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# The African Union Vision for Peace and Prosperity in Africa

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### Introduction

The following is a summary of a meeting held at Chatham House on 12 May 2017 on the subject of the African Union Vision for Peace and Prosperity in Africa. The speaker was H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat and the meeting was chaired by Jeremy Astill-Brown.

The African Union (AU), guided by the principles outlined in Agenda 2063, remains committed to achieving greater unity among its 55 member states as it pursues its vision of a peaceful, prosperous African continent. However, the organization faces many challenges as it works towards this goal: the effects of climate change, expanding populations and restrained economic growth are likely to exacerbate existing geopolitical tensions and affect development strategies.

At this event, H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat discussed the AU's current approach to these challenges, how the organization is ensuring the effective implementation of various instruments to improve democracy, elections and human rights, and the commitment of member states to their obligations as outlined by the AU's Peace and Security Council.

The meeting was held on the record. The following summary is intended to serve as an aide-memoire for those who took part, and to provide a general summary of discussions for those who did not.

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### H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat

The AU's Agenda 2063 was adopted at the Organisation of African Unity (OAU)'s 50th anniversary. In its founding texts, the OAU recognized the important link between peace, security and development. This vision was reiterated with the launch of the OAU's successor, the African Union (AU). The AU is equipped with a peace and security architecture that includes the Peace and Security Council (PSC), which aims to prevent and solve conflicts on the continent. Agenda 2063 is the vision of an integrated, peaceful and prosperous African continent, and it is on these three pillars that the AU's vision for peace and security is based.

It goes without saying that there is a direct link between climate change, prosperity and peace. The Sahel, for instance, is a region that encapsulates these challenges. The region has some of the harshest climate conditions on the continent; it has a youthful population prone to internal and external migration; and, in recent years, it has become a sanctuary for extremist and trafficking organizations. The hope is that, with the recently signed Paris Agreement, some solutions will be brought forward to tackle these issues, which will have an impact on peace, stability and prosperity in Africa.

Instability in Africa is caused by economic, political and climate change factors, as is evidenced in the Sahel, the Horn and the Great Lakes region of the continent. The continent's demographic trends are another source of instability. The reality is that the continent's population is growing faster than its economies. What sets Africa's demographic question apart is that its population is young. This is an opportunity – a demographic dividend – which, if harnessed, will translate into an advantage for the continent.

With 55 independent states – and despite the existence of numerous regional economic communities – the continent has not achieved a positive degree of integration. There is no common African market, conflicts persist, climate change continues to be a major threat, and Africa remains at the periphery of the

international system. This is the reason why Agenda 2063 has the aim of reforming the continent's bureaucratic mould and the AU's infrastructures, starting with the way it funds its activities. The task at hand is to solve the 'paradox of plenty' that has characterized the continent for too long, which is the fact that the continent is resource-rich but its population is economically poor.

Poverty, which is at the root of instability, violence and conflicts across the continent, needs to be addressed through an objective review of the existing frameworks, and through the implementation of reforms responding to the changing African socio-economic environment, so it can meet the needs of African people.

In July 2016, it was decided that a 0.2 per cent tax levy would be placed on eligible imports to finance the AU. This is an important decision, which demonstrates the commitment of African countries to the AU. Moreover, an institutional reform of the organization itself is currently occurring under the leadership of Rwanda's Paul Kagame. This reform will address the continent's relations with the rest of the world, including foreign countries and international institutions such as the UN.

## Summary of questions and answer session

### Questions

What is the chairperson's and the AU's strategy to solve the Darfur crisis?

What role can the AU Commission play to restore the autonomy of British Southern Cameroon?

Could the AU convince the Sudanese government to allow the United Nations Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) and international humanitarian organizations access to Darfur? Can the SDGs be met in Sudan without addressing impunity and instability?

### H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat

Thanks to the hybrid AU–UNAMID partnership, the situation in Darfur has significantly changed for the better, to the point where there are now discussions of reducing the size of the UNAMID force in the region. Conflicts on the continent are not single-issue conflicts. Indeed, economic, political and climate factors often converge to create difficult situations. While more remains to be done, we have to acknowledge some of the AU's efforts at finding a solution to the Darfur crisis, including the high-level panel headed by President Thabo Mbeki. Other actors such as Qatar work with UNAMID in monitoring the implementation of the Doha Accords and the peace process. The AU continues to work towards a sustainable political solution to the situation in Darfur, taking into consideration the limited capacity of states in Africa.

The Anglophone crisis in Cameroon emerged when teachers and lawyers brought forward corporate claims to the Cameroonian state. The AU's investigative team received positive responses from the government. Federalism is a constitutional question and to contest the nature of the Cameroonian state with the language question is not the best way to approach the Anglophone question. The reality is that several African countries envy Cameroon's bilingual system, which opens its citizens to diverse opportunities. What matters are the quality of governance and the ability of people to select their representatives, regardless of the structure of the government, be it a federal or a unitary state, more or less centralized.

### Questions

What are some of the opportunities emerging economies, such as China and India, could capitalize on in Africa?

We know of the AU's Agenda 2063 but that seems a long way off, especially considering that, by that time, many of Africa's current heads of state won't be heads of state anymore. What are the AU's more immediate priorities from now until 2023?

What is the AU's solution to the current migration crisis, which has seen thousands of young Africans lose their lives trying to reach Europe?

### H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat

The AU follows a diversification approach with its international partnerships while putting the priorities of the African continent first. At the top of this list of priorities is the need for infrastructure development (roads, railways, electricity etc.) to further connect the continent and its people, and to make trade more fluid within the continent. The focus of Agenda 2063 with regards to trade is the development and industrialization of the continent. While peace and security are the main components of several initiatives, there is a dialectical relationship between peace and security on one hand, and development on the other.

Agenda 2063 covers 50 years but it is broken down into decennial plans that include shorter strategic goals. Some of the institutional reforms mentioned earlier will be implemented this year. The AU has a goal to end major conflicts on the continent by 2020. It's a voluntary initiative for which the AU receives the support of the UN. Together, the two institutions are in the process of reviewing peace and support missions on the continent. The conflict landscape in Africa has shifted from inter-state wars to intra-state conflicts and conflicts involving non-state actors. There is therefore a need to devise tailored responses, taking into greater consideration the efforts of African states that have better knowledge of the theatres of conflict, instead of 'importing' expensive peacekeeping missions.

Young people are the AU's top priority. Sadly it is possible that more is spent on weapons than on youth empowerment. While security responses allow states to contain and restrict the scope of action of various threats on the continent, these need to be followed with development solutions addressing the root causes of conflicts. Many young people endure a perilous sea crossing via Libya, which has no functioning state, in the hope of salvation. This is a sign that they have lost hope in their own countries and their leaders. To address this situation, there is thus a need to stabilize Libya as a first step towards better managing the influx of people. All Africa's partners must understand that Africa knows what it wants and that it needs partners that will treat it as an equal.

### Questions

What is the AU's framework for youth and entrepreneurship on the continent?

What is the structure and organizational model of the AU? Are there enough exchanges between the AU and the European Union?

What is the AU's plan to tackle the debt crisis affecting the continent? How does the AU plan to address the fact that African countries import more than they export?

### **H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat**

It is always tempting for marginalized youth to fall in the traps of dangerous groups offering money, weapons, and in some cases, paradise. Recognizing this, the AU decided that its working theme for this year is on making the best of Africa's young people. This theme will be discussed in November during the AU–EU Summit. It will also be an opportunity for the two institutions to review their partnership. The EU has been a key partner for Africa on peace, security and development. However, the continent has changed significantly over the last 50 years, and these changes in status, context and paradigms need to be reflected in its partnerships and cooperation. The AU is currently organized in regional communities, which are pillars of its vision of deeper integration.

Debt and economic reforms are at the centre of Agenda 2063. At the G20 summit, Germany made a number of propositions, now referred to as the German Marshall Plan for Africa. Imbalances in international trade cannot continue because it brings a lot of problems. There is a need to change the paradigm of Africa as nothing other than a reservoir of natural resources and a market for foreign commodities. The 0.2 per cent levy on selected imports is a tiny amount compared to the potential wealth of the continent. This decision taken by AU states shows their understanding of the need to come together as well as their commitment to the idea that Africa should fund itself.

### **Questions**

What steps are being taken by the AU leadership to bring the continent together politically? Will the AU be bolder when it comes to corruption on the continent?

Who is going to lead negotiations in Western Sahara considering that Morocco is now in the process of reintegrating into the African Union?

How does the AU plan to enforce its own electoral rules more strictly across the continent?

Does the AU have a fixed policy on constitutional amendments for extended term limits? Does the AU have plans to reduce trade barriers between African countries?

The high-level panel on Darfur, led by Thabo Mbeki, has existed for years without offering a sustainable solution. Why is this and how can the panel do better?

How will the AU chairperson approach violence inflicted upon civilians by their own leaders and elites as in the case of South Sudan?

What is the AU's vision and plan to better integrate and empower people with disabilities across the continent?

Do you agree with the concerns some have voiced that the ICC's indictment of Sudan's leader is a genuine threat to the sovereignty of an African state, or is the indictment the result of the actual culpability of the leader?

What is the status of the proposed African peacekeeping force?

**H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat**

Good political and electoral governance as well as economic transparency are some of the most topical issues currently being discussed by Africans and the AU. While the continent has tools such as treaties and conventions on good democratic practices, governance, human rights and elections, these are not well implemented. Some conflicts in Africa have lasted for too long in part because of the complex socio-political dynamics within each of the continent's 55 states. In light of the history and the political evolution of the African continent, which was brutal in certain parts, the AU believes that these conflicts can only be solved in a peaceful manner.

The availability of new information technologies and social media will have a tremendous impact on the continent's youthful population. Africa is at a turning point in its history and it is essential that the right steps are taken. That is why it is important that Africa takes its own destiny in its own hands. In this process, the African diaspora, intellectuals and the civil society have an important role to play.