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**CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMMISSION'S INTRODUCTORY NOTE TO
THE ANNUAL REPORT ON ACTIVITIES OF THE AFRICAN UNION
AND ITS ORGANS FOR THE PERIOD
FROM JANUARY TO DECEMBER 2019**

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**I. THEME OF YEAR 2019: YEAR OF REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND
INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS: TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE
SOLUTIONS TO FORCED DISPLACEMENT**

1. The year 2019, proclaimed by the Assembly of the Union as: the "Year of Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons: Towards Durable Solutions to Forced Displacement" enjoins us all, African States and citizens alike, to unreservedly tackle this phenomenon which has been our bane since independence. This has persisted despite our pooled energies to decisively cut this Gordian knot which impedes our march towards the harmonious integration of our peoples, in keeping with the Aspirations of Agenda 2063.

2. Let me start by expressing our warmest congratulations to a worthy son of Africa who makes us proud. I am here referring to our brother Abiy Ahmed, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, who has just won the prestigious Nobel Peace Prize for 2019. This is a well-deserved distinction for his tireless efforts, since his accession to the helm of the Ethiopian government on 2 April 2018, "*for his decisive initiative to resolve the border conflict with (...) Eritrea*". The Prize also is the culmination of his joint efforts with his peers in the region to establish peace and security in the Horn of Africa, a region that has long been plagued and subjected to climatic hazards. It is gratifying to note that some degree of peace is gradually returning to this region, especially on the Djibouti/Eritrea border, in Somalia, in Sudan and in South Sudan, as well as within Ethiopia itself. He has just added yet another trophy to Africa's prize list by joining his illustrious predecessors. I would like to mention in particular: Albert Luthuli (1960), Anwar al-Sadat (1978), Archbishop Desmond Tutu (1984), Nelson Mandela/Frederick Willem De Klerk (1993), Kofi Annan (2001), Wangari Maathai (2004), Mohamed El-Baradei (2005), Ellen Sirleaf Johnson/Lymah Gbowee (2011), the Tunisian National Dialogue Quartet (2015) and Denis Mukwege, who won it a little over a year ago in October 2018, without forgetting the other illustrious African laureates in other fields of continental interest [Literature (4), Medicine/Physiology (3), and Chemistry (1)]. These various prizes awarded to our African brothers and sisters are proof that Africa makes a very positive contribution to universal values and civilization. I would like therefore, on behalf of the Commission, to wish Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed every success in his endeavour to effect the social and economic transformation of his country, which has so generously hosted our Union for over 56 years, and for the strong democratic governance for the benefit and development of its worthy and proud people, in all their enriching diversity.

3. Going back to the theme of the year, it is important to emphasize its centrality in relation to the programme of human rights, the rule of law and democratic governance in

Africa. In this regard, it is worth noting that the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and its Member States had been at the forefront of efforts to domesticate and effectively implement the 1951 United Nations (UN) Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, by adopting in 1969 the Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, which made Africa the only continent with a specific instrument. We have talked about multiple African paradoxes, such as abject poverty experienced by many Africans on a continent endowed with such vast amounts of human, natural and mineral resources. Similarly, there is the shameful phenomenon of forced displacement. While Africa unquestionably has the best instruments and mechanisms in this area than any other continent, it also holds the horrible world record for the number of refugees and displaced persons. The 2018 figures of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) show that there are 70.8 million refugees and internally displaced persons worldwide, with Africa accounting for over 35% of the total number, ie 25.2 million (7.4 million refugees, 17.4 million internally displaced persons and over 700,000 stateless persons). The majority of them are vulnerable women and children often living in subhuman conditions.

4. As a matter of fact, we should acknowledge that the number of refugees a country has beyond its borders and the kind of treatment they endure, in terms of prospects for their voluntary return to their homes, are still reliable indicators of the internal difficulties inherent in the peaceful coexistence of the citizens of such a country. However, we should exclude the still fortunately small number of climate refugees, though this proportion can increase drastically following the many natural disasters (desertification, floods, landslides, cyclones, etc.) observed in different regions of the continent. The OAU, and its offspring the African Union, in 2002, built an impressive legal architecture of shared values over the years. If this legal arsenal were effectively implemented on the ground by all Member States, Africa would reap tangible results in improving the daily lives of its citizens and ensuring the harmonious integration of its peoples. I welcome the establishment by the African Union in 2003 of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), which is a credible means whereby peers undertake actions to correct this image of Africa as a continent with a democratic deficit. Let us put it candidly: the existence of forced displacement of populations is an obvious negation of our vision of a united, integrated and peaceful Africa driven by its own citizens; in short, a prosperous Africa with a world-class footprint and inspiration.

5. Let us briefly mention these instruments, which range from the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981) to the African Charter on Elections, Democracy and Governance (2007), including the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990), and the Protocols on the Rights of Women (2003), on the Rights of Older Persons (2016), on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Africa (2018) as well as the Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption (2003), to name just a few. What is more, many flagship programmes and projects have been announced, in a state of general euphoria, which are intended to facilitate the implementation of these instruments to which our Member States have voluntarily and unreservedly adhered. I will cite, among others, the themes of 2015 and 2016 devoted to human rights and women in particular,

that of 2017 on the demographic dividend which focused on investment in youth and, more particularly, the theme of 2020 we are actively preparing on "*Silencing the Guns by 2020*". Clearly, these different instruments and themes have a close and intimate correlation with the 2019 theme and the instruments that underpin it, namely the 1969 Convention and the Convention often referred to as the "*Kampala Convention*" of 2009 on Internally Displaced Persons, whose 50th and 10th anniversaries, respectively, we celebrate.

6. These instruments and themes also have a correlation with the conclusions of the Durban World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (2001). On this subject, I would like to quote President *Mwalimu Julius Nyerere* who, as a committed pan-Africanist and winner of the UNHCR's Nassen Prize in 1983 for his generous protection and assistance to the many refugees in his country, Tanzania, left us this beautiful sentence: *Without unity, the peoples of Africa have no future, except as perpetual and weak victims of imperialism and exploitation*". His companion, Kwame Nkrumah, had said it before him. This legacy of *Mwalimu* should be continually translated into reality in the treatment that our countries reserve for populations wandering on our continent as a result of internal political contingencies.

7. This is also an explicit invitation to explore, as has always been recommended, the real root causes underlying the phenomenon of refugees and displaced persons, which is a veritable haemorrhage of the national fabric, so as to resolutely end it and rebuild, at the local level, our nations in unity and reconciliation, that constitute sure bases for regional and continental integration of a plural Africa, the "*Africa We Want*"! When the theme was launched in February 2019, the Assembly itself identified, in its declaration, the structural root causes on our continent, the main ones being in particular: "*protracted violent conflicts, terrorism and violent extremism, natural disasters and calamities, climate change, governance deficit, diversity mismanagement, human rights abuses...*".

8. However, this refugee phenomenon will not disappear as if by magic. It will evolve at the pace of political reforms which promote the voluntary return of refugees and displaced persons, in safety and with dignity, to their homes, coupled with the adoption of confidence-building measures both within state institutions and local communities as well as with the involvement of the displaced populations concerned. We should, at this juncture, thank and pay tribute to the countries of asylum for refugees for their generous hospitality and their respect for the principle of non-refoulement, which is enshrined in our texts. In this connection, I would like to pay tribute once again to the countries of asylum which are making immense sacrifices for the welfare of refugees. I hope that these efforts will continue and that there is no "*fatigue syndrome*" towards our African brothers and sisters. This would be a harmful erosion of the principle of solidarity which has always been the leitmotif of African unity, since the time of the first Pan-Africanists of the beginning of the 20th century. I also appeal to all countries and organizations to put into practice the other principle of these international conventions, namely burden sharing; first, by making generous contributions to organisations responsible for protecting and assisting refugees and displaced persons, including the Office of the United Nations High

Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the numerous NGOs that are constantly at the side of our refugees and displaced persons on a daily basis; second, it is important to provide full support to countries of asylum to help them best meet their international obligations on behalf of these disadvantaged persons; lastly, an urgent appeal is made to the countries of origin of the refugees to create the best conditions for their return to their homes in safety and dignity, in accordance with their constitutional, national and moral obligations.

9. Within the framework of the preparation of the deliberations of the Assembly of the Union of February 2020 on the theme and with the aim of taking stock of activities of the Year of Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons, a high-level dialogue took place in Kampala, Uganda, from 4 to 6 September 2019. This forum brought together all the stakeholders dealing with this thorny issue for the continent, including current heads of state, former heads of state and government, representatives of the African Union organs, of Regional Economic Communities (RECs), as well as refugees and displaced persons. Also in attendance were members of civil society, the private sector, the media, scholars and researchers, traditional and religious leaders, as well as development partners. The forum made recommendations to African leaders on 6 thematic areas, namely: (a) Forced Displacement in Africa - dimensions, causes and policy direction, (b) Implementation of Durable Solutions to Forced Displacement in Africa, (c) Securing the Rights of Refugees, IDPs and Returnees, (d) Addressing the Needs for Justice by Displaced Persons, (e) Management of Returns Policy, and (f) Burden Sharing and the Role of International Actors in the Pan-African spirit of solidarity.

10. This Forum has consequently developed a reference document which will inform the discussions of the February 2020 Summit in considering the root causes and seeking lasting solutions. High on the list of causes are armed conflicts, widespread violence, the democratic deficit, exclusion and abuse of human rights on a massive scale. Similarly, the search for lasting solutions can only be based on these same causes, so as to consolidate peace through good democratic governance, respect for constitutional order, the rule of law and human rights, permanent and inclusive dialogue among all segments of the society, the development of harmonious policies for fair and equitable socio-economic integration for all citizens.

11. At this juncture, I would like to express our heartfelt congratulations to the Champion of the Year's Theme, President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo of Equatorial Guinea, for the various actions and initiatives he undertook in 2019 to promote the protection agenda for refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons. In particular, he celebrated the African Refugee Day, on 20 June 2019, in Addis Ababa, where he joined the Commission and Ethiopia, to visit the Tsore camp and made a donation of US \$ 50,000 to the refugees as a symbolic contribution to their well-being, a gesture that was highly appreciated.

II. HUMANITARIAN AGENDA IN AFRICA

I) AFRICAN HUMANITARIAN AGENCY (AHA)

12. The theme of the year 2019 also highlights the need to tackle head-on the perverse effects of forced displacement that translate into situations of humanitarian distress. The Commission's action with regard to Africa's humanitarian agenda is rooted in the Common African Position on Humanitarian Efficiency, which was adopted by the Assembly of the Union in February 2016, in preparation for the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) held in Istanbul, Turkey, in May 2016. Consequently, the Commission organized in Johannesburg, in April 2019, a meeting of experts from the Member States with a view to operationalizing the African Humanitarian Agency (AHA), whose establishment was recommended in this Common African Position. This is an initiative of great relevance, insofar as our continent must acquire the means, alongside partner countries and organisations, to effectively respond to the humanitarian challenges of our time, some of which result from human actions and from man's political and social management, while others arise from the increasing weather-related disturbances, as underlined above. Experts from Member States discussed practical measures for the operationalization of the African Humanitarian Agency. The Commission will submit their conclusions and recommendations to competent decision-making organs in due course.

13. This new mechanism could play a major role in providing responses to humanitarian crises on the continent, while equally providing structural solutions to the causes and consequences of such crises. Africa must assume its responsibilities, in this and many other areas, in the pan-African spirit of solidarity, and not always rely wholly on external emergency aid, as is often the case. I am happy to note that most Member States have also established mechanisms and structures to prevent and fight against natural disasters and calamities, such as floods, cyclones, landslides, drought cycles, and several other climatic phenomena.

14. These natural phenomena that have dramatic consequences on populations have affected many countries in Africa, causing significant human and material loss, in terms of public and socio-economic infrastructure, mainly in the southern and eastern regions of Africa in 2019, as floods and landslides alternate in countries like Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Burundi, Congo as well as in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, while other countries experienced severe droughts, like in Zimbabwe, or cyclones in Madagascar and The Comoros, and almost everywhere else on the continent. It is therefore important to pool these resources and efforts and to share experiences which will enable neighbours to intervene by providing emergency assistance, when necessary. It is also a requirement in a united and progressively integrated Africa, which is continually seeking African solutions to African problems.

III. CLIMATE CHANGE

15. Africa, once again, actively participated in the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP25), which was held in Madrid, Spain, from 2 to 13 December 2019 and extended to 15 December, by strongly supporting the Common African Position as articulated by the Committee of African

Heads of State and Government on Climate Change (CAHOSSC), and in particular the resilient implementation of the 2015 Paris Agreement in all its facets. We know that Africa, and this is another paradox, is a continent that accounts for less than 4% of the world's total carbon emissions but is the one most vulnerable in terms of the impact of climate change, according to the United Nations. We should bear in mind that the most perverse effects result in recurrent dramatic consequences, such as cyclones, floods, prolonged droughts, reduction in water resources, destruction of habitats and displacement of populations, pandemics such as malaria, food insufficiency and malnutrition and their devastating effects on the general health of the population.

16. Through its Group of Negotiators under the able leadership of Mr. Tosi Mpanu Mpanu from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), whom I acknowledge, Africa submitted to COP 25 pertinent proposals on the mobilisation of substantial financial resources, technology transfer and capacity building, in accordance with commitments made under the Paris Agreement. According to a UN study on the sub-Saharan African region alone, the continent would need funding to the tune of US \$ 50 billion per year for adaptation to climate change by 2050. It is unfortunate that COP 25 failed to obtain results commensurate with the climate change goals already expressed. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said that “*the international community has missed an important opportunity to demonstrate greater ambition in terms of mitigation [reduction of greenhouse gas emissions], adaptation and financing of the climate crisis...*”, while committing to continue the fight. Africa should make its contribution to this noble fight commensurate with the enormous challenges for the preservation of our planet.

17. As part of the follow-up of the Paris Agreement and the commitments made by the States Parties since 2015 and with a view to improving the production and productivity of agriculture and its adaptation to climate change, the Commission provided support to 9 Member States for preparing projects to be submitted to the Green Climate Fund (GCF), namely: Botswana, Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. Three (3) of these countries already have the Fund's approval for their projects (Botswana, Kenya and Tanzania), while the other six (6) are awaiting the outcome of the examination of their applications. In addition, the Commission provided technical support to eight (8) other countries for the integration of the climate change dimension into their national agricultural investment plans. Furthermore, the Commission, in collaboration with the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), organized training sessions for members of the African Group of Negotiators, as part of efforts to obtain financing for agricultural projects of Member States from competent mechanisms of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

IV. GOVERNANCE, DEMOCRACY AND THE PEACE AGENDA

a. Elections

18. In 2019, I deployed electoral observation missions to 15 Member States. These missions worked closely with national electoral management bodies, political parties and

other stakeholders. We know that successful and credible elections depend on good preparations as well as the full and inclusive participation of the stakeholders at all levels, to ensure general acceptance of the election results and, in so doing, consolidate peace, stability and peace of mind. Indeed, as the Panel of the Wise already established it in its report which was submitted to the Assembly in July 2009 [see Assembly/AU/6 (XIII) Annex II], it turns out that these days, the majority of conflicts arising in Member States are rooted in elections that are poorly organized or fraught with fraud. In this regard, the Panel made relevant recommendations that should be revisited and implemented, particularly those that relate to the establishment of good governance as well as neutral and impartial electoral administration to ensure inclusion of all the segments of the society at all levels in electoral processes. The African Union (AU) for its part should strengthen its capacities to develop operational strategies for preventing disputes/crises arising from electoral processes and to help in the establishment of a credible system for independent observation of elections at national, regional and continental levels.

19. In this regard, it should also be recalled that the Assembly of the Union adopted, in 2002, an important declaration on the principles governing democratic elections in Africa, which was followed five (5) years later by the adoption of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance. These two instruments provide internationally recognized standards for honest, inclusive, transparent, fair and credible elections. It is important to stress, however, that democracy cannot be reduced only to organizing regular elections every 4, 5 or 7 years. It should be supported by a true democratic culture and the firm commitment of the State and all other stakeholders to respect and scrupulously ensure that everyone upholds the rule of law, constitutional order and human rights as well as the verdicts of the polls. Democratic elections should be conducted in a peaceful environment, without any moral constraint, intimidation or financial retribution, and devoid of any form or practice of corruption. They should be supervised by a national electoral institution established in the broadest consensus and which should operate in a neutral, independent and impartial manner, as well as in all transparency, in the presence of representatives of all competing parties and with the support of independent and duly accredited observers. In addition, in accordance with the constitutional provisions of the State concerned, the competent judicial authority to confirm or proclaim the results should enjoy the greatest legitimacy, since, ultimately, it is the body responsible for attesting to the regularity of electoral processes and results, and for declaring the winner(s).

20. We have witnessed the destructive effects of the sometimes-violent protests and popular demonstrations that follow electoral processes and results, and have plunged countries into conflicts or crises of greater or lesser magnitude. Such conflicts or crises have even affected countries in post-conflict reconstruction, which further delays their development, despite efforts deployed by the international community, including the African Union. Most recently, in April 2019 in Sudan and Algeria, we have witnessed such popular demonstrations, which were generally peaceful. With minimum levels of violence and human and material damage, such movements have succeeded in bringing about regime change. Fortunately, in both cases, the stakeholders in these two countries quickly began negotiations, which resulted in more or less acceptable compromises for a

peaceful transition, without resorting to violence, and pending the conduct of inclusive and consensual elections, the results of which should be accepted by all. In the case of Sudan, we note with satisfaction that the transitional institutions, the Sovereign Council and the Government, were set up based on a general consensus for a period of three (3) years. I seize this opportunity to commend the joint mediation of Ethiopia, under the aegis of its Prime Minister, Abiy Ahmed, and the African Union Commission for their efforts to this end. As for Algeria, a new President, Mr. Abdelmadjid Tebboune, was sworn in following the presidential elections of 12 December 2019, which, however, failed to put an end to street protests calling for political change. It is hoped that confidence-building measures and open dialogue will ensure the stability in the country, as promised by the new President.

b. Constitutionalism and rule of law

21. As part of the implementation of the decision of the Peace and Security Council (PSC) adopted at its 432nd Session on developing a unified strategy to combat unconstitutional changes of government in Africa, the Commission conducted a study on guidelines on constitutionalism to complement the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance. Indeed, notwithstanding the inclusion of certain elements of the Lomé Declaration of July 2000 on the Framework for an (AU) Response to Unconstitutional Changes of Government in this Charter and based on experiences since then, it was necessary to explain the modalities for modifications to national constitutions in Member States. This study is being forwarded to policy organs for consideration. It should be recalled, for instance, that during the political changes that had taken place in North Africa since 2011, at the time of the movement commonly known as "*the Arab Spring*", the Peace and Security Council held long discussions on whether or not to qualify as unconstitutional changes, those changes that occurred following large-scale revolts and popular demonstrations, resulting in the fall of elected governments. The issue is still under discussion and it is important to adopt common directives and a doctrine of the Union in this regard. This is all the more important considering the phenomenon that occurred recently in Sudan and Algeria, as we have just witnessed, and which is likely to happen elsewhere on the continent. In the same vein, it is necessary that Member States agree on the appropriate attitude to adopt and the code of conduct to follow in the event of popular demonstrations or revolts, which are sometimes massive and are repressed in a muscular and disproportionate manner by security forces, with loss of life and several severe injuries among often peaceful demonstrators. Again, there is no common approach or doctrine on how the Union should treat such situations, especially since certain demonstrations can lead to regime change, which would require discussions to be initiated with protagonists at subsequent stages. Such a situation inevitably calls on the Union to decide and act according to a well-defined and agreed code of conduct and doctrine.

22. Aspiration no. 3 of Agenda 2063 on an Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law, requires the consolidation of constitutionalism on our continent, through the domestication into national constitutions

of all shared common values. This implies that Member States should adopt the same constitutional norms and standards to facilitate the regional and continental integration process. Indeed, more than once, within the context of negotiating and adopting legal African Union instruments, some States have faced internal constitutional obstacles, which subsequently slowed down the process of signing and ratifying such instruments for implementation.

c. Promoting African Union shared values

23. I am pleased to announce that the study on integrating the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG) into school curricula has been finalized. Its conclusions will form the basis for mapping out a long-term strategy to promote legal instruments on African Union shared values in schools. This will anchor the values of democracy, good governance and respect for the rule of law and human rights in the minds of the young people and in the popular culture of present and future generations. For this purpose, the Commission organized training courses in Central and Eastern Africa regions on the principles of the rule of law, drawing inspiration from the dialogues with parliamentarians, members of the judiciary and political decision-makers in 2015 and 2016. Such training sessions will be conducted in the other regions. This is of great importance as these same young people at times either spearhead demonstrations/popular protests calling for desired change or are manipulated by certain political forces to achieve their own interests. Young people should therefore grow up with this civic education to become responsible African citizens who are fully aware of the challenges of the "*Africa We Want*", at a time of globalization and of complex and very demanding global competition.

24. I therefore urge Member States to find the best ways and means of introducing such shared values into school curricula in order to prepare their young people to adopt and embody the driving principles of regional and continental integration, outside national boundaries. This is also a new opportunity to invite all Member States to popularize the symbols of the African Union, in particular by flying the flag of the Union in public and educational institutions, in particular, and by teaching the anthem of the Union to students and schoolchildren of primary education.

d. Preventive diplomacy and constitutionalism

25. I would like to announce that the High-Level Reflection Group on the theme "*Democratic Governance and Preventive Diplomacy in Africa*" has produced an analysis of the challenges that impede the implementation of the Commission's mandate in the area of preventive diplomacy. In conjunction with the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), the Commission deployed a mission to Burkina Faso from 13 to 18 October 2019. The objective of the mission was to explore possibilities for collaboration with the authorities and competent institutions of Burkina Faso and the G5 Sahel. One of the results of this mission is the drafting of a national project and a regional project aimed at providing technical support to institutions, in order

to strengthen their resilience in the face of the general security challenge in the G5 Sahel region.

e. Combating corruption

26. As we know, corruption is like a cancer which should be eradicated on the continent, more so as it is a major cause of Africa's impoverishment and accounts for the extreme degree of poverty within most African populations. We dedicated the Year 2018 to winning the fight against corruption and adopted an important declaration which commits all Member States to eradicate this scourge in the governance of their countries and our common institutions. However, this phenomenon continues to grow on the continent, despite the existence of anti-corruption institutions in most of our States: national commissions, high authorities as well as specialized courts and tribunals. What is more, 42 Member States have ratified the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption. I take this opportunity to make an urgent appeal to the 13 Member States that have not yet done so to ratify this instrument to demonstrate their commitment to combat this scourge. The African Union Advisory Board on Corruption (AUABC) continued its activities aimed at promoting the Convention among the States Parties, although only a small number of countries submit reports to it. I encourage the States to fulfil their statutory obligations in this regard and to share with other countries their experiences to promote best practices for winning this noble fight.

27. Let me remind you that the Thabo Mbeki Panel had already conducted a study in 2015, which was submitted to the Assembly of the Union in 2016, and which established the volume of illicit financial flows to tax havens in the order of about US \$ 50 billion each year. Although these figures are low, they are far higher than the total development aid to our continent, which stood at US \$ 29.7 billion in 2018, as recorded by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). For the record and for purposes of comparison, let us note that remittances by the 30 million or so African migrants earned the continent more than US \$ 65 billion in 2017, according to the African Institute for Remittances (AIR), a specialized agency of the African Union. Concerning corruption, Transparency International's statistics for 2019 are edifying in this regard. They show that, on a global level, Africa is the continent with the highest Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), with an average of 32% on a 100-point scale. Only 6 African countries out of the 180 assessed in the world crossed the 50% threshold in this ranking (namely Seychelles, Botswana, Cabo Verde, Rwanda, Namibia and Mauritius). This is a ranking which fails to honour Africa and which we should, together, correct over the next few years.

28. Our continent should therefore avail itself of means to combat this terrible scourge with determination, so that public resources are exclusively serviced to ensure the integral development of African citizens. In this regard, I invite all Member States and their national anti-corruption institutions to cooperate fully with the AU Advisory Board on Corruption, notably by submitting their annual reports on a regular basis. It should be noted that during the period under review, only two (2) countries had submitted reports (namely, Namibia

and Uganda) and only three (3) countries had been visited for evaluation missions (namely, Congo, Madagascar and Tanzania). We should also fully take stock of our actions in 2018 which we devoted to fighting corruption to draw lessons for future necessary actions to improve our Corruption Perceptions Index.

f. Human rights and transitional justice

29. In 2019, the Commission, working closely with key African human rights institutions, prepared an Action Plan for the Human and Peoples' Rights Decade in Africa to strengthen the African human and peoples' rights system. The main objective of this action was to strengthen the African system of human and peoples' rights within Member States to bring them to ratify and domesticate all human rights instruments with a view to their effective implementation.

30. The adoption by the African Union, in February 2019, of a transitional justice policy framework, within which each State could develop a policy tailored to the national context, will undoubtedly contribute significantly to promoting peace, healing the wounds of the past and strengthening respect for human rights. In this context, the Commission deployed experts and organized workshops to support various truth, justice, reconciliation and reparation commissions, particularly in West and East African regions and especially in South Sudan. This awareness raising effort also involved the business community, with a regional roadmap developed for enterprises, as part of the implementation of the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

31. As I emphasized earlier, Africa's image concerning human rights protection should be improved at the level of all Member States and their institutions. This has been called for in several key legal instruments and platforms that Africa has equipped itself with and which are without comparison in the rest of the world. Consequently, Africa should step out of the rhetoric and be seen as a continent where the rule of law, democratic culture and respect for human rights are not empty words. We celebrated, on 10 December, as in every year, the 71st anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was adopted in 1948 by the United Nations General Assembly. We are pleased that all of our Member States have ratified the African instrument which has, in a way, domesticated and amplified on our continent this historic Universal Declaration, namely the June 1981 African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, which was adopted 33 years later in Nairobi. The Assembly of the Union went further by adopting several protocols granting rights to different categories of African citizens, including women, older persons, persons with disabilities, children, and young persons, through the African Youth Charter.

32. Despite the existence of such an architecture, human rights are still abused, sometimes massively in certain regions of our continent, as reports of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights as well as those of other human rights organizations regularly indicate. Atrocious acts of torture, as well as inhuman, humiliating and degrading treatment are still committed against African citizens in some of our

countries, despite the denials. Forced disappearances, extrajudicial executions, and sexual violence are still recorded as having been committed by State structures, such as security forces, which sometimes enjoy impunity. The Member States mentioned in such reports should, once again, demonstrate and reaffirm their pan-African commitment to uphold human rights as guaranteed by their Constitution. To this end, Member States are strongly encouraged to work closely and confidently with the relevant Union organs, including the African Commission and the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, as well as the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC), to establish the truth or take corrective action, as the case may be.

33. It is within this framework that the Commission provided technical assistance to Member States and national human rights institutions by organizing forums which enabled national institutions to interact with members of the Permanent Representatives' Committee (PRC) on matters relating to displaced persons, refugees and returnees, in line with the theme of the year. These forums sought to mobilize national institutions to help to curb the displacement triggered by a series of causes, such as human rights abuses, post-election violence, intolerance, sexual and gender-based violence, violent extremism, impunity, terrorism, misuse of natural resources and corruption.

34. Furthermore, in accordance with the AU Assembly Declaration on the Human and Peoples' Rights Decade in Africa, which was adopted in Kigali, in July 2016, on plans to establish a Pan-African Institute for Human Rights, the Commission has already forwarded the draft statute of this Institute to the Specialised Technical Committee (STC) on Justice and Legal Affairs for its consideration. Similarly, plans are underway to build a permanent memorial site for all categories of human rights victims, along with a resource centre at the Union headquarters, as was decided by the Assembly. The final design of the project has been approved by the working group of Member States set up for this purpose. The African Union continues to commemorate human rights related events, and particularly commemoration of the genocide against the Tutsis in Rwanda on 7 April, as well as the African Human Rights Day on 21 October, which is devoted mainly to internally displaced persons and forced displacement. Finally, the Commission organized dialogues on human rights with international partners of the African Union, especially with the European Union (EU) and the United Nations.

V. CONSOLIDATION OF PEACE AND SECURITY

a. New emerging peace and security threats: inter-communal violence.

35. In partnership with GiZ, the Commission launched in February 2017 a pilot project on Interfaith Dialogue for the Prevention of Violent Extremism. The project aims at getting young people who are often enticed by terrorist organizations such as Al-Shabaab, Boko Haram and other terrorist groups in the Sahel, which use religion to cause division and for criminal purposes, to develop new approaches to counter violent extremism in their communities, strengthen social cohesion and promote the sharing of constructive ideas. The project draws on the experience of African civil society and diaspora networks in

Europe, the Middle East and South East Asia. Thanks to the project a Manual was developed in 2018 for youth trainers in the area of prevention of violent extremism.

b. Operationalization of the pillars of APSA

36. During the period under review, the Commission intensified its efforts to find lasting solutions to conflicts and crises on the continent by expediting the implementation of the peace agreements already concluded by the parties in conflict zones, strengthen the fight against terrorism and the perverse effects associated with it such as extremism, radicalization and transnational organized crime, as well as drug and human trafficking. In addition, the AU Policy Framework on Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) was implemented in post-conflict countries with quick-impact projects aimed at restoring livelihoods and promoting peacebuilding. Among the Member States that benefited from these efforts are Somalia, Madagascar and Mali. Activities in the fields of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, as well as those within the framework of security sector reform (SSR) were also carried out in several Member States in accordance with the PCRD framework.

37. In the area of conflict prevention and early warning, the Commission continued to provide technical assistance for the establishment and the strengthening of national early warning and response mechanisms in Member States. It also provided assistance to six (6) Member States to enable them to build their capacity in conflict prevention and early warning. Collaborative and capacity-building programs in conflict prevention with the RECs were implemented, including the launching of a joint AU-COMESA structural conflict prevention initiative in the Zambia and in other countries. The Panel of the Wise, through its subsidiary mechanism known as FemWise Africa, made efforts to promote the inclusion of women in peace processes and to build capacity in mediation and conflict prevention. FemWise Africa also trained and built the capacity of its members, with some of those trained deployed to support peace-making efforts in some Member States such as Sudan and South Sudan.

38. Under the African Union Border Program (AUBP), the Commission provided support to sixteen (16) countries within the framework of their delimitation, demarcation and reaffirmation activities, as well as the promotion of cross-border cooperation.

39. The Youth for Peace in Africa Program, launched last year, aims at implementing Article 17 of the African Youth Charter in order to facilitate the meaningful participation of African youth in all aspects of peace and security. A study is underway to determine the role and contribution of the African youth in promoting peace and security on the continent. This is all the more necessary for the youth as they easily fall prey to the criminal activities and the demagoguery of terrorist groups springing up in certain parts of the continent. These extremist groups have thus been recruiting vulnerable young people who lack supervision, education and employment. In most cases the groups exploit the extreme poverty faced by the youth. The Algiers-based African Center for Studies and Research on Terrorism, CAERT, regularly presented reports on the monitoring of the

movements of terrorist groups. It also submitted detailed reports, together with the other reports generated by the Commission and other specialized institutions such as CISSA, to the PSC for consideration.

40. The Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) continued its offensive and defensive operations against the Boko Haram terrorist group since its operationalization in July 2015 with 10,772 soldiers from Benin, Cameroon, Niger, Nigeria and Chad. Currently the security situation in most of the operational zones of the MNJTF, though unpredictable, is relatively calm. Boko Haram continues to operate in small groups and concentrates its action on the islands of Lake Chad and its surrounding areas, carrying out repeated attacks and causing large scale human displacement and material damage. It is important to congratulate the troop-contributing countries (TCCs) of the MNJTF and the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) for their efforts, which have significantly reduced the destructive capacity of Boko Haram. It is imperative to mobilize resources for post-conflict reconstruction in order to revitalize the communities of the Lake Chad Basin.

41. With regard to the continuous strengthening of the African Standby Force (ASF), the Commission worked closely with Member States, RECs / RMs and other stakeholders with a view to making it fully operational. A new concept of operation and a new doctrine were developed. They are in the process of being finalized in order to facilitate their adaptation to the evolving peace and security landscape of Africa. For its part, the PSC, with the support of the Commission, continued planning its joint retreat with the organs of the RECs/RMs in charge of peace and security scheduled for early 2020. Also, from August 29 to September 3 2019, the Ministers of Defense of the volunteering countries of the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crisis (ACIRC) held their meeting in Pretoria to deliberate on the status of ACIRC relative to the ASF. The meeting recommended the convening of a meeting of the Heads of State and Government of ACIRC on the side-lines of the 34th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union. There is the need to commend all the Member States that have voluntarily joined ACIRC for their pan-African commitment in promoting peace, security and stability in Africa.

c. Evolving conflicts and crises on the continent

42. The Commission also monitored closely the evolving conflicts and crises situation on the continent and regularly submitted appropriate reports to the PSC and to the Assembly for their consideration and direction. As mentioned earlier, actions were undertaken to monitor political developments in Algeria and in the Sudan.

43. The situation in Libya is still a source of serious concern. The AU continued to work closely with the United Nations and other international and regional stakeholders to find a lasting solution to the conflict raging in the country. Consultations with the UN Secretary General are ongoing with a view to implementing the decision of the AU High Level Committee on Libya regarding the appointment of a joint AU and UN Envoy for Libya. At its 883rd meeting held on September 27, 2019, the Peace and Security Council approved

the proposal to appoint a joint African Union and United Nations Envoy to Libya in order to coordinate efforts aimed at resolving the Libyan crisis.

44. In The Comoros, the situation in recent months has been blighted by political tensions between the ruling party and the opposition. Consequently, I issued a public statement urging the Comorian authorities and all the other stakeholders to exercise restraint and to initiate an inclusive dialogue so as to preserve the gains that have been made in the archipelago after a protracted political crisis.

45. Somalia continued to make progress in the roll-out of its federal system. Despite the challenges, the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) and the Federal Member States (FMS) made efforts to improve their relations, particularly on electoral matters in some of the federated states. This trend augurs well for preparations towards the general elections scheduled for 2020/2021. AMISOM continued to work closely with the Somali security forces, especially in line with its mandate of assisting the Federal Government in implementing its national programs, particularly the Transition Plan for Somalia and Somali National Security Architecture. AMISOM also continued to protect populated centers and critical infrastructure, especially the main supply routes. At the same time, the combined operations of AMISOM and the Somali security forces degraded the operational capacity and the supply routes of the terrorist group Al-Shabaab. The group however continues to pose a threat, as evidenced by attacks against civilians, AMISOM and Somali security forces. It would be important for Somali forces to prepare to effectively take over from AMISOM, whose departure from Somalia has been programmed.

46. With respect to developments in South Sudan, the first one-on-one meeting between President Salva Kiir and Mr. Riek Machar since the signing of the Revitalized Agreement took place in Juba on 9 and 11 September 2019. They subsequently met on October 21, 2019. The two discussed urgent matters concerning the State, particularly security provisions, the number of states and their demarcation, as well as the funding required for expediting the implementation of the extension of the pre-transition period preceding the formation of a Revitalized Government of National Unity (R TGoNU). I remain confident that the South Sudanese, with the support of IGAD, the AU, the neighbouring countries and the international community, would address the challenges facing their country and subsequently restore peace and lasting stability for the benefit of the people of this country who have suffered for far too long.

47. With regard to Darfur in the Sudan, UNAMID continued its operations while scaling down its personnel. UNAMID continues to focus its support on: (a) the peace process, (b) the establishment of the support mechanism for the peace agreement which should have been signed in December 2019, and (c) the Peace Commission. It is therefore important for adequate resources to be made available from the Mission's current budget in line with the said urgent priorities. The situation prevailing in the South Kordofan and Blue Nile states is a source of major concern. The Commission, in consultation with IGAD, continues to monitor the situation closely and to take appropriate initiatives.

48. The Horn of Africa continued to chalk positive developments following the new chapter opened by the Prime Minister of Ethiopia, Abiy Ahmed, who has been working with the other regional leaders to usher the region on the path to peace, sustainable development and integration. The Commission developed a regional strategy to address the many challenges facing the Horn of Africa. However, developments in the Gulf region, particularly the war in Yemen and its impact have exacerbated the problems of insecurity in the Horn of Africa. The growing competition among countries of the Gulf region, as well as among other external powers to exert influence in the Horn of Africa, continues to fuel tensions in the region and undermines AU efforts to assist the stakeholders in the region to address the challenges confronting them.

49. In Mali, the political situation is still dominated by the efforts made to implement the Peace and Reconciliation Agreement and to organize an inclusive national dialogue with a view to the constitutional and institutional reforms necessary for the transforming of the Agreement into a national legal instrument. The signatory parties have taken steps to accelerate the implementation of the key measures provided for in the agreement. With the assistance of the AU, progress has been made in the accelerated demobilization, disarmament and reintegration process with the transfer of more than 1,000 armed combatants from the Azawad Movement prior to their formal integration into the Malian Defence and Security Forces (FDSM). It is necessary to underscore the urgency of the redeployment of the reconstituted units in restoring the authority of the State in the north of Mali, including the return of the civil servants and the restoration of the basic services after the recent adoption of legislation establishing the northern economic development zone, particularly the Kidal Region. My High Representative and Head of MISAHÉL, former President Pierre Buyoya, as well as other regional actors, have been actively supporting the Malian parties in the implementation of the agreement.

50. The situation in the Sahel region continues to be at the center of international efforts, including those of the AU. The almost daily attacks in Burkina Faso, and most recently in Niger, the growing inter-communal violence in the region and the spread of extremist and terrorist attacks from the south to the Gulf of Guinea are of deep concern to the AU. The countries of the region, in particular through ECOWAS and WAMU, are taking decisive action. The ECOWAS extraordinary session, held in Ouagadougou on September 14, 2019, decided to set up a billion dollar fund over five years to finance an action plan against terrorism and violent extremism. The Commission took part in the Summit and expressed its readiness to support the action plan. During the reporting period, I continuously advocated for adapted, predictable and sustainable funding and logistical support for regional security agreements such as the G5-Sahel and the Multinational Joint Task Force on the basis of African and regional ownership and a holistic approach to the situation in the Sahel.

51. The situation in the Central African Republic was characterized by a reduction in violence across the country following the signing of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic (APPR-RCA). The effective redeployment

of state authority continued in several localities in the provinces. All the 16 prefects have taken office, and 66 sub-prefects out of the 71 positions proposed have been filled. The training of mixed security units comprising the Central African Armed Forces and armed groups was launched on October 16 in Bouar. Regarding humanitarian efforts, the UNHCR recorded the spontaneous and assisted return of more than 357,000 refugees and displaced persons to their respective regions despite the deplorable situation noted in the Birao camp. Although the government confirmed its commitment to promote the Peace Agreement, challenges still remain on the side of the armed groups. Several cases of violations of the Agreement by the signatory armed groups have been reported. It is important that all the stakeholders respect the commitment they made to effectively implement the Peace Agreement. I appeal to the AU Member States and to the international community to show active solidarity and provide technical and financial support for the timely organization of the 2020-2021 elections, and also support the implementation of socio-economic development projects as well as peacebuilding efforts in the Central African Republic.

52. The political situation in Guinea-Bissau is still an issue of concern despite the success of the parliamentary elections of 10 March 2019 and the first round of presidential elections held on November 24, 2019. The second round to choose between the two remaining candidates, namely Domingo Simoes Pereira (47%) and Umaro Sissoco Embaló (27%) was scheduled for December 29, 2019. The results announced on 1 January 2020 by the electoral institution declared Umaro Sissoco Embaló as winner with 53.55% of the votes cast, against 46.45% for Domingos Simões Pereira. The rise of ethnic considerations, demonstrations by the trade unions and perceptible tensions in the ranks of the army, coupled with drug trafficking and transnational crimes involving suspects linked to Al-Qaida affiliated terrorists, have created a worrying situation in the country. The political and institutional crisis in Guinea-Bissau has been on the agenda of the continent and the international community for a long time. For many years, the Commission, in collaboration with ECOWAS and the international community, multiplied initiatives and met with stakeholders individually and collectively in order to establish lasting peace among the brothers and sisters of Guinea-Bissau. It is regrettable to note that whenever there is an agreed solution another crisis rears its head. This cycle of crises has condemned generations to structural poverty with no prospect of improvement in their living conditions. It is high time the political actors placed the interest of their country above any other consideration and committed to ending the cyclic institutional and political crises that have undermined the development of Guinea Bissau for decades. I appeal to all Member States and to the international community to provide financial and material support to the elected government to revive the peace and development efforts of the country.

53. With regard to the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework (PSCF) for the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the region, the AU Liaison Office for the Great Lakes region and Burundi contributed to the effective implementation of the security, political, diplomatic and economic components. The synergy of action between my Special Representative and the other Special Envoys in

the region made it possible to consolidate the positions developed by the partners with regard to their approach to the political and security situation in the Great Lakes region. The harmonization facilitated a common vision among the AU, the UN, the ICGLR, SADC and MONUSCO on the fight against the negative forces, the repatriation of unarmed combatants and the neutralization of the FDLR and the FAD. In the same vein, I would like to acknowledge the efforts made by the authorities of the DRC in cooperation with the Commission and WHO to contain the epidemic of Ebola.

54. In Burundi, the AU Liaison Office supported the preparation of the mediation process for the Inter-Burundian dialogue spearheaded by the East African Community (EAC), within the framework of the Joint Technical Working Group (JTWG). The latter held several consultations with all the stakeholders, including the government of Burundi, members of the opposition within and outside the country, civil society organizations, the media, youth and women's groups. In addition, the Commission contributed to the monitoring of the human rights and security situation through its human rights observers and military experts deployed in the country. The Human Rights Monitors (HRM) have been working in collaboration with relevant government agencies and departments and other stakeholders such as civil society organizations, United Nations agencies and diplomatic missions. As Burundi prepares for the general elections scheduled for May 2020, the African Union must assist the country so that the elections could be held in a peaceful and reassuring environment for all political and social groups. After investing heavily in the restoration of peace in Burundi with the assistance of the international community, the African Union must ensure that the impending crucial elections provide the platform for restoring lasting peace and security in this country which has suffered for so long. This can be achieved only through an inclusive national dialogue, the setting up of consensus-based and inclusive election monitoring bodies in the spirit of the 2000 Arusha Accord of which the African Union is the guarantor. I welcome once again the commitment of President Pierre Nkurunziza not to stand in the next presidential elections.

55. The Gambia continued to enjoy political stability following the restoration of the constitutional order in the country. Considerable progress has been made in terms of reforms. The establishment of the National Human Rights, Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission, among others, are indicators of the government's determination to promote stability in the country. Similarly, the African Union, through its Gambia Technical Assistance Team (AUGTAT), has provided technical support in thematic areas such as Security Sector Reform, the rule of law and transitional justice. The support culminated in the formulation of the first ever national security policy by The Gambia which was adopted in June 2019.

VI. CONSOLIDATION OF REGIONAL AND CONTINENTAL INTEGRATION

a. African integration and development agenda

56. The Commission published a study in November 2019, entitled: *"Africa's Development Dynamics 2019: Achieving productive transformation"* which coincided

fortunately with the launch of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) a couple of months ago. I would like to pay a glowing tribute to our late colleague, Dr. René Kouassi N'Guettia, who served as Director of Economic Affairs for a long time. It was he who initiated the first edition of this important annual publication in 2018. Unfortunately, he left us on January 13, 2019 and may his soul rest in peace. The publication, which has attracted logistical support from the OECD Development Center, provides an update on major economic trends which took place on the continent during 2018. It examines the policies of productive transformation in the various regions of Africa and aims at advising African leaders on the strategies for achieving the objectives of Agenda 2063, by emphasizing the potential for productive transformation both at continental level and at the level of the 5 regions, through the RECs. The study emphasizes the need for Africa to accelerate its productive transformation in order to create jobs for its teeming youth, scale up the capacity of the companies and their production tools with better quality products in order to better position themselves on the large market offered by the AfCFTA. The publication is therefore a reference and an excellent tool for dialoguing on policies and reforms to be undertaken at the country, regional and continental levels. Thus, political leaders are called upon to support local businesses to enable them to improve their industrial and commercial performance.

57. In its report on the 2019 Economic Outlook for Africa, the African Development Bank (AfDB) projected that the continent's economic growth would rise from 3.5% in 2018 to 4% in 2019 and then to 4.1% in 2020, which is well short of the 5% growth recorded on average in the 2000s and which placed the continent in a more sustained trajectory than the other continents in comparable areas. However, the AfDB has projected that 40% of African countries should post 5% growth rate in 2019.

58. The AfDB also noted that Africa should promote job creation and sustained growth in the coming years through renewed business dynamism. It projected that the working age population would rise from 705 million people in 2018 to nearly a billion in 2030. Consequently, Africa should create 12 million new jobs annually to contain the increase in unemployment which has already reached alarming proportions in most countries and which could seriously compromise macro-economic stability. Therefore, appropriate policies should be formulated in order to derive maximum benefit from the large population of the continent which should be considered as a dividend rather than a burden by investing in the youth as the conclusions of the theme of 2017 enjoined us to do. The advent of the AfCFTA in 2020 would put all Member States in pole position if they are able to fully seize the opportunities offered by this great integration project.

b. Review of the flagship projects of Agenda 2063

59. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA): I am happy to report that the AfCFTA agreement entered into force on May 30, 2019, 30 days after the submission of the 22nd instrument of ratification. As of November 1, 2019, 54 Member States had already signed the agreement. Only one Member State, Eritrea, has not yet signed. However, the Commission has initiated consultations with the hope of obtaining its

signature at the earliest opportunity. I also appeal to all other Member States that have not yet ratified this historic agreement that would lay the foundation for a prosperous Africa to do so. In the meantime, the Commission has finalized the instruments associated with the AfCFTA including documents on Rules of Origin, the Trade Observatory, Trade in Goods, the Payment and Settlement Mechanisms, as well as Electronic Mechanisms on Reports, Monitoring and Elimination of Non-Tariff Barriers. As I often point out, the AfCFTA is the most significant achievement since the 1991 Abuja Treaty and the launch of the Constitutive Act of the African Union. It is the fulfilment of one of the biggest dreams of the founding fathers of the OAU. It represents the concrete expression of the age-old adage, since Confucius time 5000 years ago, that trade is the real source of wealth of nations. Trade in ideas, knowledge, goods, services, capital, this is also the objective of the AfCFTA which is in a way the fulcrum of all the other flagship projects of Agenda 2063 and the vision of the "Africa We Want". It is obvious that this great project which is expected to restore to Africans their dignity and eliminate the causes of their impoverishment is a long-term project. It can only be achieved on the condition of gradually building the pillars and implementing the strategies for its development. They include: resilient infrastructure associated with efficient energy according to the PIDA pillar, transformed agriculture through the implementation of the 2014 Malabo commitments under CAADP, free movement of people, industrialization based on the AIDA program which is expected to end the plunder of our abundant raw materials.

60. The Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons and Goods: As of 1 November 2019, there had been 33 signatories to the protocol with 4 instruments of ratification deposited by four Member States. 15 ratifications are required for its entry into force. At the level of the RECs, two of them have already made commitments on the issue (ECOWAS and EAC). I would like to reiterate my appeal to all Member States that have not yet done so to sign, ratify and domesticate this Protocol in order to concretely support the African integration project.

61. Single Air Transport Market in Africa (SAATM): To date, 30 Member States have signed the solemn commitment for the establishment of SAATM. 18 of them have signed a Memorandum of Implementation (MoI) on the elimination of all restrictions that contradict Yamoussoukro's Decision. The partners of the project, including the AfDB, the EU and the World Bank, have made specific commitments to provide technical and financial support of more than USD 5 million.

62. Financial institutions: The Commission has already prepared the headquarters agreement, together with the statutes and structures of the African Monetary Institute (AMI) which is intended to be a transitional body before the establishment of the African Central Bank (ACB). Regarding the African Monetary Fund (AMF), 12 Member States had signed the Protocol as at the end of November 2019. The Chairperson of the Union also appointed President Nana Dankwa Akufo-Addo of Ghana as Champion for the promotion of financial institutions. There were no new developments during 2019 with regard to the African Investment Bank (AIB). I appeal once more to all Member States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the instruments relating to the said institutions.

63. High-speed train: Several missions and consultations were carried out with China, one of the main partners of the flagship project, in pursuance of the joint action plan and roadmap signed between the Africa and China covering the period 2016-2020. Similarly, three technical meetings were held in Nairobi, Dakar and Johannesburg respectively to determine the operational tools, implementation strategies and deadlines. At the same time, the Commission launched a study for the audit of the Union of African Railways (UAR), including the harmonization of norms and standards for the trans-African railways network.

64. Commodities Strategy: it is based around 4 strategic pillars, namely: i) commodity markets and prices; ii) connections and diversification; iii) governance and enabling environment and finally; iv) skills development, research and development. The pillars would guide policy makers on the optimum utilization of raw materials with a view to value addition, support for sustainable industrialization, economic diversification, structural transformation and improved business development. The study would be submitted to the policy organs as soon as possible.

65. Africa Outer Space Strategy: At the 32nd Ordinary session held in Addis Ababa in February 2019, The Assembly decided that Egypt would host the African Space Agency. Since then, the Commission has prepared the draft headquarters agreement and has started consultations with Egypt with a view to its signature.

66. The Pan-African Virtual University and e-University (PAVEU): In 2019, the Commission forged strategic partnerships with 4 specialized organizations to ensure the quality of PAVEU courses. The organizations are the African Council of Distance Education (ACDE), UNESCO, the African Virtual University and VMware.

67. Silencing the Guns by 2020: I would like to point out that this initiative by the Union was endorsed by the United Nations Security Council in February 2019 by Resolution 2457 (2019). This is a noble ambition which requires the full commitment of all stakeholders, starting with the Governments of Member States, which should create the conducive environment for peace-building and security for all, the fight against poverty and inequality, respect for the rule of law, human rights and good democratic governance, education and health for all and in particular the empowerment of youth, gender equality and justice for all.

68. The Grand Inga Dam: This major project located in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has the potential to provide low cost electrical energy, not only to this country, but also to the entire continent and even beyond. It can generate over 44,000 MW to meet the needs of the entire continent. The Commission continued consultations with the government of the DRC with a view to moving forward on the issue. In this regard, the Commission organized, in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Southern African Institute for Environmental Assessment, a training session on the environmental impact assessment, in October 2019, for DRC

officials and other stakeholders, including the RECs. At the same time, the DRC authorities started discussions with development partners, including China and Spain, on the legal and operational modalities of a consortium for the construction of INGA III. Dam.

VII. GENERAL IMPLEMENTATION STATUS OF AGENDA 2063

69. In order to better reflect the implementation status of Agenda 2063, it is important that Member States regularly submit reports to the Commission to prepare an overview of the progress achieved. In this regard, the Commission, in collaboration with experts from Member States, has established a monitoring and evaluation framework for the first ten-year plan for implementing Agenda 2063 and has drawn up a manual of indicators to help Member States in collecting data and preparing reports for submission. By the end of 2019, the Commission had provided technical support to 42 Member States, following which 17 of them submitted reports based on the agreed indicators. Furthermore, in conjunction with NEPAD, the Commission organized a continental workshop for experts from 40 Member States and 6 RECs on the empirical methodology to be used by competent institutions at national, regional and continental levels in reporting on progress achieved during the 2013-2019 period. It is expected that this continental report will be presented at the February 2020 Summit by President Alassane Ouattara of Côte d'Ivoire, Leader for the Follow-Up of the Implementation of African Union Agenda 2063.

70. In general, such an evaluation will help to deepen the strategies for improved domestication of Agenda 2063 and its popularization within the general public, as well as to refine the strategies for mobilizing resources internally and from development partners to finance the Agenda, and the roadmap for implementing the flagship projects of Agenda 2063 described above. In these efforts, we are working closely with the United Nations to implement the Joint Agreement signed in 2015 on the Framework for the harmonious implementation of Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's or Agenda 2030). This common endeavour aims to implement the two partnerships in the areas of peacebuilding and security as well as the African sustainable development agenda, which I signed with the United Nations Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, on 19 April 2017 and 27 January 2018, respectively.

71. I would like to pay a heartfelt tribute to the Ministerial Committee on Agenda 2063, which is making commendable efforts under the wise leadership of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Botswana and which met in March 2019, in Gaborone, to assess the progress achieved and offered pertinent proposals on several aspects of Agenda 2063. This important Ministerial Committee deserves full support and the Commission undertakes to provide it its full support.

VIII. REFORM OF THE AFRICAN UNION

72. During the 2019 financial year, the institutional reform dossier made significant progress in the area of reforming the structures of the Union, pursuant to the decisions taken by the Assembly of the Union since the Summit of Kigali in July 2016, in particular

Assembly Decision 635 of January 2017. These reforms concerned, in particular, the following areas: the restructuring and accountability of the Commission, governance and coherence between the different organs, the division of labour between the Union and the RECs, the evaluation of partnerships as well as the implementation of the new system of funding the Union.

73. The Extraordinary Summit of November 2018 established a new structure of the Commission composed of the Chairperson, the Deputy Chairperson and 6 Commissioners who will start work as from February 2021. It also decided to put in place a Panel of 5 eminent personalities, one from each region, responsible for overseeing the candidate selection process. As of early December 2019, only three regions (Central Africa, West Africa and Southern Africa) have appointed their representatives. The PRC recommended in November that this Panel should start its work in mid-December.

74. Furthermore, the Extraordinary Summit in November 2018 mandated the Chairperson of the Commission to develop a new structure, which is performance-based and takes into account the division of labour between the African Union and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), Member States and other specialized continental organizations. In this context, a new structure was developed with the help of an independent consulting firm from March to April 2019. It was submitted to Member States in May 2019. The Permanent Representatives of the Member States requested for more time to consult their capitals and recommended that the cost of the new structure should not exceed the budget currently allocated to the Commission, and that additional costs should be financed by savings made. Based on these guidelines, the proposed new structure was presented in December 2019 to the PRC, through its Sub-Committee on Structural Reforms, for its consideration before submission to the Assembly in February 2020. At the same time, the Commission has been working with the group of experts from Member States since July 2019 to improve the AU recruitment and selection system. Their final report was submitted in December for presentation to the February 2020 Summit.

75. During the period under review, sustained efforts were made to strengthen accountability within the Commission and the other organs of the Union concerning administrative and financial management. Regarding the budgetary process, the golden rules defined by the Committee of Fifteen (15) Finance Ministers were rigorously applied in preparing the 2020 Budget, which resulted in a drastic reduction in volume.

76. Regarding the implementation of the 0.2% tax on eligible imports imposed on Member States, it should be noted that, as at 11 October 2019, only 17 Member States have already started to levy this tax, representing 31% of Member States. All but one (1) of these countries have cleared their arrears through payment of this tax, bringing in more than US \$ 79.9 million to the Regular Budget and over US \$ 18.5 million as contributions to the Peace Fund. I urge Member States which have not yet done so to fulfil their statutory obligations to enable the effective functioning of the organs of the Union.

77. Regarding the African Union Peace Fund, the Executive Council, at its 35th Ordinary Session held in Niamey in July 2019, requested the Commission to prepare the governance and management structures so that it will be operationalized at the February 2020 Summit. Since 2017, a total of 50 Member States have contributed US \$ 131 million to this Fund. It should be borne in mind that the goal is to raise US \$ 400 million by 2021.

78. With regard to the division of labour between the AU and the RECs, a new draft Protocol on Relations between the African Union and the RECs was submitted to the STC on Justice and Legal Affairs in November 2019 prior to its submission to the February 2020 Summit for consideration and adoption.

79. Regarding strategic partnerships, the Commission continued to work with the Sub-Committee on Multilateral Cooperation and the PRC with a view to finalizing the evaluation of these partnerships, in accordance with the directives of the Assembly. The 2019 report describes the activities carried out with the various partnerships, including Africa-Arab cooperation, the Forum on China–Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD), AU-EU, Africa-Turkey and Africa-India. At the same time, the Commission continued its contacts within the framework of institutional partnerships with the following countries: Norway, France, United Kingdom, Germany, Russia and the United States.

80. The Commission also continued its contacts with civil societies and the African diaspora, in particular with the Diasporas of the Americas and the Caribbean, Europe, the Middle East, Asia and Oceania, for the purpose of projecting a positive image of the continent with its economic and cultural potential. In its efforts to promote the trade sector, the Commission has also followed up on global trade agreements, in particular, the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) and the World Trade Organization (WTO), not to mention the appropriate consultations with institutions of the South-South Cooperation, including the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

IX. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES: YOUTH, GENDER AND HEALTH

a. Promoting the empowerment of youth : the “1 Million by 2021 Initiative”

81. As part of the roadmap for implementing the conclusions of the 2017 theme on “Harnessing the Demographic Dividend through Investments in Youth”, the Commission hosted the Pan-African Youth Forum in Addis Ababa, from 24 to 27 November 2019, with the active participation of 400 young people from all over the continent and the diaspora to exchange views on all issues of interest and innovative solutions for young people. These young people particularly discussed the “*1 Million by 2021 Initiative*”, which I designed and launched in April 2019, and which aims to reach a million young Africans to expand their horizons to opportunities in the fields of education, employment, entrepreneurship and engagement (“the 4 E's”) by the year 2021. When this initiative was

launched in April, a total of 17 actors in the private sector and development partners promised to support the Initiative through various concrete interventions in the “4 E” fields.

82. Regarding youth empowerment, the Commission carried out awareness-raising and training actions at the Pan-African Parliament (PAP) in 2018 and the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) in 2019, with the aim of including youth in their programmes and activities. The Commission will pursue this awareness-raising in all the other Organs of the Union as well as within the individual Member States. The Commission has already strengthened its Youth Volunteer Corps Programme in recent years, with excellent results in all departments/services where the youths are posted each year. In addition, within the framework of the implementation of the Decent Rural Jobs Project, the Commission has developed and validated national action plans on youth employment and entrepreneurship in rural areas with 4 Member States (Benin, Cameroon, Malawi and Niger). This project equipped 647 young boys and girls with the know-how to create small agricultural businesses that can generate profits.

b. Promoting Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (GEWE)

83. The Commission launched the 4th Edition of the “Gender Scorecard” at the Summit in February 2019, during which 17 Heads of State received awards for the actions taken to promote gender parity. It continues to encourage all Member States to support gender parity in their governance institutions. The Commission also defended the AU common position on commitments on GEWE and its integration into UN platforms at the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and the 74th Session of the United Nations General Assembly in March and September 2019, respectively. My Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security led awareness-raising missions to several Member States to encourage the implementation of GEWE and the ratification of the 2003 Maputo Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa for 13 of the 55 Member States which have not yet done so.

84. Furthermore, the 4th Session of the Specialized Technical Committee (STC) on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment adopted Africa’s declaration on the subject on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Conference on Women (Beijing + 25). This declaration will be presented at the 64th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW64) in New York in March 2020. During the period under review, 18 Member States and 3 RECs submitted reports on the implementation of the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA). Lastly, the Commission is actively pursuing the goal of parity at its level by 2025, in compliance with the decision of the Assembly. I call on all Member States to also set and accomplish the same goal by 2025.

c. Building resilient health systems: African Medicines Agency (AMA), AFRICA CDC and Response to Ebola Virus Disease

85. In line with the Africa Health Strategy (AHS) for the period 2016-2030, the Commission continued its action to ensure its implementation. In this context, I would like

to stress the importance of two tools designed to support this strategy in concrete actions. These are the African Medicines Agency (AMA) and Africa Centres for Disease Control (Africa CDC).

86. Regarding AMA, whose Treaty was adopted by the Assembly in February 2019, I would like to announce that 7 Member States have signed it and I commend them for that. The Commission continues to encourage all Member States to sign and ratify this instrument, for which it has drawn up relevant documents, including a model law on the regulation of pharmaceutical products. Indeed, we already know the negative effects of criminal fraud in the production and distribution of medicines in Africa, despite the existence of national regulatory mechanisms. I would also like to express our appreciation for the advocacy action carried out by the Government of Mali with Member States for the signing and ratification of this instrument, through its distinguished Minister of Health and Social Affairs, Michel Sidibé, former Executive Director of UNAIDS, who brought to this latter position all his know-how and made an excellent contribution to the fight of the century to curb the devastating AIDS pandemic on the continent.

87. With regard to the Africa Centres for Disease Control (Africa CDC), with the experience acquired in fighting Ebola in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone in 2014-2015, the Commission set out to strengthen this institution to bring to Member States all its expertise in disease prevention and control, and in particular in its deployment in eastern DRC to fight the Ebola virus disease. In this context, Africa CDC has deployed more than 65 experts since the onset of the Ebola disease in the east of the country, while providing it with laboratory equipment and medicines. Africa CDC has also established operational centres in Central and Eastern Africa, and in the neighbouring countries at risk, notably Uganda and South Sudan. A meeting of health ministers from these neighbouring countries was facilitated by the Commission, in close cooperation with the World Health Organization (WHO), in Goma on 21 October 2019. The ministers agreed to set up mechanisms for cross-border collaboration to effectively provide a common response to this terrible disease and counter its spread. In other respects, Africa CDC launched an initiative called the Regional Integrated Surveillance and Laboratory Networks (RISLNET), through which 10 laboratories of Member States of Central Africa were interconnected to facilitate pooling of public health resources for exchange of experience, knowledge and staff training. The Commission has also successfully signed agreements with Gabon and Zambia to host regional centres of Africa CDC in the Central and Southern Africa regions, respectively.

X. CONCLUSION AND PROSPECTS FOR 2020

88. As can be seen, the 2019 Report on the Activities of the African Union and its Organs takes stock of the achievements of our continental Organization and the challenges it continues to face, which are not insurmountable. It is with the combined efforts of Member States, all organs, RECs, African civil society, women, youth and all other active forces in Africa and its Diaspora that we will be able to have a lasting impact on the improvement of the living conditions of our populations.

89. Inter-state conflicts, democratic deficits and dictatorships, massive human rights violations and policies of exclusion, marginalization and division between the different components of the nation, climate change, terrorism and violent extremism continue to consume our abundant resources in Africa and in so doing, dangerously mortgage the future of our younger and upcoming generations. Agenda 2063, our vision of the "Africa we want" remains the most appropriate way to meet all these daunting challenges and make Africa the flagship continent of the 21st century. We have all the necessary assets, through our full mobilization. Tomorrow will be too late if we do not rally together to keep moving towards African solutions that exist and which we know so well, according to our time-honoured rhetoric. All we need to do is to revisit all our instruments, themes, flagship projects, common positions, plans and platforms for action in all areas of human endeavour, which have no comparison with all the other continents of our planet.

90. We have the capacity and the means to carry Africa's voice far, provided we stick to the vision of an Africa united and interdependent in its action, an Africa integrated in our actions and behaviour, an Africa at peace with itself, from grassroots to continental level, an Africa where we are capable of managing our differences as a source of wealth within our societies and states in order to extend this peace to every corner of our continent, a prosperous Africa through the resilient implementation of our flagship projects with great integrative potential and, finally, an Africa that speaks with one voice and commands respect in the comity of nations.

91. 2020 is another year of immense opportunities. The Assembly declared it as the year for "*Silencing the Guns*" on the continent; silencing guns not only in the field of physical confrontation, but also disarming our minds and building peace in the hearts of all members of our societies. A daunting challenge that we must take up together in positive action for the bright future of our younger generations; these young generations, in whom we should inculcate the culture of peace, democracy and tolerance, and who we should, through our everyday actions and deeds, preserve from the lures of terrorism, violent extremism, devastating divisions in the secular unity of our nations, manipulation of negative forces on our path to integration, policies of exclusion, looting and corrupt practices.

92. In the year 2020, we will launch the Decade of African Women for Financial Inclusion. This decade must enable African women, who represent half of our humanity, to be fully integrated into the political, economic, social and cultural management of our societies and states at all levels, from the village cell to continental institutions. The same year also commits us to empowering our youth to create jobs through the transformation of our economies.

93. As of July 2020, the AfCFTA will become operational, offering all our states, according to their own strengths, every opportunity to promote intra-African trade, which is currently less than 17%. This will happen naturally provided that we combine together the necessary conditions such as transport, communications and clean energy

infrastructure, the single market in air transport, the transformation of our agriculture, the resilient education and health of our people and industrialisation, thereby putting an end to unequal trade and the plundering of our abundant raw materials. It will also, we hope, be the year in which the Protocol to the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community Relating to the Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment becomes operational, *a sine qua non* for the success of the AfCFTA.

94. As is well known, 2020 will also be the last year of the current Commission's term of office. We will therefore strive to implement all the decisions of the Assembly on the Institutional Reform of the Union, so as to enable the new Commission, which will be elected in February 2021, to take on the mantle, with all the functional institutions, structures and platforms for action in place, as required for the efficient governance of the African Union..

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