MESSAGE OF H.E. AMBASSADOR SMAIL CHERGUI, COMMISSIONER FOR PEACE AND SECURITY, ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE (PEACE DAY)

AU HEADQUARTERS, 21 SEPTEMBER 2018

Excellences Permanent Representatives of AU Member States,
Distinguished representatives from partner institutions,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Dear Youth,

We are gathered here to observe the 36th International Day of Peace, a day that is specifically dedicated to strengthening the ideals of peace worldwide, namely justice, tolerance, equality, non-discrimination, respect for the human dignity of every person, regardless of their race, sex, languages, cultures or religion.

The theme of this year’s International Day of Peace - “The Right to Peace – The Universal Declaration of Human Rights at 70” – could not have been more carefully crafted and vision oriented than in these words. At a time when terrorism continues to spread; when almost 70 million people have fled their places of habitual residence as a result of ongoing conflicts and persecution, leaving young people with the burdensome legacy of conflict-ridden states; where thousands still die of hunger and starvation and millions still live...
below the poverty threshold, when our normative and policy advancements fail to match our day to day realities.

This year’s theme allows us to have a moment of continental and global unity and acknowledge our collective search for a world void of violence and inhuman treatment. It behooves upon all of us, from East to West, North to South, to deeply think about the legacy we want to leave to future generations and oblige ourselves to harness efforts towards a common goal. As Martin Luther King rightly pointed out: “injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” Similarly, insecurity anywhere is a threat to development and prosperity everywhere.

Peace Day also provides an opportunity, not only to celebrate the progress made in the area of human rights and peace, but to imagine and dream bigger – to envision a world in which all persons, especially our ever growing youthful population, would have access to basic necessities and enjoy their full rights within enabling political and economic environments, in order to attain their full potential in their respective spheres of service and interest. This is our collective dream, and for us Africans, this is “the Africa we want.”

Sadly, this aspiration remains obstructed by a broad range of challenges, none the least, corruption – a cancerous tumor to our
peace and development efforts. Against this backdrop, our Heads of State have dedicated the year 2018 to “Winning the fight against corruption: A sustainable path to Africa’s transformation”. This fight as you well know, may only be won with the full participation of all layers of society, and especially the youth, who make up over 50% of Africa’s population.

As the “youngest Continent” therefore, we are convinced that inclusive spaces are critical for Africa’s peace and development. That is why at the African Union, we have decided to celebrate Peace Day 2018 under the theme, “Youth participation in the fight against corruption: Ensuring the Right to Peace.” This is in tandem with the Peace and Security Department’s Youth for Peace Africa Programme (Y4PAfrica), launched in September 2018 in Lagos, Nigeria; which seeks to implement Article 17 of the AU Youth Charter (2006) by actively and effectively engaging, involving and collaborating with youth on peace and security, and other APSA initiatives.

Ladies and Gentlemen, as you are aware, corruption robs hardworking people of opportunities, strips communities of necessities, deprives societies from advancing, breathes animosity and armed conflict, and destroys initiative, passion and innovation. Simply stated, corruption violates human rights and sets in a spiral whereby such violation reduces tolerance and increase incentives for
violence. Therefore, we cannot continue to tolerate practices that hold us down as a people, nor accept circumstances that can be overcome by the will to do right, the zeal for accountability and a stand for justice – the right to peace and security as enshrined in Article 22 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights.

Let us all together; as youth, women, men, academia, civil society, media, governments and inter-governmental entities, continue to harmonize and strengthen our efforts for a more peaceful and prosperous Africa and to ensure a better world for all. We must continue to work for the wide implementation of AU and international instruments that aim to ensure human rights and human dignity, peace, security, development and prosperity – and to secure a corruption free world.

Happy International Day of Peace.

Aluta Continua!

Thank you.