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**SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 144th ORDINARY SESSION OF THE
GROUP OF AFRICAN AMBASSADORS IN BRUSSELS
ACP HOUSE – 15 DECEMBER 2011**



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1.The Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels held its 144th ordinary session on 15 December 2011 at 10.00 a.m at ACP House, under the chairmanship of H. E. Mr Paul Badji, Ambassador of Senegal.

I. ATTENDANCE

2.The following Member States attended the meeting:

Algeria, Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Congo (DR), Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mauritania, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sudan, Swaziland, Tunisia (see attached list of attendance)

II. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

3.The following agenda was adopted by the meeting:

1. Adoption of the agenda
2. Introduction of the new Ambassador of Djibouti in Brussels, H. E. Mr Badri ALI BOGOREH and of the new Permanent Representative of the African Union in Brussels, H. E. Mr Ajay K. BRAMDEO
3. Adoption of the minutes of the 143rd session
4. Consideration of the report on the retreat of the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels on Climate Change (Liege, 10-11/11/2011)
5. Composition of the Bureau of the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels for the period 1st January to 30th June 2012
6. Update on the establishment of the Afro-Arab Committee of Ambassadors in Brussels
7. Conflict or political crises situations in Africa (Somalia, Sudan)
8. Any other business – Communications from the following countries:
 - Eritrea
 - Madagascar
 - Cape Verde
 - Ethiopia

III. Introduction of the new Ambassador of Djibouti and of the new Permanent Representative of the African Union in Brussels

4.Under this item, the new Ambassador of the Republic of Djibouti, H. E. Mr Badri ALI BOGOREH and the new Permanent Representative of the African Union in Brussels were introduced to the Group.

5.The introductions were followed by the Chairman's words of welcome to both Ambassadors, in his own name and on behalf of the whole Group. Referring to their respective CVs, he stressed his conviction that the African Group will definitely benefit from the qualifications, expertise and experience of the two Ambassadors. He then assured them that all the members of the Group would be available to give them the necessary assistance and support to ensure the successful fulfilment of their respective missions.

- H. E. Mr Badri ALI BOGOREH took the floor to thank the African Group for its welcome. He underlined his willingness to work in perfect synergy with all the members of the Group to defend and promote Africa's well understood interests. He insisted, in particular, on the need to intensify all efforts to meet the political (peace and security) and economic challenges facing Africa. In conclusion, he said how reassured he was by the fact that he could rely on the solidarity and wise advice of each of the Group's members to fulfil his mission in Brussels.
- H. E. Mr Ajay K. BRAMDEO said that he was particularly moved by the warm welcome of the Group. He stressed that he was most honoured and privileged to have been appointed for this prestigious position of Permanent Representative of the African Union in Brussels. He was pleased to have been given the opportunity to work with the African Group in Brussels to serve Africa. The challenges, he added are manifold: economic, political and geostrategic. He emphasised the importance of Brussels in this context, given the existing privileged bilateral and multilateral relations linking the African Union and its Member States to the European Union. He concluded by underlining his determination to rely on the advice and sound experience of each of the Group's members in the fulfilment of his mission.

6.To conclude on this item, the Ambassador of Burkina Faso, H. E. Mr Kadré Désiré OUEDRAEOGO, Dean of the African Diplomatic Corps, took the floor to welcome the two Ambassadors into the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels. He underlined that their respective qualifications and experience were indeed a good omen for the important contribution that they are expected to make to enhance the Group's action.

7. He expressed his full availability and solidarity with them, in the fulfilment of their respective missions.

IV. Adoption of the minutes of the 143rd session

8. The minutes of the 143rd session of the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels was adopted with the following amendments:

- Page 2, paragraph 5: H. E. Mrs Anita Pipan, recently appointed Permanent non-resident Representative of Slovenia to the African Union is currently Ambassador of Slovenia in Belgium and not Slovenia's Permanent Representative to the EU;
- Page 5, paragraph 19: the new Ambassador of Djibouti said that the wording of his Predecessor's intervention on the ACP Group's action vis-à-vis Somalia was regrettable. Rather than "denounce" an attitude, it was in fact an appeal to the African Group to call on the ACP Group in particular and on the international community in general, to express greater solidarity with Somalia through their support and encouragement to the peace and reconstruction process engaged by the AU, namely through AMISOM.

9. Under matters arising from the minutes the issue of the memorandum to be addressed to Ambassador Pierre Labouverie, the new Chief of Protocol of the Belgian Foreign Affairs Service was raised (Rf. chapter IV, page 3 of the Report). The Secretariat however added that the memorandum should rather emanate from the ACP Committee of Ambassadors which Ambassador Labouverie had met long before meeting the African Group. Indeed, his referring to it on the occasion of his meeting with the African Group was by a mere assimilation of the two Groups.

10. The above clarification notwithstanding, it was agreed that the African Group would make a contribution to the memorandum, given that the African Ambassadors constituted the majority within the ACP Committee of Ambassadors. It was further decided that a Working Group chaired by Senegal would be set up and would include one representative for each region. Regions were hence requested to appoint their representatives by Thursday 22nd of December.

V. Consideration of the report on the retreat of the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels on Climate Change (Liege, 10-11/11/2011)

11. The Secretariat introduced the report on the retreat of the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels on Climate Change which was held on 10 and 11

November 2011 in Liege. It recalled that the retreat was also seized as an opportunity to discuss, on the one hand, the report of the Working Group on a Greater Involvement of the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels in the follow-up of Africa-EU cooperation, and on the other, to have an in-depth brainstorming on the cooperation between Africa and the European Union in general.

12. The meeting hailed the initiative of the AU Permanent Mission in Brussels to organise the retreat which gave the African Group a better insight into the negotiations on Climate Change. It encouraged the Mission to continue organising similar activities.
13. On the ways and means of enhancing the visibility of the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels (Rf: Report of the Working Group on a Greater Involvement of the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels in the Follow-up of Africa-EU Cooperation), some delegations were of the view that the decision to increase the annual statutory contributions of Embassies to the annual budget of the Group from 200 to 500 Euros should be reviewed given that some delegations had raised some reservations for the following reasons:
 - The justifications provided (funding the activities of the African Group such as receptions and gifts to departing Ambassadors who are members of the Group; funding meetings with other Regional Groups or partners represented in Brussels; organisation of meetings with other African Groups based in Geneva or Addis Ababa for the coordination of their planned actions; support to activities of the African Diaspora Associations in Europe, etc.) were not very convincing;
 - The amount requested is all the more high as it is not necessarily part of the regular budget of the Embassies concerned. The situation also raises questions as to whether it is the Embassy or the Ambassador who should pay the contribution.
14. On the last point and at the Chairman's request, the Secretariat explained that the contribution concerned is a statutory contribution as stipulated in chapter IV, Art. 10 of the Rules of Procedure of the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels. It is therefore to be paid by the Embassy and not by the Ambassador intuiti personae. The Secretariat further explained that the activities to be funded, such as the few examples mentioned here above, are to be strictly differentiated from the "statutory" activities of the AU Permanent Mission in Brussels and particularly from its functioning. The latter are indeed funded exclusively from the Mission's own budget which is part of the African Union's operating or programme budget. The retreats and other conferences organised by the Mission for the benefit of the African Group are thus considered as institutional activities falling under the Mission's mandate and hence funded from its own allocated budget.

15. The Chairman drew the following conclusions:

- The recommendation to increase the annual statutory contribution to the budget of the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels to 500 Euros (five hundred Euros) is maintained;
- Special attention will be given to the need to use such contributions to fund activities which would rather add value to the action and visibility of the Group, rather than for protocol functions such as receptions. The souvenir-gifts offered to Ambassadors having reached the end of their mission could be handed to them, for instance, on the occasion of their last participation in a plenary session or Bureau meeting of the African Group.

VI. **Composition of the Bureau of the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels for the period 1st January to 30 June 2012**

16. The meeting approved the composition of the Bureau of the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels for the period 1st January to 30 June 2012 as follows, pursuant to article 9,2 of the Rules of Procedure:

Chairman: Sudan

Vice Chairmen: Algeria (North Africa)
Cameroon (Central Africa)
Côte d'Ivoire (West Africa)
Ethiopia (East Africa)
Zimbabwe (Southern Africa)

Ex officio members:

- Honorary Chairman: Current Chairman of the African Union, Equatorial Guinea (Up to the 18th AU Summit, 29-30 January 2012)
- Dean of the African Diplomatic Corps: H. E. Mr Kadré Désiré Ouedraogo, Ambassador of Burkina Faso in Brussels

Troïka:

- Sudan (current Chairman)
- Senegal (outgoing Chairman)
- Swaziland (incoming Chairman)

VII. Update on the establishment of the Afro-Arab Committee of Ambassadors in Brussels

17. On the above subject and as a follow-up to the recommendations of the Working Group on a Greater Involvement of the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels in the Follow-up of Africa-EU Cooperation, the necessary provisions were made to reactivate the process to establish the Afro-Arab Group of Ambassadors in Brussels, in accordance with instructions from the AU Commission and the LAS Secretariat. The Troïkas of the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels and of the Council of Arab Ambassadors in Brussels thus participated in a working dinner hosted by H. E. Mr Mohammed Abdullah AL-HUMAIMIDI, Ambassador of Irak, Chairman of the Council of Arab Ambassadors in Brussels. At the dinner which took place at Ambassador AL-HUMAIMIDI's residence the following was agreed on:

- **An informal structure would be established** rather than a formal one (Afro-Arab Committee of Ambassadors) to avoid heavy procedures which might jeopardise the efficiency of the required coordination undertakings;
- **The informal structure would be composed of the two Troïkas** of the Council of Arab Ambassadors in Brussels and of the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels;
- The Permanent Missions of the League of Arab States and of the African Union in Brussels shall coordinate all ad hoc actions to be undertaken by the informal structure.

18. The meeting approved this approach viewed as more realistic.

VIII. Some conflicts or political crisis situations in Africa (Somalia, Sudan)

19. The Chargé d'affaires a.i of the AU Permanent Mission briefed the meeting about recent developments in political crises and/or conflict situations in the following countries, as addressed by various sessions of the African Union Peace and Security Council (PSC):

- **Sudan:** based on the substantive report of the Chairperson of the AU Commission on the activities of the AU High Level Implementation Panel for Sudan (301st meeting of the PSC, 30 November 2011)

- **Somalia:** based on the PSC's provisions (302nd meeting , 2 December 2011) to start the second phase of implementation of the AU's mission in Somalia (AMISOM)
- **Madagascar:** on developments in the political crisis in Madagascar following the signature on 16 September 2011 of the "Roadmap to end the crisis in Madagascar" (PSC 303rd meeting, 8 December 2011)
- **Action against the LRA:** on the operational implementation of the AU's regional cooperation initiative against the Lord's Resistance Army (PSC, 299th meeting, 22 November 2011)
- **Preventing and fighting terrorism:** based on PSC provisions to fight against terrorism in Africa, as reflected in the report giving an update on terrorist threats and Africa's vulnerability to terrorism and efforts made by the AU Commission to face this scourge.

20. The reports, decisions and communiqés relating to these specific situations were duly distributed to participants.

21. Some delegations reacted to this information

- **Ethiopia:** The situation in Somalia has become more difficult because of Eritrea's (among other actors) action to supply arms to the Chabab. The UN Security Council has thus adopted sanctions against that country. Furthermore, Eritrea is planning to prevent the AU Summit meeting from taking place in Addis Ababa, as planned, in January 2012. Measures must be taken to make Eritrea end such actions.
- **Eritrea:** Ethiopia's accusations are totally unfounded as there can be no evidence to substantiate them. No one is to be misled; Ethiopia is used to making such fabricated accusations – See hereto attached statement made under Any Other Business.
- **Madagascar:** As presented by the Secretariat, the peace process is effectively in progress, based on the implementation of the Roadmap. Partners have resumed their cooperation with the country. Hence, the European Union Ambassador has just presented his credentials. The Embassy thanked the African Group for its support and solidarity.

- Guinea Bissau: The exchange of views between Eritrea and Ethiopia proves that the item was not properly formulated. To avoid similar exchanges in future, there should just be a point of information not to be followed by any other intervention, except to supplement information given by the Secretariat.

- Sudan: The Ambassador of a country concerned should be consulted before his country is listed under this item.

22. The Chargé d'affaires a.i recalled that at previous sessions of the African Group, it had been agreed at the express request of many delegations that there should systematically be an item on the meetings' agenda, to inform on conflict and crises situations in Africa and thus avoid reliance of the Ambassadors on information solely coming from the medias which often tend to manipulate situations or reflect them in ways which do not tally with the African vision. The Libyan crisis was quoted as an example and to regret the way in which the African positions were marginalised. He also underlined the fact that to date, the AU Permanent Mission in Brussels has made it a point to regularly disseminate to all the Embassies of the AU Member States in Brussels, the PSC's communiqués, reports and decisions. Thus, at this very meeting, the Mission limited itself to inform on the crises or conflict situations effectively addressed by the PSC and distributed the reports, decisions and communiqués adopted by the same PSC on such political crisis or conflict situations.
23. To conclude the exchange of views on this item, the Chairman requested that this item be maintained as a recurrent agenda item for the plenary sessions of the Group, with the proviso that it would just be a point of information on situations already examined by the PSC. As such, any comment to follow would only be to supplement or, if necessary, update the information reflected in the PSC documents. Under no circumstances should there be an in-depth debate on presented crises situations, except to identify a common strategy position to defend the issue vis-à-vis partners such as the EU or in the framework of a coordination forum such as the ACP Group of States. He recalled that when the decision was made to systematically have this item on all the plenary sessions' agendas, it had been agreed that any Embassy wishing to do so could make a communication to the Group under the item concerned, to inform the African Group on developments in a crisis involving its country. If necessary, such a request could be tabled when the agenda is submitted to the meeting for adoption. The communication concerned would then be made either under the item on information or under any other business.

IX. Any other business

24. The following delegations took the floor under this item:

- **Eritrea:** The allegations of the Ethiopian delegation are totally false. Eritrea has no foreign base on its territory. It is, on the contrary, a permanent victim of the United States' policy in the horn of Africa. On 5 December 2011, the United States initiated an illegal and unfair Resolution (2023/2011) against Eritrea at the UN Security Council. Before the adoption of the Resolution, Eritrea gave an exhaustive response to the unfounded allegations presented by the UN Somalia and Eritrea Monitoring Group (SEMG). Indeed, some of the Security Council members had energetically rejected the allegations regarding Eritrea's alleged support to some armed groups in Somalia and its alleged conspiracy to sabotage the AU Summit in Addis Ababa, as the evidence produced was not convincing. Before the adoption of the Resolution advocating sanctions against Eritrea, the Eritrean President wanted to address the Security Council to defend his country's position but the United States waged a campaign against such an initiative, thus breaching Eritrea's right to defend itself. The sanctions against Eritrea are hence illegal as they are based on totally false allegations. The reality is that the United States and its allies in the sub-region are bringing pressure to bear to divert the attention of the international community from their urge to dominate the horn of Africa on the one hand, and on the other, from their ally Ethiopia's illegal occupation of part of the Eritrean territory, in sheer violation of international law – See hereto annexed statement.
- **Cape Verde:** the European Union granted GSP+ to Cape Verde on 9 December 2011. This will obviously boost the trade between the country and the EU. It should be underlined that more than 90% of Cape Verde's trade is with the EU.
- **Guinea Bissau:** Ambassador Alfredo LOPES CABRAL congratulated Ambassador Paul BADJI profusely for his great success as chairman of the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels. The dynamism, energy and commitment of Ambassador BADJI during his tenure not only enhanced the visibility of the African Group of Brussels but also contributed to place it on a dynamic path which ought to be maintained. He also warmly congratulated the new Bureau and gave it the assurances of his unfailing support.

25. The meeting was adjourned at 5h45 p.m.

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