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Creating One African Market

**Statement by**

**H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union**

**Commission Delivered at the Handover Ceremony of the**

**AfCFTA Buildings to AU**

**17 August, 2020**

**Accra, Ghana**

**H.E. Nana Akufo-Addo, President of Republic of Ghana,**

**H.E. Issoufou Mahamadou, President of the Republic of Niger,**

**H.E. Cyril Ramaphosa, President of Republic of South Africa and  
Chairperson of the African Union,**

**H.E. Wamekele Mene, AfCFTA Secretary General,**

**Honourable Ministers,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

Im honored to be here to witness the handover of the headquarters of the AfCFTA Secretariat by the Republic of Ghana to the African Union.

I also wish to thank President Nana Akufo-Addoh for the warm welcome and gracious hospitality accorded to me during my visit. Thank you Excellency.

In the same token, I wish to salute his steadfast leadership in making the strong and legitimate case for the Secretariat, to be hosted here, in Ghana. This included contributing financial resources to ensure that this important symbol of our Union was built and ready today.

I also wish to pay special tribute to President Issoufou Mohamaddou of Niger and Champion of the flagship AfCFTA project. His strong and sustained advocacy oversaw the fastest ratification and entry into force of an AU instrument second only to that of the AU Constitutive Act. Merci Monsieur le Président!

We are also here today thanks to the unfailing support and leadership of President Cyril Ramaphosa and Chair of our Union, who has made the operationalization of AfCFTA, a priority during his tenure.

Indeed, today marks a historic milestone in the road to fulfil the vision of our Founding Fathers for Continental Integration, that dates back to the inaugural session of the OAU in 1963, articulated most strongly by then President Kwame Nkrumah in his landmark speech .

**Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen**

We stand here today despite a global Covid 19 pandemic that has caused major disruptions to global trade and the movement of goods and people.

It is fitting that the secretariat will have its home here, in Accra. Ghana is a historical trading centre for gold, cocoa and timbers and other valuable goods, and remains an important center of commerce on the Continent and beyond.

Accra is also, and has always been a guardian of our collective Pan African memory, not only as a home of thought but also as a port of safety and freedom for fellow Africans fleeing persecution, and for people of African descent seeking refuge or simply coming back home.

While the operationalization of the Secretariat was postponed due to the Covid 19 pandemic, the same pandemic has also magnified the urgent need for speed to accelerate economic integration on the Continent.

This crisis with its negative impact on trade and the multilateral system, is also an opportunity to rethink our value chains and reduce our reliance on traditional supply routes.

To ensure we can absorb the negative impacts of future pandemics, we must integrate our markets, accelerate industrial development, enhance competitiveness to ensure a prosperous, peaceful and integrated future for our people.

When Covid19 hit, Africa took strong and early action, to the surprise of many. We opened essential corridors to facilitate the transport and delivery of urgently needed equipment and first responders to member states.

We also set up a pooled procurement platform of medical supplies for member states, and AfricaCDC, the AU agency for public health emergencies, is ably coordinating the continental response.

Africa demonstrated her resilience and also our sense of cooperation and solidarity in the face of this common threat.

### **Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen**

It is this same spirit of unity, that has brought us here today, to this physical manifestation of a key economic pan african agenda that will be led by Honourable Wamkele Mwene, whose vast experience, vision and competence belies his relative youth. Congratulations and I'm sure you will take care of this beautiful headquarters!

I cannot finish without applauding the African trade ministers, including Minister Alan Kyerematen here today, whose strong contribution, I remember, together with Foreign Minister Shirley Botchwey, was critical not only to Ghana's victory to host the AfCFTA Secretariat, but also for the success of the entire process. I can also

not forget the AU Commissioner for Trade Dr Albert Muchanga who together with his team and their hard work, brought us to this historic milestone.

Let me now conclude with the words of Kwame Nkurumah, “The task ahead is great indeed, heavy is the responsibility; and yet it is a noble and glorious challenge. A challenge which calls for the courage to believe, the courage to dare, the courage to do, the courage to fight, the courage to achieve.”

I thank you for your attention.