



COMMUNIQUÉ ON THE VISIT OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION TO ZIMBABWE

Addis Ababa, 22 February 2018: The Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union, Moussa Faki Mahamat, undertook a visit to Harare, Zimbabwe, from 18 to 20 February 2018. He was accompanied by the Commissioner for Political Affairs, Minata Cessouma Samate, and other senior officials of the Commission. The visit provided an opportunity to express the support of the African Union to, and solidarity with, Zimbabwe at this key juncture of its history and in the run up to the forthcoming elections, as well as to exchange views with the Zimbabwean authorities on issues of mutual interest.

During the visit, the Chairperson of the Commission met with President Emmerson Mnangagwa; the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Sibusiso Moyo; the Minister of Industry, Commerce and Enterprise Development, Mike Bimha; and the Minister of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs, Ziyambi Ziyambi. The Chairperson paid a courtesy call on the Speaker of Parliament, Jacob Francis Mudenda, who was accompanied by Zimbabwean members of the Pan-African Parliament. He also paid a courtesy call on former President Robert Mugabe.

In the course of his discussions with the Zimbabwean authorities, the Chairperson of the Commission commended the Government and people of Zimbabwe on the peaceful transition that took place last November, as well as on the dignity and respect that the new administration has afforded former President Robert Mugabe. He expressed the African Union's support for the ongoing efforts to revive the national economy and create a conducive business environment, deepen political reforms and organize free, fair and peaceful elections. He pledged the African Union Commission's commitment, working with other stakeholders, most notably the Southern African Development Community, to provide support to the organization of successful polls, including through the deployment of observers.

Noting that close to two decades of sanctions have had serious adverse impact on Zimbabwean economy, the Chairperson assured his interlocutors of the African Union commitment to help mobilize support for the recovery efforts, including through renewed advocacy efforts for the early lifting of all sanctions imposed on the country.

The discussions with the Zimbabwean authorities also covered the institutional reform of the African Union. The Chairperson underlined the urgency of ensuring financial self-

reliance through the implementation, by all Member States, of the 0.2% levy on eligible imports. President Mnangagwa expressed his country's full support to the reform process.

On the integration agenda and development agenda of the African Union, and in light of the decisions adopted by the 30th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union, held in Addis Ababa on 28 and 29 January 2018, the Chairperson of the Commission stressed the importance of the Kigali Extraordinary Summit due to be held on 21 March 2018 to sign the agreement establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area. It should be noted that, during the Kigali Summit, the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, the Right of Residence and the Right of Establishment, and on the African Passport will be placed before the Member States for signature. The Chairperson urged the full implementation of the commitments made within the framework of the Single African Transport Air Market.

Discussions also covered how to boost tourism on the continent, as a driver for socio-economic development, growth and integration. Zimbabwe is currently chairing the sub-Committee on Tourism of the African Union Specialized Technical Committee on Transport, Transcontinental and Inter-regional Infrastructure, Energy and Tourism. The Commission is planning a number of activities in this respect, including a continental Conference on Infrastructure for Tourism Development in Africa.

On 19 February, the Chairperson addressed the National Defence University of Zimbabwe on the topic "African Solutions to African Problems". He looked forward to Zimbabwe's contribution to the promotion of peace, security and stability on the continent, as a new member of the African Union Peace and Security Council.

On 20 February, the Chairperson visited the Harare Regional Internet Exchange Centre, which was established in 2017, with the support of the African Union Commission. The Centre is part of the African Internet Exchange System launched by the Commission in 2012. It should be recalled that, in 2010, the Assembly of the Union, noting the low quality and high cost of internet traffic in Africa due, among others, to lack of National Internet Exchange points, thereby compelling Member States to route their national internet traffic via a third party, requested the Commission to deploy Internet Exchange Points across the continent, to address this situation. Since then, the Commission has supported, technically and financially, the establishment of 18 National Internet Exchange Point Systems and 5 regional ones.

The Chairperson also visited the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF), which was established in 1991 to build human and institutional capacity for good governance and economic development in Africa. The Chairperson and the Executive Director of the ACBF signed a Memorandum of Understanding to give effect to the January 2017 decision of the Assembly of the Union granting a Specialized Agency status to the ACBF.

Finally, the Chairperson visited the African Centre for Fertilizer Development. This Centre was established following a decision adopted by the Council of Ministers of the Organization of the African Unity in March 1985. Its mandate is to promote fertilizer consumption in African agriculture. The Chairperson took note of the challenges facing the Centre in the execution of its mandate and pledged that the Commission would look into these issues.

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