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**REPORT ON AFRICA'S STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS OF
THE AFRICAN UNION WITH JAPAN (TICAD IV), CHINA,
SOUTH AMERICA, INDIA, TURKEY AND IRAN**

REPORT ON AFRICA'S STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS OF THE AFRICAN UNION WITH JAPAN (TICAD IV), CHINA, SOUTH AMERICA, INDIA, TURKEY AND IRAN

Executive Council will recall its Decision at the 12th Ordinary Session on Africa's Strategic Partnerships (EX.CL/374(XII)) that requested a) the AU Commission to continue to work closely with relevant organs of the Union to accelerate progress in this regard; b) the AU Commission and Member States to continue to work closely with the Coordinating Mechanism established by the first Africa-South America Summit in Abuja to ensure adequate preparation for the second Africa-South America Summit scheduled to be held in Venezuela in November 2008; c) the AU Commission to take necessary measures to facilitate the successful conduct of the Africa-India Summit in April 2008, and the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD IV) scheduled for May 2008 and the Africa-Turkey Summit in August 2008, in line with the Banjul Summit Decision; d) the AU Commission to follow-up on this process and undertake a global review of all existing partnerships in order to effectively implement strategies and action plans agreed upon between Africa and its international partners, rationalize the number of Summits, and identify criteria for such partnerships to ensure coherence between and within these partnerships and make necessary recommendations to Council and the Assembly; e) the Permanent Representatives Committee to submit its recommendations on the above-mentioned study before initiating any new strategic partnerships.

2. Following this Decision, the Commission has intensified efforts to enhance and support the process of building these partnerships in accordance with the directive and guidance given by Council. The focus of efforts have been in three main directions. First, to consolidate and further develop existing partnerships in areas identified and approved by Council as demanding further efforts. Second is to review and rationalize all existing partnerships to ensure coherence and congruity between and within existing relationships. Third is to locate the feasibility of new approaches or requests within the template of the review efforts and to do so in close cooperation with the Permanent Representatives Committee of the Union (PRC) as directed by Executive Council.

I. Preparation for the 2nd Africa-South America (ASA) Summit

3. Efforts in this area have concentrated on intensification of preparations for the 2nd Africa-South America (ASA) Summit scheduled to be held in Venezuela in November 2008 and implementation of the framework of action agreed upon in the first ASA Summit held in Abuja, Nigeria in November 2007 that was further developed and refined by the Coordination Mechanism set up by the Summit.

4. As noted in the last report, the Coordination Mechanism held two meetings in Caracas, Venezuela, from 16-17 July 2007 and Abuja, Nigeria, from 29-30 November 2007 to establish a calendar of activities to support the implementation process and prepare for the 2nd Summit. A third meeting of the Coordinating Mechanism was also held on 9 and 10 June 2008 in Brasilia, Brazil.

5. The calendar of activities highlighted the need for some important steps, to be taken. First was the need to hold a meeting of African and South America's Ministers of Trade in Morocco as indicated by the Abuja Summit. In this respect, Morocco proposed that the meeting should be held in Marrakesh in the Kingdom of Morocco from 17-20 June 2008. The proposal was evaluated by the Commission and circulated to Member States of the Union for appraisal and consent. The Ministers of Finance discussed the proposal during its meeting in Addis Ababa in April and had no objection to the Moroccan proposal. Consequently, the meeting took place as scheduled. The Department of Trade and Industry of the Commission was assigned responsibility to act as the focal point for the meeting, taking into account the reasons informing the decision to hold the meeting and the provisions relating to it in both the Abuja Declaration and the Plan of Action. The Department will provide a report on the outcome of the Marakesh meeting.

6. Council may also wish to note that in implementation of the decision of the Coordinating Mechanism held in Abuja, Nigeria, in November 2007, to hold a meeting of High Officials of Africa South America was held in Brasilia, Brazil from 9-12 June 2008. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss and foster agreement on the implementation plan discussed by previous meetings of the Coordination Mechanism held in Venezuela and Abuja respectively, and to accelerate the process of preparations for the 2nd ASA Summit in Venezuela in November 2008. It is recalled that among other things, the meetings of the Coordination Mechanism had agreed on the need to strengthen and streamline the Coordination Mechanism to facilitate quicker action and recommended the establishment of a "Secretariat Pro Tempore" (rotational Secretariat) hosted by the country hosting the next Summit for the period of its Presidency. The High Officials' meeting in Brasilia reflected upon these issues and made concrete proposals on them.

7. In addition, the Government of Venezuela, as was agreed during the Abuja Coordination on 20 and 21 May 2008, a workshop of technical experts to examine its proposals on the establishment of (a) Bank of the South; (b) University of the South; (c) Telesur and Radio of the South; and (d) Petrosur for energy cooperation. Experts from Africa's RECs and the Commission were invited by the Government of Venezuela and participated in the workshop. It is hoped that outcome of that workshop will lead to the preparation of concrete projects that could be presented to the next Summit in November 2008.

8. Proposals were also made which were intended to accelerate the momentum for cooperation through "quick win" symbolic activities including sporting, cultural and social exchanges, that should start with an inter-continental football match with a trophy that would precede the 2nd ASA Summit, as well as the promotion of a series of cultural and social events including institutional, social and cultural interlinkages through the twinning of cities, joint scholarship as well as and exchange and research programmes between educational institutions in the two regions.

9. In this regard, the Commission of the Union invited its various departments to come up with key proposals in relevant areas. The proposals were consolidated into a concept paper that was developed further through consultation and close cooperation with the Multilateral Affairs Sub-committee of the PRC in order to set the African Agenda for the Brasilia meeting. The association of the PRC with the process is aligned with the requirements of the Executive Council Decision

highlighted above but has also served to foster broader consciousness that created a wider stakeholder community which enriched the process as a whole.

10. As the process intensifies in a run-down towards the 2nd ASA Summit in November 2008, it is expected that Council and Assembly would use the opportunity provided by this Summit to preview anticipated outcomes of the Summit and how this would support the wider implementation strategy for the realization of outcomes and the fulfillment of the goals that motivated the creation of this partnership.

11. Finally on ASA Summit, the Executive Council might wish to recall that the dates approved for the second summit are as follows:

24-25 November 2008:	- Meeting of High Officials;
26-27 November 2008:	- Meeting of Ministers; and
28-29 November 2008:	- Meeting of Heads of State and Government

It is the hope of the Commission that many African countries will attend the Summit in Caracas.

II. The Africa-India Summit

12. In furtherance of the objective of consolidating the strategic partnership, the Africa-India Summit was held in New Delhi, India, from 8-9 April 2008. The meeting was held at three consecutive levels – Senior Official, Ministers and Heads of State and Government. Significantly also, the model of Africa's representation at the Summit conformed to the framework agreed upon by the Banjul Summit of the African Union and the modifications to it, on the continent – single country partnerships.

13. The Summit, which was attended by several African leaders representing the continent, established an Africa-India Cooperative Forum that would meet every three years in addition to high level political exchanges in bilateral, regional and multilateral contexts. It agreed therefore, that the next Africa-India Summit will be held in 2011 in Africa.

14. In addition, the Summit produced two major outcome documents, namely, a Delhi Declaration. The Declaration underlined the values and historical ties that established a foundation for the relationship as well as the common commitment inherent in the partnership and the challenges that it is designed to overcome. The Summit also agreed on an Africa-India Framework of Cooperation outlining the key areas of cooperation and the substantive content for such cooperation.

15. The key difficulty at the Summit was on the framework for implementation of the agenda for cooperation. India preferred to rely on already existing bilateral and multilateral frameworks. The African side, on the other hand, insisted that the continent-single country partnership with the African Union was intended to add direct value to existing processes and that if this was not the case, the Africa-India Summit would have no purpose. After protracted discussion at the Senior Official level, without a common agreement, the Ministers concurred with the African position. The Summit therefore resolved that "without prejudice to India's ongoing and future programmes at the bilateral, REC and other levels, we agree to develop

jointly, within a period of one year, a joint plan of action at a continental level and an appropriate follow-up mechanism to implement our framework for cooperation.”

16. The challenge now is to determine the content of the plan of action and what Africa intends to get from it in a mutually beneficial relationship. There is clearly a need for the Commission to work closely together with the PRC and partners such as ADB, ECA, etc, to set out a precise African agenda that will feed into the joint plan preparation. It is proposed that the PRC and the Commission will make proposals on how to establish a work plan and calendar of activities that will meet the aspirations and demands of the Delhi Declaration. Thereafter, we must engage with India so as to agree on plan of actions and an implementation mechanism within one year provided for in the framework for cooperation.

17. A major highlight of the Summit was the announcement by the Indian Prime Minister to grant:

- i) Duty-free tariff preference scheme to Least Developed Countries, 34 of which are in Africa. This will allow cotton, cocoa, aluminum ores, copper ores, cashew nuts, cane sugar, ready-made garments, fish fillets, etc. from Africa to gain access to Indian markets;
- ii) Lines of credit to Africa doubled to US\$5.4 billion over the next five years;
- iii) Enhanced quota of 1600 seats annually for Africans under India's flagship technical training scheme; and
- iv) The execution of projects in excess of 500 million dollars over the next 5-6 years in the areas of railways, IT, telecom, power generation and physical connectivity in Africa.

African countries and the RECs should take advantage of these provisions as early as possible.

III. Tokyo's International Conference on Africa's Development (TICAD) IV

18. Preparations continued apace also on developing relations with Japan within the framework of the TICAD process. The preparations fed into the TICAD IV meeting held in Yokohama, Japan, from 28-30 May 2008. TICAD IV – the fourth in the series that will precede the G8 Summit that will take place also in Japan later in July 2008. In line with tradition, the meeting addressed issues in priority areas of African development, namely, accelerating economic growth, ensuring human security including the achievement of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the consolidation of peace and democracy, as well as issues pertaining to environmental issues and climate change. The African Union Commission was fully represented at the TICAD IV meeting with the Chairperson leading its delegation. The substantive outcome of the meeting is to be presented separately to Council and Summit.

19. The process of preparation for participation in the TICAD IV process however raised a substantive issue about the importance of the Banjul decision regarding continent – single country partnership. Contrary to the case with India, the Japanese sent invitations to various African Heads of States who attended the Summit. Questions were then raised by some Member States about the implication of this situation for the Banjul decision. Similarly, some Member States have even questioned Africa's representation at the Summit with India. It would be necessary for this Summit to assess the situation and make an appropriate follow-up decision as to whether or not the Banjul Decision should remain applicable in future situations and how to ensure that Member States act in accordance with the decision.

IV. Africa-Turkey Summit

20. Preparations are also being intensified to ensure the successful conduct of the Africa-Turkey Summit as directed by Council. The meeting is scheduled to take place in Istanbul from 17-21 August 2008.

21. In this regard, the Commission as continued to work in close consultation with the Multilateral Affairs Committee of the PRC and the PRC itself, to develop and improve the draft outcome documents proposed by Turkey with the view to ensuring a coordinated African position that will inform the deliberations at the Summit. The process would also involve consultations with the Group of African Ambassador/Heads of Mission in Turkey.

22. It is to be noted that the African Union side, made up of Members of the Multilateral Cooperation Sub-Committee and the Commission had a working session with a Turkish delegation in Addis Ababa in March 2008 during which agreement was reached on the practical aspects of the Summit. Another working session is due to take place in order to finalise the outcome document. However, while Turkey proposed that this should take place before the AU Summit in Egypt in June/July, for reasons of the Union's calendar, this meeting will take place immediately after that Summit.

23. Significantly, Africa had proposed the model of African representation at this meeting should be in consonance with the Banjul decision. However, Turkey wants to invite all African countries to the Summit on the ground that it was the first between Africa and Turkey. In view of the situation with regard to Africa's participation in TICAD IV, as well as complaints about participation in the Africa-India Summit.

V. Proposed Africa – Iran Summit

24. As Council would recall, the former Chairperson of the Commission had informed it, as well as the Assembly of the desirability of engaging Iran in a partnership similar to the one with India and Turkey. This interest was first kindled after the participation of the Iranian President in the Banjul Assembly when he addressed his African colleagues. The visit to Iran by the former Chairperson to Iran and several visits to Africa including Addis Ababa by the Iranian Foreign Minister and his Deputy responsible for African and Arab Affairs have reinforced this desire.

25. Indeed, it is recalled that Iran had requested for a meeting in Teheran in February this year for Senior Officials at the level of Deputy Ministers. It had

intended that that meeting would be followed by African Foreign Ministers and Iran and a Summit with African leaders later this year. However, the Commission had informed the Iranian authorities that before such meetings could take place between it and African leaders, the executive organs were required to give their approval. In any case, a Summit this year was impossible, Iran was informed, because of the heavy schedule of other Summits Africa had this year. Accordingly, rather than a meeting between Member States of the African Union and Iran, the Commission undertook a fact-finding and exploratory visit to Teheran on 25 and 26 February 2008.

26. An abridged report of that visit is attached to this report as an Annex. However, the visit was extremely useful as it allowed the Commission to explain to the Iranian authorities the African Union partnership policy, the steps required to be taken before engaging in a partnership and the expectations of the African Union from such a partnership. It also exposed to the Commission the areas in which a partnership with Iran could add value to Africa's relations with partners, as well as the undoubted desire by Iran to engage in a genuine partnership with Africa. The visit also allowed the Commission to seek the opinion of the Group of African Ambassadors in Teheran on the desirability of engaging in a partnership with Iran and in what areas such a partnership would best benefit Africa.

27. The conclusions of the Commission after the visit was that a partnership with Iran was indeed viable and desirable and should be actualized. As paragraph 17 of the attached report clearly indicates, "Iran has tremendous potential and if the relationship is properly harnessed, it could attract bountiful benefits for Africa in more areas than one, including the promotion of trade, energy development and science an technology. A partnership with Iran is unique because of her specificities in being neither an Arab nor an Asian Country." Furthermore, a partnership with Iran would give African an opportunity to have a moderating effect in that country with respect to its role in the world.

28. In the light of the above, Council might wish to consider approving the proposal to engage in a partnership with Iran taking into account the following:

- (i) such a partnership should be on the basis of the Banjul decision or as it many be reformed;
- (ii) the partnership is directed at a few selected areas where Iran has a comparative advantage and would greatly benefit Africa;
- (iii) such a summit should take place sometime in 2009 at a time to be determined taking into account the Union's other engagements; and
- (iv) adequate preparation is made which will not only ensure a successful summit but one that has concrete and realizable benefits for Africa.

VI. The Global Review Process

29. The final aspect of Council Decision focused on the need to undertake a global review of all existing partnerships in order to effectively implement strategies and action plans agreed upon between Africa and its international partners, rationalize the number of Summits, identify the criteria for such partnerships and make necessary recommendations to Council and Assembly. Similarly, the PRC is to

submit its recommendations on the aforementioned study before initiating any new strategic partnership.

30. As part of the review process, the Commission has taken two important steps. First, is to locate any request for a new partnership firmly within the framework of this decision. Thus, any requests for partnership will necessarily involve an exploratory phase in which discussions would be held with intending partners to evaluate the added value, if any, of the proposed relationship, which will then be discussed with the PRC as an element of the wider evaluation process.

31. The Commission has commenced preparatory work on the process of a global review. The work, which is expected to be concluded within two to three months, would then be submitted to appropriate policy organs as a measure of informed assessment that would guide policy decisions. The Commission intends to discuss the results with the PRC so that a common position may be formulated in order to enable a joint report to be submitted to the next Ordinary Session of Council in January 2009 for consideration and adoption.

VII. Conclusion

32. The development of Africa's Strategic Partnership with the world within the framework of the African Union continues apace. The emphasis is three- fold. One is to follow-up upon and strengthen existing relationships to enable them to deliver on promises and feed successfully into Africa's overall development efforts. Second, is to ensure coherence and complementarity within and between these relationships as part of the reinforcement process. The global review process is a critical part of this effort and the decision to rationalize and streamline the pattern of the relationship is integral to the effort. Harmonization of the broader strategic partnership network implies that new relationships must necessarily complement and add value to what already exists. Hence, there is no premium on establishing a partnership for its own sake because such partnership, by definition, cannot be strategic.

33. Third, is an implicit and necessary desire to harmonize the tools and institutional framework that must coordinate this relationship within the framework of the Union and between the Union and its partners individually and collectively. Creating the necessary linkages between these objectives would accentuate and strengthen the increasing profile of the African Union in the global mainstream and foster a situation whereby its framework of strategic partnerships would create multiplier effects for growth and development on the continent.

**Office of the Chairperson,
African Union Commission,
Addis Ababa
23 May 2008**

**PROGRESS REPORT ON THE EXPLORATORY VISIT OF AU COMMISSION
DELEGATION TO TEHRAN, ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN IN PREPARATION
FOR THE PROPOSED AFRICA-IRAN FORUM SUMMIT**

Introduction

An African Union Commission (AUC) delegation visited Tehran, the Islamic Republic of Iran, from 23 – 27 February 2008. During its stay, His Excellency Manoochehr Mottaki, the Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic, received the AU delegation. The delegation also met with Their Excellencies Bagheri and Talari, the Deputy Ministers for African and Arab countries and Economic Affairs, respectively.

2. The objective of the visit was to obtain information on Iran and to explore the prospects and possibilities of Africa-Iran cooperation in line with the decisions and objectives set by the executive organs of the African Union (EX.CL/Dec.397 (XII)). It was to define the content of a possible partnership, the principles that would guide it, as well as identify the possible areas of cooperation. The meeting with the Iranian officials was also to see how to promote and deepen cooperation and establish a mechanism for joint action including collaborative projects in specific areas.

Issues Discussed

VIII. A. Areas of Cooperation

3. After agreeing on some of the principles of the cooperation, which include the respect for the principle of sovereignty, justice, human dignity, culture of peace and tolerance, as well as the development of an international system that is characterized by multilateralism, the two parties identified the following areas of possible cooperation:

i) Political and International Issues

4. The meeting recalled the cooperation between Africa and Iran in international bodies and organizations especially the United Nations and called for the enhancement of cooperation between Iran and African countries in line with mutual interests of their States and peoples. In this context, the two sides undertook to consider joint positions, vis-à-vis issues of mutual interest including international peace and security, development, eradication of poverty, multilateralism, combating contagious diseases, protection of the environment, cultural diversity, etc.

ii) Economic and Social Issues

5. The meeting identified the areas that could form the basis of the cooperation as follows:

I. Infrastructure

- Road construction;
- Bridge construction;

- Dam and power generation plants construction; and
- Railway construction

II. Energy

- Participation in the African Oil Fund
- Construction of regional refineries and upgrading of existing ones;
- Establishment of regional oil depots in Africa;
- Pipeline and gasoline construction;
- Construction of petrochemical complexes/plants; and
- Oil and gas extraction and exploration technology

III. Telecom, ICT and Media

- Broadband networks (optic fibers); and
- Pan-African TV and radio network

IV. Trade and Industry

- Improve volume of trade and structure of trade;
- Promotion of investment and appropriate mechanism for financing (joint ventures, banking cooperation facilities, avoidance of dual taxation, customs cooperation, investment protection, preferential tariffs, risk reduction, etc.);
- Standardization, quality control, and metrology;
- Establishment of joint Chambers of Commerce and Industry;
- Cooperation between trade promotion centers;
- Processing and manufacturing; and
- Cooperation in extractive and mining industries

V. Science and Technology, Innovation

- Basic Research;
- R&D; and
- Cooperation between universities and research centers

VI. Health

- Establishment of regional pharmaceutical industries;
- Establishment, equipping and servicing regional medical centers of excellence; and
- Cooperation in combating epidemic diseases (HIV/AIDS, malaria, etc.)

VII. Environmental Protection and Agriculture

- Water management and waste water management;
- Combating desertification and pollution;
- Irrigation systems; and
- Drainage systems

VIII. Education and Capacity-Building

- Education, training and technical assistance in all identified areas of cooperation including diplomatic, managerial, vocational, etc; and
- Information and knowledge sharing

B. Format of the Forum

6. During the meeting, the Iranian side proposed that the Forum should take place at three levels, which are, Summit, Ministerial and Senior Officials. The AU side accepted the proposal as it conformed to the existing practice with other partnerships. However, both sides agreed that the bulk of the preparatory work of the Forum Summit should be done at the level of senior officials.

C. Level of Participation

7. Regarding the level of participation at the Forum, the AU side indicated that, if the summit is approved by its Member States, participation on the African side would conform to the decision of the AU Assembly at the Banjul Summit of 2nd July 2006 (Assembly/AU/3 (VII), which directs that a meeting of Africa and a single country partner should be attended at the summit level as follows:

- Current Chairperson of AU;
- Immediate past Chairperson of AU;
- Chairperson of AU Commission;
- Chairpersons of the 8 recognized Regional Economic Communities;
- Chairperson of the NEPAD Heads of State and Government Implementation Committee (HSGIC); and
- Leaders of the 5 initiating countries of NEPAD

8. The AU also indicated that, at the level of Ministers, representation would be by Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the countries that would participate at the summit whereas the meeting at senior officials level could be open to all AU Member States that wish to attend, in order to ensure inclusiveness. The AU delegation made the point that even though not all 53 Heads of State and Government, and their Ministers would attend, those attending represent the whole of the continent.

9. Following this information, the AU side requested to know the level of participation on the Iranian side and was informed that Iran's representation at the senior officials' level would be headed by the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs for African and Arab countries, assisted by high level officials from the relevant ministries. It was also indicated that, at the ministerial level, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, assisted by his colleagues from the relevant ministries, would lead the Iranian delegation while the summit level would involve the Iranian President as well as ministers and high officials that are considered appropriate.

D. Outcome Document

10. In the course of the meeting, the Iranian delegation sought clarification on the expected outcome document of the Forum Summit. However, following the intervention of the AU side, the meeting agreed that the character and nature of the outcome document would be the subject of future discussion as the preparatory work progresses.

E. Follow-up Preparatory Meeting

11. On this issue, both sides agreed on the need for a follow-up preparatory meeting. The venue and date of the next meeting will be fixed after due consultation between the AU and its organs, as well as between both sides. However, the AU side emphasized the point that before such meetings could take place the AU Member States would pronounce themselves on the proposals that would be made in response to the Executive Council Decision referred to earlier on.

Meeting with the Group of African Ambassadors in Tehran

12. At the instance of the AUC delegation, a meeting was held with the African Group of Ambassadors accredited to the Islamic Republic of Iran at 10h00 on Sunday 24 February 2008, ahead of the meeting with the Iranian officials. The meeting took place at the Chancery of the Embassy of Sierra Leone in Tehran and was aimed at briefing the Group on the mission of the Delegation and draw from their individual and collective experiences as vital input that would guide the Delegation in its meeting with the Iranian officials. The delegation reminded the Group that its visit was exploratory and pointed out that Iran had not put any thing specific on the table.

13. To that effect, the delegation briefed the meeting on the status of AU's partnerships since the OAU days, beginning with the oldest and traditional one with the European Union and the path leading to the two summits that have so far been held between the two sides; the Africa-South America Cooperative Forum, whose first summit took place in Abuja, Nigeria in November 2006, and the second summit that is scheduled for Caracas, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in November 2008. The other partnership arrangements were with individual countries such as Japan under TICAD, China, India and Turkey. The summit with India took place in April 2008 after the exploratory visit to Tehran, Iran while the summit with Turkey will be held in August 2008. In addition, the AU had other partnerships such as the Africa-Arab Summit, which already had a first summit but the second one is yet to hold, and the Africa-Asia Forum, which took place in 2004. Furthermore the AU also had partnerships with international organizations, including the Organization of the Francophonie, the Commonwealth and the Organization of American States (OAS), with which the AU has a Memorandum of Understanding.

14. The Group was informed that AU's partnership policy was not to replace its Member States' bilateral relations with the organizations and countries, but that they were to reinforce them as well as protect their interests. To this end, the AU delegation wished to procure information from the African Heads of Mission on their bilateral relations with Iran, share their experiences and obtain their views on the proposal to have a partnership with Iran. These were important because as Africa's representatives in Tehran, they were best placed to understand Iran, what contributions it could make to a partnership with Africa and what unique contributions such partnership would bring to Africa.

15. In reaction, members of the Group made various comments and observations to guide the delegation as follows:

- i. That Iran was facing increasing isolation as a result of the sanction placed on it by the West and was anxious to acquire friends and was, within that context, attracted to Africa despite its euro-centric policy;
- ii. The proposed cooperation should be futuristic and should underpin the need for a critical assessment of what Iran has on the table. It was pointed out that while Iran was under sanction now, sanctions were temporary and Iran was not likely to forget Africa;
- iii. Africa should present specific projects for execution by Iran within the partnership arrangement rather than having to contract projects to Iran for which it (Africa) would effect payment;
- iv. Iran utilizes short-term credit instruments which is export-oriented rather than long-term instrument, it should be encouraged to create appropriate financial mechanism to assist Africa; and
- v. Africa should carry out an assessment of existing bilateral cooperation between Iran and individual African countries in order to ensure that cooperation agreements were fulfilled.

16. Aside from the preparation for the proposed Africa-Iran Forum Summit, the delegation also briefed the Group on the status of the African Union and the activities of the Commission.

Conclusion

17. The exploratory mission of the AU delegation to Tehran was a productive one. It unveiled the strong commitment and determination of the Islamic Republic of Iran for a comprehensive and holistic relationship with Africa. Conscious of the need to acquire new friends, Iran could use Africa to showcase her new found stature in the international community by forging a selfless, balanced and beneficial relationship with Africa. No doubt, Iran has tremendous potentials and if the relationship is properly harnessed it could attract bountiful benefits for Africa in more areas than one including the promotion of trade, energy development, and science and technology. A partnership with Iran is unique because of her specificities in being neither an Arab nor an Asian country.

18. Of further significance is the expressed willingness of Iran to use her embassies in countries bordering her to provide services to those African countries without representation there. In this context, there is need for both sides to expand diplomatic relations by opening new missions as a way of encouraging people-to-people contact and interaction at the various levels of their societies.

19. While Iran nurtures a euro-centric policy in her international relations, Africa should seize the moment and the opportunity offered her by the circumstance facing Iran. In doing so, Africa should insist on a structured and beneficial relationship that would be devoid of strings, and one that is targeted towards the attainment of specific projects. In order to avoid the lapses being experienced in Iran's bilateral relations

with individual Africa countries, it is advised that a clause that encourages respect for contractual agreements be factored into the cooperation arrangement. Similarly, consideration could also be given towards developing appropriate mechanism that would promote trade and safeguard investment through banking cooperation facilities, investment protection, preferential tariffs, risk reduction and other relevant instruments.

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