READOUT OF THE VISIT OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE AFRICAN COMMISSION TO CAMEROON

Addis Ababa, 16 July 2018: The Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, undertook a 48-hour official visit to Cameroon from 12 to 14 July 2018. During his stay, he was received by President Paul Biya, with whom he had a long and substantive exchange of views during a one-to-one meeting followed by a working lunch. He also met with Prime Minister Philemon Yang and Minister of External Relations Lejeune Mbella Mbella. Furthermore, he visited the premises which provisionally house the Rectorate of the Pan-African University, where the Minister of Higher Education, Jacques Fame Ndongo, officially handed him the model of the final headquarters to be built by Cameroon. The Chairperson of the Commission also addressed the students of the Institute of International Relations of Cameroon, during a meeting attended by members of the faculty, the Government and the diplomatic corps accredited in Cameroon. This address focused on the theme of continental integration and reform of the African Union in the light of the challenges currently facing the multilateral system.

In the context of the decisions adopted by the 31st Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union, held in Nouakchott on 1 and 2 July 2018, the Chairperson of the Commission and his interlocutors exchanged views on various aspects of the implementation of the African agenda, with particular emphasis on continental integration. In this regard, the Chairperson of the Commission welcomed the signing by Cameroon of the Agreement on the African Continental Free Trade Area and looked forward to their prompt ratification - the Cameroonian authorities intend to complete the ratification process of the Free Trade Area Agreement by the end of the year. He urged Cameroon to sign the Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons, the Right of Establishment and the Right of Residence and to join, as soon as possible, the Single African Air Transport Market launched at the January 2018 Summit and to which 26 Member States are already parties. He also expressed his appreciation to the Cameroonian authorities for their commitment to the reform of the African Union, as evidenced by, among other things, the implementation of the 0.2% levy on eligible imports to ensure the financial autonomy of the African Union. The negotiation of a new cooperation agreement with the European Union, which will replace the Cotonou Partnership Agreement after its expiry in 2020, was also discussed. The exchanges reiterated the importance for Africa of embarking on these negotiations in unity, having in view the decisions of the African Union on this matter.

Discussions with President Paul Biya and other Cameroonian officials also addressed peace efforts at the regional and continental levels, in the context of the goal of silencing
the guns on continent by 2020. The Chairperson of the Commission welcomed the progress made in the fight against the Boko Haram terrorist group within the framework of the Multinational Joint Task Force that includes Cameroon, Niger, Nigeria and Chad.

President Biya and the Chairperson of the Commission discussed at length the situation prevailing in northwestern and southwestern Cameroon. President Biya spoke about his Government’s efforts to resolve the crisis and reiterated its determination to work towards a speedy return to peace and security, as well as towards the promotion of harmony among all Cameroonianians. For his part, the Chairperson of the Commission welcomed the determination thus expressed by President Biya and commended the initiatives taken in this regard, including the launching of a humanitarian emergency plan to respond to humanitarian needs on the ground. Reaffirming the African Union's unwavering commitment to the unity and territorial integrity of Cameroon and rejection of the recourse to violence, he called for an inclusive dialogue and urged all stakeholders to privilege this path to facilitate a lasting way out of the crisis based on national leadership and ownership and that strengthens Cameroon's unity while respecting its diversity. The African Union is ready to support any efforts to this end, in accordance with its responsibilities under its relevant instruments.

In addition, and in view of the humanitarian situation arising from the crisis, the Chairperson of the Commission and the Cameroonian authorities agreed on the convening of a resource mobilization conference to mobilize greater assistance commensurate with the needs of the affected populations, in support of the humanitarian emergency plan launched by the Government. The modalities for the holding of this conference will be discussed as soon as possible.

The Chairperson of the Commission assured his interlocutors of the commitment of the African Union to accompany as best as it can the elections scheduled for next October. This support will include, inter alia, the sending of a powerful election observation mission. He seized the opportunity of his discussions to appeal to all political actors - from the majority, the opposition and the civil society - to join forces to ensure that these elections are held in a calm and harmonious national climate.

The Chairperson of the Commission expresses his sincere thanks to President Paul Biya and his Government for the particularly warm welcome extended to him and to the members of his delegation, and for all the arrangements made for the smooth running of his visit.

During his visit, the Chairperson of the Commission was accompanied by a delegation including the Commissioner for Human Resources, Science and Technology, Sarah Anyang Agbor, and the Head of the Reform Implementation Unit of the African Union, Pierre Moukoko Mbonjo, as well as other senior officials of the Commission.