



The African Union

**REMARKS BY THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSIONER
FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS**

H.E AMB. MINATA SAMATE CESSOUMA

**OPENING CEREMONY OF THE 2018 HIGH LEVEL DIALOGUE ON DEMOCRACY,
HUMAN RIGHTS AND GOVERNANCE IN AFRICA**

**GABORONE, BOTSWANA
28, NOVEMBER 2018**

Your Excellency, Mokgweetsi Masisi, President of the Republic of Botswana;

Your Excellency, Dr. Hage Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia and Chairperson of the Southern African Development Community;

The Right Honourable Motsoahae Thomas Thabane, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho;

Honourable Prof. Anastase Shyaka, Minister of Local Government, representing H.E. Representing H.E. Paul Kagame, Chairperson of African Union and President of the Republic of Rwanda;

Honourable Nonfo Molefhi, Minister of Presidential Affairs, Governance and Public Administration of the republic of Botswana;

Distinguished Members of the AU Permanent Representatives Committee;

- **Members of the Diplomatic Corps;**
- **Representatives of the Development Partners;**
- **Representatives of Civil Society Organisations, the Academia and the Media;**

Ladies and Gentlemen;

On behalf of H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, who could not be here due to prior engagement, I am delighted to join you during this Seventh High Level Dialogue on Democracy, Human Rights and Governance in Africa, under the theme, "Trends, Challenges, and Prospects".

First and foremost, let me extend our profound gratitude to your Excellency Mokgeetsi Masisi, President of the Republic of Botswana for graciously accepting to host the annual dialogue this year; I also thank the government and the people of Botswana for not only hosting this great event and availing a conducive space for thorough reflections on sustainable approaches to preventing and combatting corruption on our continent, but also for the courtesies extended to me, the African Union delegation and the participants since our arrival in the beautiful city of Gaborone.

The forum is organized every year by the African Union, through the African Governance Architecture (AGA) as a platform for critical reflections on our pursuit of the noble goals of the Union Agenda 2063 and the United Nations 2030 global agenda on sustainable development goals (SDGs).

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen;

Corruption remains a devastating challenge to good governance, sustainable economic growth, peace, stability, and development in Africa.

The 2018 High Level Dialogue Forum focuses on the AU theme of this year: **“Winning the fight against corruption: a sustainable path to Africa’s transformation”**.

In order to provide robust political leadership in the implementation of the theme, the AU appointed H.E. Muhammadu Buhari, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, as Champion of the theme of the Year 2018.

Let me recall the words of President Buhari during the official launch in order to emphasise the strategic significance of our dialogue here in Gaborone over the next three days. When launching the theme, the Champion reminded us that *“corruption is indeed one of the greatest evils of our time. Corruption rewards those who do not play by the rules and also creates a system of distortion and diversion thereby destroying all efforts at constructive, just and fair governance”*. This commitment has renewed the vigor towards preventing and combating corruption and impunity on the continent and accelerating the efforts towards accountable and transparent governance.

Excellencies, Dear participants;

When our citizens, especially our greatest asset, the youth, are unable to acquire quality education and skills in a conducive environment for meaningful employment and other opportunities, we are then oiling the wheels of corruption and setting ourselves to the dangers of this demographic dividend. Our call for action is to turn this demographic dividend into an asset for the betterment of our continent

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen;

The high level dialogue culminates from series of regional youth consultations across all the five regions of the continent and from a Gender Pre-Forum, which was held earlier this week (*I unfortunately missed that important segment due to other pressing matters; but I am sure that the conclusions will be well reflected in the outcomes documents for further consideration*). These bottom-top all inclusive consultations have ensured a critical interface of the various voices from the young people, women, the academia, civil society, the media and faith-based organisations and have greatly enriched the existing strategies in preventing and combatting corruption.

Distinguished Guests;

As a continent, we have faced the blunt of corruption at all levels: whether through public service provider negotiating kick-backs, whether in the public private sector partnership or through multinational corporations contracts with governments to the women in the rural area seeking basic health services. Sadly, this is at the expense of millions of people, especially when it is at great magnitudes such as losing over 100 billion US dollars every year through illicit financial flows.

In terms of natural resources, Africa is the richest continent the world. Yet paradoxically, Africa is home to the poorest populations globally. Then the question is how do we explain the paradox of a continent rich in natural resources, yet home the poorest of the poor globally. I will venture to attribute this paradox to the scourge of corruption through Illicit Financial Flows (IFFs).

The African Union recognized the importance of sustainable efforts towards the fight against corruption; in 2003, the Union adopted the AU Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption in Africa (AUCPCC). This essentially laid out the blueprint for combatting corruption effectively at all levels.

For an effective implementation of these instruments, political will is key to following through with the efforts at preventing and combatting corruption.

To date, 40 AU Member States have ratified the AU Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption in Africa; it is one of the most ratified instruments of the AU; this demonstrates the commitment of our Member States to the fight against corruption. Nonetheless, ratification is not enough; we need a universal ratification by all our 55 states as well as its full domestication-at all levels: from the rural areas to the big conglomerations and from the street vendor to the government in their dealing with multinational corporations.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests;

In conclusion, we hope that through this dialogue, we will endeavor to come up with clear strategies in order to address four major issues; These issues have been identified as a key to sustainable anti-corruption efforts in Africa.

First, we need to encourage AU Member States and the various anti-corruption institutions to enhance their delivery capacity and motivate them to do better.

Beyond ratification, implementation and domestication remain key. We must exchange views on how best to ensure committed and effective implementation of anti-corruption laws.

Furthermore, how do we strengthen the capacity of anti-corruption institutions in order to preserve their independence and protect them from political interference as well as the challenge of corruption fighting back?

Second, we need to discuss how better to democratize the fight against corruption by leveraging the positive partnership that can be achieved through state and non-state collaborative efforts. Quite often, in many of our countries, we have made the fight against corruption, a state affair, thus creating a perception that fighting corruption is the government's business.

Without the collective ownership and buy-in by citizens as individuals and collectively, we will be attempting to clap with one hand. We must seek ways to broaden the fight against corruption by enlisting the various segment of our societies; youth, women, media, parliament, political parties, traditional institutions, and many others.

Third, the need to foster inter and intra agency partnership is also a critical challenge. In many of our countries, the duplicity of efforts and the silo-mentality in the discharge of mandates create an unhealthy competition that limits the effectiveness of our anti-corruption efforts. How best can we strengthen collaboration, partnership, and cooperation vertically and horizontally within our countries?

Fourth and lastly is the much talked about international dimension of the fight against corruption. Generally, we have reached a consensus that we cannot sustainably fight corruption in Africa without addressing the supply side of it. Strengthening global and international partnerships around issues such as illicit financial flows, asset recovery and transparent business dealings within various sectors of the African economy remains a major issue. How do we cultivate these partnerships and what are the critical success factors for ensuring that it bears the right dividends for anti-corruption efforts in Africa?

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen;

We are committed to seeing recommendations from this Dialogue forum as part of the Champion's Report to the AU Assembly in 2019. We also expect strengthened programming of the AU Advisory Board on Corruption as well as other anti-corruption bodies.

Once again, fighting corruption is a collective challenge of state and non-state actors, and I hope that we will all double our efforts to ensure our continent makes the right turn in addressing this challenge.

If sustainable efforts are not put in place to address this challenges, attaining the goals of Agenda 2063 - Africa's 50-year development blueprint - as well as the Global Sustainable Development Goals may be slow to achieve.

Ladies and gentlemen;

I wish you fruitful deliberations and thank you for your kind attention.