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**DRAFT MINUTES OF THE 181ST ORDINARY SESSION OF THE
AFRICAN GROUP OF AMBASSADORS IN BRUSSELS HELD ON 17 JULY, 2019
AT THE PERMANENT MISSION OF THE AFRICAN UNION**

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1. The 181ST Ordinary Session of the African Group of Ambassadors in Brussels (GAAB) was held on Wednesday, 17 July 2019 at 15:00, at the AU Permanent Mission in Brussels, under the chairmanship of H.E Apolinario MENDES DE CARVALHO, Ambassador of Guinea-Bissau and President of the African Group.

2. The list of participants is attached to the present Minutes.

I. Adoption of the Agenda

3. The Agenda was adopted as follows :

- 1) Adoption of the Agenda;
- 2) Communication on the African Renewable Energy Initiative (AREI);
- 3) Adoption of Minutes of the 180th Ordinary Session of the African Group and Consideration of Matters Arising;
- 4) Status of the Post-Cotonou 2020 Negotiations (Africa Regional Protocol);
- 5) Briefing on the Outcomes of the AU Special Summit held in Niamey, Niger, from 4 to 8 July 2019;
- 6) Any Other Business.

II. Communication on the African Renewable Energy Initiative (AREI)

4. In its communication, the AREI Delegation recalled that this initiative was launched in 2015 by decision of the AU Heads of State and Government. It was explained that AREI aims to ensure universal access to energy and to rapidly increase the use of renewable energy through the development of specific projects intended to provide 10 GW additional energy production capacity in Africa by 2020, and at least 300 GW by 2030. It was added that at the launch of the AREI Initiative, donors committed to mobilize \$ 10 billion between 2016 and 2020 to achieve this goal.
5. The Delegation stated that the AREI Board of Directors is composed of Five (5) Members (1 per African Region), namely Egypt, Chad, Namibia, Guinea and Kenya and that it is chaired by H.E Pr. Alpha Conde, President of Guinea, and its secretariat hosted by the AfDB, in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. The Delegation also indicated that since the launch of the AREI, several meetings of the Board of Directors were convened and resulted in the adoption of 104 projects spread across the continent, and that the AREI benefited of \$ 1.5 billion subsidy which is expected to leverage \$ 8.5 billion.
6. However, the Delegation regretted the poor commitment of the African regions/countries which delayed the appointment of their respective Focal Points. An appeal was therefore launched to all the countries/regions that have not yet done so to designate their respective Focal Points to ensure ownership, monitoring and implementation of the AREI projects.
7. The presentation by the AREI Delegation was followed by a Communication made by EU experts who highlighted the importance of the AREI and recalled that the EU is today one of the major actors in providing development aid in the energy sector. The EU experts

indicated that support for renewable energy projects in Africa is underway through the EU External Investment Plan (EIP), as well as in the form of *blending* with the participation of the European Investment Bank (EIB). They explained that the aim is to combine loans and subsidies, which allow a significant leverage and investment opportunities. They concluded by saying that an amount of 1.5 billion euros was already secured as part of the support for AREI and that an amount of 15 to 16 billion euros will be allocated within the framework of the EU multi-year budget to improve access to energy.

8. The Ambassador of Côte d'Ivoire sought clarification on the concrete achievements made in the framework of the EIP, and requested for additional details on the state of implementation of the projects approved by the AREI, in particular those proposed by Côte d'Ivoire.
9. His intervention was supported by the Representative of Sudan who also pointed out that in Africa, access to energy is not improving because funding is not secured.
10. The Ambassador of Kenya commended the progress made by the AREI while underlining the need to strengthen communication and advocacy around this Initiative.
11. The Representative of Sierra Leone sought clarification on the process of nominations of the Focal Points and on the criteria of selection and/or rejection of projects.
12. In its response, the AREI Delegation indicated that a project introduced by Cote d'Ivoire to produce 30 GW has been approved and will be implemented soon. This project is part of the 24 projects adopted in 2017, for which a subsidy of 1.5 billion euros was secured for the period 2015-2020.
13. Addressing the Focal Points issue, the AREI Delegation indicated that a letter had been sent to the Heads of State and Government requesting them to kindly nominate their respective Focal Points according to specific criteria, namely: experience and technical skills. It was indicated that is the responsibility of the Ministers in charge of energy to communicate the names of the Focal Points to the AREI.
14. With regard to approval of the projects, the Delegation of AREI explained that the selection is conducted on the basis of the quantity and quality of data and information provided as well as on the reliability of the proposed projects. Countries whose projects were not retained have the possibility to resubmit their projects, provided all selection criteria are met.
15. In their response, the EU Experts indicated that a process of signature of a Guarantee Agreement is ongoing under the EIP, and that several projects in the field of renewable energies are being implemented through organizations such as AfDB and the RECs.

III. Adoption of Minutes of the 180th Ordinary Session of the African Group and Consideration of Matters Arising

16. Before introducing this Agenda Item, the President of the GAAB welcomed the new Ambassador of Zambia to Brussels, H.E Prof. Esther Munalula NKANDU who took office in Brussels and assured him of the GAAB's availability to provide all the necessary support to him in the discharge of his mission. He then invited the GAAB members to comment on the Minutes.
17. No comments were made under this Agenda Item, the Minutes were adopted without amendments.

IV. Status of the Post-Cotonou 2020 Negotiations (Africa Regional Protocol)

18. The briefing under this Agenda Item was made by the Ambassador of Ethiopia, in the absence of the Ambassador of Eswatini. In his briefing, the Ambassador of Ethiopia indicated that since the last meeting (34th) of the Central Negotiating Group (CNG), the GCN-Africa convened its 7th meeting to consider the merged structure and skeleton of the Africa Regional Protocol (ARP). Following this meeting, the GCN-Africa Bureau met with the EU side on 16 July 2019 to remove brackets on areas of divergence, based on the inputs and guidance provided by the Africa-CNG.
19. He indicated that, in general, there is a convergence on most parts of the consolidated structure of the ARP and both sides also agreed to await texts/agreement at the Common Foundation level, before discussing on the other chapters such as science, technology, culture and development, migration, etc. He also explained that the Bureau decided to postpone consideration of the European proposal on Part 1 on "Basis for Engagement" and other issues related to the last part of the Agreement (implementation of the Protocol, institutional framework for funding and monitoring), areas in which the ARP structure seems to differ from the one negotiated with the Caribbean and Pacific regions, respectively, until common position is reached regarding these matters at this level.
20. The Ambassador of Ethiopia concluded his briefing by indicating that the next step will be to finalize the consolidated structure of the Agreement in order to present it at the next ACP-Joint ACP Ambassadorial level/EU Senior Officials meeting scheduled for 25 July 2019. He added that prior to the submission of the consolidated structure for consideration, the GCN-Africa intends to convene a meeting to validate the merged structure of the Agreement and, as appropriate, and give direction on few issues that require guidance of the Africa-CNG.
21. The briefing of the Ambassador of Ethiopia was followed by a communication made by the Assistant to Dr. Carlos Lopes, High Representative of the African Union in the Post-2020 Cotonou Agreement Negotiations. In her presentation, she briefed the GAAB on the progress made in the process of recruitment of consultants to provide technical support to the GCN-Africa in the framework of the ACP-EU Post-Cotonou 2020 Negotiations (Regional Protocol Africa).
22. The Assistant of Dr. Carlos LOPES recalled the AU Decisions (November 2018, January-February 2019) related to the Post-Cotonou 2020 negotiations and the background of the request made to the AU decision organs by H.E Prof. Robert Dussey, Minister Foreign Affairs of Togo and ACP Chief Negotiator to benefit of an AU technical support as part of the negotiations. She indicated that following this request, 4 independent consultants have been selected and will be deployed by the end of the month to provide technical expertise in the areas of (1) Peace, Security, Governance and Human Rights, (2) Trade and Industry, (3) Migration and (4) Capacities Building.
23. She concluded her communication by indicating that, another process is underway to recruit experts to support the AU in the negotiations of a Continent-to-Continent Agreement with the EU, or at least ensure consistency between the two processes. Several countries have already appointed experts for this purpose (12 in total). The AU Permanent Representatives' Committee (PRC) is expected to play a key role in the monitoring these negotiations.

V. Briefing on the Outcomes of the AU Special Summit held in Niamey, Niger, from 4 to 8 July 2019

24. The AU Permanent Representative briefed the participants on the main outcomes of the 32nd AU Summit held in Niamey, Niger, from 4 to 8 July, namely: the official launch of the operational phase of the AfCFTA. He indicated that the AU Heads of State and Government have adopted a number of instruments to be put in place to enable operationalization of the AfCFTA such as the Rules of Origin, Online Tariff Offers, Digital Payment System and the African Trade Observatory. He added that a total of 27 AU Member States have ratified the AfCFTA agreement and 54 have signed it (namely Nigeria and Benin), and that only Eritrea has not yet signed the Agreement, thus the AUC decision to organize an awareness raising mission to this country. He further explained that Accra offer to host the headquarters of the future AfCFTA Permanent Secretariat has been validated by the summit and that the AfCFTA will enter into force fully as from 1st July 2020, namely in one year time.
25. Among other outcomes of the Niamey Summit mention was also made of the holding of the 1st Coordination Meeting between the AU and the RECs which resulted in the review of the status of regional integration, the adoption of a system of division of labor between the AU and the various RECs and the amendment of the Protocol governing the relations between the AU and the RECs. Other topics, such as the fight against terrorism, the situation in Sudan and Libya were also discussed and decisions were issued on them. The Permanent Representative concluded his briefing by stating that all final decisions of the Summit will be sent to all the GAAB members as soon as they are finalized by the AUC.
26. The GAAB Members took note of the outcomes of the Niamey Summit and congratulated Niger and the African Union for the successful organization of the Summit.

VI. Any Other Business

27. The President of the GAAB raised the issue of the ongoing reflection to boost the GAAB's activities. He indicated that a Reflection Committee has been established and will meet soon to reflect deeply on the issue and formulate concrete proposals.
28. The Ambassador of Guinea deplored the low participation of the African Ambassadors in the GAAB's meetings, which is not the case with the EU meetings. He welcomed the initiative of the President of the GAAB. He also seized this opportunity to welcome, on behalf of the Dean of African Ambassadors, the new Ambassador of Zambia.
29. The Ambassador of Kenya called for better communication and information flow. He recalled the need to ensure that all presentations intended to be made to the GAAB should be preceded by the circulation of relevant relating documents to allow proper preparation of the meeting.
30. His proposals were supported by the Delegation of Egypt.
31. For information on Sudan, the President of the GAAB informed the participants of the signing of an agreement under the aegis of IGAD and the AU. He indicated that an Investigation Committee will be set up to shed light on the recent killings that took place in Sudan during the demonstrations.
32. The Ambassador of Zambia thanked all the GAAB Members for the warm welcome conveyed to him. She also expressed her firm will and readiness to work closely with the GAAB to defend the interests of Africa.
33. The meeting was adjourned at 5 pm.

2019-10-16

Projet de compte-rendu de la 181^{ème} Session ordinaire du Groupe africain des Ambassadeurs à Bruxelles tenue à la Mission permanente de l'UA le 17 juillet 2019

Permanent Mission of the African Union in Brussels

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