of Regional Integration on the continent based on the African Multidimensional Regional Integration Index (AMRII).
- PART 2 - A set of themes on regional integration in the continent that were pre-selected by the African Union Commission (AUC) and the RECs. The selected themes for the 2021 Report are: Free Movement of Persons for African Integration; The Role of Regional Integration in Africa's post-COVID-19 Recovery; and the Operationalization of the African Integration Fund

8. At the end of his presentation, Heads of State and Government present, other representatives and the Heads of UNECA and AFDB made valuable contributions that culminated in the following recommendations:

- i. Speed up the signing and ratification of agreements, protocols and treaties, especially those related to Trade and Free Movement;
- ii. Contribute to strengthening health systems at national, regional and continental level through funding, research and integration of the health sector;
- iii. Explore the means of mobilising domestic resources on the continent through a reduction in illicit financial flows, a restructuring of taxation and formulating a more attractive banking and financial policy;
- iv. Rethink the formalisation of the informal sector through putting in place progressive policies that will transform the sector;
- v. Strengthen collaboration with Member States and the AUC in order to align their projects, programmes and policies in terms of integration in the economic sector, health and free movement of people;
- vi. The AUC should work with Member States to develop a harmonised and coordinated approach to the restrictive measures being put in place so that the economic effects can be mitigated;
- vii. Set up or support regional research centres in the field of health to address infectious diseases;
- viii. Rethink the post-COVID recovery of the economies in their regions by encouraging and coordinating the formulation of better policies especially in the financing of the economy, industrialisation and governance;

- ix. Set up regional mechanisms or specialised units for the monitoring and tracking regional integration; and
- x. Reaffirm the need for AUC to come up with readiness assessment towards Africa's Customs Union.

B. Report on the financial status of the African Union COVID-19 Response Fund by H.E Cyril Ramaphosa President of the Republic of South Africa and AU Champion for the COVID-19 response.

9. H.E Cyril Ramaphosa in his capacity as the Champion for COVID-19 response introduced his report on the COVID-19 situation in Africa. He appraised the meeting of the AU COVID-19 response. He stressed that despite the vigorous campaign by the AU on vaccination, there is still very low access to acquiring vaccines from the manufacturers hailing from the more developed countries. He called for the development of African vaccine manufacturing capabilities. He recommended that the continent needs an autonomous, coherent strategy to combat COVID-19 as well as a heavy investment drive in Africa bio-technology. He further recommended the need to establish an African Pandemic Preparedness Response on Authority (APPRA).

10. Heads of State and Government and other invited guests expressed appreciation for the report of the Champion and the work that has been accomplished. They further discussed the recommendations arising from that report.

11. Subsequently, the following recommendations were made:

- i. Commend H.E Cyril Ramaphosa for his notable achievements in the COVID-19 response;
- ii. Establish an African pandemic preparedness response on Authority (APPRA) to secure responsiveness capacity to combat pandemic crisis as well as future pandemic;
- iii. Commend the efforts of the Chair of the Union, H.E Felix-Antoine Tshisekedi, Chairperson of the AU Commission, H.E Moussa Mahamat Faki, the AU Member States, the members of the African Vaccine Acquisition Task Team (AVATT), and the African Union Special Envoys to Mobilize International Support for the Continental Fight Against COVID-19;
- iv. Request the AU Commission to continue to promote socio-economic development and the integration of African economies to enable the Continent to combat the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic;
- v. Call for equitable, affordable, timely and universal access to vaccines and available financing,
- vi. Also call upon Member States, Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms (RMs) to adopt measures to promote resilience against future pandemics including investment in domestic vaccine manufacturing capacity;
- vii. Commend the crucial role played by the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) in coordinating the continental

response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and also congratulate Dr. John Nkengasong on his appointment as the new US Global Aids Coordinator.

C. Presentation by H.E Professor Pierre Moukoko Mbonjo, Head of Reform Implementation Unit on the detailed Division of Labour between Member States, RECs/RMs and AU

12. H.E Prof. Pierre Mbonjo Moukoko, Head of the Reform Implementation Unit, presented the status of the progress made on the Division of Labour among African Union, Regional Economic Communities/Regional Mechanisms and Member States. Prof. Moukoko stated that consolidated areas of convergence were elaborated and agreed upon by AUC relevant Departments, RECs/RMs and AUDA-NEPAD. The said areas of convergence were also presented to the PRC. He recalled the Terms of Reference for the recruitment of independent experts which were considered by the AUC Departments, RECs/RMS and AUDA-NEPAD. The work of these independent experts was to deal with the remaining sectors on the Division of Labour.

13. He further specified that the TORs for the recruitment of independent experts were advertised. He indicated that areas to be covered by the experts are the following: Economic Development, Integration, Investment and Industry; Agriculture, Food Security, Blue Economy and Environment; Education, Science, Innovation and Technology; Agriculture, Food Security, Blue Economy and Environment and Transport, Energy and Infrastructure.

Recommendation

14. The meeting took note of the presentation and made the following recommendations:

- i. Commend progress made in the development of the Division of Labour by the AUC, the AUDA-NEPAD, and the RECs, the RMs, and the Member States on the remaining sectors; and
- ii. Request the AUC, the AUDA-NEPAD and the RECs/RMs to further collaborate with Member States to agree on the remaining sectors concerning the division of the labour and to submit the final draft for consideration by 35th Ordinary Session of the AU Assembly in February 2022.

D. Presentation by H.E Dr. Monique Nsanzabaganwa, the Deputy Chairperson of the AUC Appointment on the new AUDA-NEPAD CEO

15. The Chairperson reminded the meeting of the Decision of Heads of State and Government based on the report of the AUDA-NEPAD Heads of State and Government Orientation Committee (HSGOC) to appoint a new CEO to replace the incumbent Dr. Ibrahim Mayaki.

16. H.E. Dr. Monique Nsanzabaganwa, the Deputy Chairperson of the AUC clarified that she was delivering a progress report because the process of recruitment had yet to be concluded. The Panel had shortlisted three people. However, due to the fact that the candidates came from the same region, the HSGOC decided that this exercise be redone and the position be re-advertised and that only candidates from the eligible regions based on regional and geographical rotation be considered namely, Central Africa, Eastern Africa and Northern Africa. The process of re-advertisement closed on 12 July 2021 and 71 applicants were received from the eligible regions. A private firm to assist the panel of eminent persons has been secured to conduct the interviews. The results will be submitted to the HSGOC.

E. Consideration of the Declaration of the Third Mid -Year Coordination Meeting

17. The Acting Secretary for the AU Commission made a brief presentation of the Draft Declaration of the Third Mid-Year Coordination Meeting. H.E. Tshisekedi, Chairperson of the Meeting then tabled the Declaration for adoption. The meeting adopted the recommendations contained in the Declaration.

IV. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

a. Update on the AfCFTA by H.E Mahamadou Issoufou the Champion of the AfCFTA

18. H.E Mahamadou Issoufou presented a report on the AfCFTA. He lauded the launch of the AfCFTA in Niamey Niger. He further stressed the vital role of RECs in the AfCFTA implementation. He briefed the meeting on the status of the outstanding negotiations of the AfCFTA protocols in the second phase. He called for even greater political commitment in concluding the outstanding negotiations. He concluded that intra-African trade was fundamental in the economic integration of the continent.

19. He recommended that the AUC holds an extra ordinary session of the AfCFTA in November 2021.

20. The discussion that ensued after his presentation centered on the need to strengthen the implementation of the AfCFTA. In response to the request for an extra-ordinary summit, the meeting observed that this is not the Forum to decide upon the convening of an extra ordinary summit as this can only be decided by Heads of State and Government collectively. The issue should be referred to the Council of Ministers to follow the correct procedure.

21. Both the Acting Secretary General and the Office of the Legal Counsel concurred that the Mid-Year Coordination Meeting could not pronounce itself on the holding of an extra ordinary summit according to the rules of procedures of the Assembly.

22. Consequently, the meeting took note of the report.

b. Attendance of the AU Statutory Meetings at Heads of State and Government and Ministerial level

23. The meeting noted with grave concern that statutory meetings of the Union are very poorly attended at the Heads and Government as well as Ministerial levels whereas there is a strong presence of the said leaders at the partnerships Summits. The meeting underscored the need for greater presence of Heads of State and Government and Ministers to attend AU Statutory meetings so as to give political leadership on matters that have an impact on the African continent.

V. Closing

24. H.E. Felix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo expressed his sincere gratitude to everyone for their participation and contribution that made the meeting highly participatory. He welcomed the adoption of the Declaration and called for the consolidation of regional and continental integration. He emphasized the special role of women and youth in accelerating the said regional and continental integration. He also underscored the importance of free movement of persons in addition to free movement of goods and services. He invited the Heads of State to redouble their efforts towards accelerating integration. He thanked them for the spirit of cooperation that prevailed throughout the discussion.

25. H.E. Felix- Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo then declared the Third Mid-Year Coordination Meeting officially closed.

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