



## COMMUNIQUÉ

### COMMUNIQUÉ ON THE VISIT OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMMISSION OF THE AFRICAN UNION TO THE GAMBIA

**Addis Ababa, 5 October 2018:** The Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union (AU), Moussa Faki Mahamat, concluded a 24-hour visit to The Gambia yesterday. During his visit, he met with President Adama Barrow, with whom he had a wide ranging exchange of views on various issues of common interest. He also had a working session involving several Ministers, including the Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Gambians Abroad and a cross section of other Cabinet members and officials in charge of issues relating to security, justice, agriculture, environment, employment, trade and regional integration, information, youth and sports, as well as officials in charge of the National Nutrition and Food Safety Agencies.

The Chairperson commended the Gambian authorities for the progress made in advancing democracy, rule of law, security sector reform and reconciliation, as well as socio-economic development, since President Barrow took office in February 2017, acknowledging that the President and his Government had inherited an extremely challenging situation. He reiterated the AU's solidarity with the Gambian people and leaders and its commitment to support their efforts in whatever way possible.

President Barrow and other Gambian officials welcomed the visit, which they termed as historic, as this was the first ever visit by a sitting Chief Executive of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU)/AU to The Gambia, since its independence.

President Barrow emphasized the critical importance of sustaining peace and security as a prerequisite for socio-economic development. In this regard, he called for continued accompaniment by the AU and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The Gambian authorities expressed appreciation for the recent deployment of an AU Technical Support Team comprising military, human rights and rule of law experts. It was agreed that the AU and the Gambian authorities will work together to mobilize further support to The Gambia in strengthening its institutions, pursuing security sector reform, drawing on the capacity of its Diaspora, enhancing the capacity of the civil service, and sensitizing the concerned stakeholders in order to facilitate national debt restructuring. The AU will also continue to extend support in the area of food safety, building on the work being

conducted by the Platform for Aflatoxin Control in Africa (PACA). The Gambia is one of the PACA pilot countries.

In his interactions, the Chairperson also stressed the need to expedite the integration process. He looked forward to the early ratification by The Gambia of the African Continental Free Trade Area and the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, of which it is already a signatory, as well as to the implementation of the required steps to operationalise the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) - The Gambia is among the 26 AU Member States that are parties to the SAATM. The Gambian authorities expressed their commitment to swiftly conclude the formalities related to these major undertakings. The Chairperson also discussed the ongoing AU institutional reform process, including the planned extraordinary summit in Addis Ababa on 17 and 18 November 2018, and commended The Gambia for being one of the first countries to implement the 0.2% levy on eligible imports, as part of the efforts to ensure the financial autonomy of the Union.

The Chairperson also met with the Chairperson of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), Madam Soyata Maiga, and visited the premises of the ACHPR. The Chairperson commended the Commission for the achievements made during its 30 years of existence. The discussions also touched on the administrative, financial and other challenges encountered by the ACHPR and how best to address them, to enable this organ to more effectively discharge its mandate.