



# Peace & Security Council Report

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*PSC Interview:* Moussa Faki Mahamat - 'I will not promise unrealistic plans'

## Will the new AU Commission meet expectations

During the 34<sup>th</sup> Summit of the African Union (AU) on 6 February 2021, member states elected the new leadership of the AU Commission (AUC) for the next four years. These include the chairperson, deputy chairperson and four commissioners of the AUC. The election of two positions was postponed because the candidates did not fulfil the gender and regional representation requirements.

The new AU Commission is expected to ensure greater efficiency, deliver on the institutional reform process and implement key AU flagship projects, such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and the extended mandate to 'silence the guns'.

Member states showed more interest in nominating candidates for high-level AUC positions during the latest elections.

The only uncontested position was that of chairperson, which was won with 51 votes by incumbent Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat of Chad. According to insiders in Addis Ababa, he ran a good election campaign and has healthy relations with most African heads of state.

### Member states showed more interest in nominating candidates for high-level AUC positions during the latest elections

He is the first chairperson to be re-elected and the first to be elected almost unanimously. This has, to an extent, been attributed to the need for continuity in the AUC reforms. Central African countries also did not nominate candidates for any other position, in support of his sole candidature.

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#### Current PSC Chairperson

**HE Amma Adomaa Twum-Amoah**, ambassador of Ghana to Ethiopia and permanent representative to the African Union.

#### PSC members

Algeria, Benin, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal

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#### Regional battles

Faki's almost certain win meant that a woman would be elected as the deputy chairperson. As such, the three candidates from Djibouti, Rwanda and Uganda who were up for election by the Executive Council were all women. The male candidate from Somalia was automatically disqualified when Faki was elected.

Four East African candidates' competing for the deputy position indicates a lack of communication, regional strategy and consensus among these countries. This may be attributed to the absence of an active regional community to which all the countries belong. Open contestation was evident between Rwanda and Uganda for the deputy chairperson position. Uganda's attempt to have the elections postponed a few days before the summit failed.

Once Dr Monique Nsanzabaganwa of Rwanda was elected to the position of deputy chairperson with 42 votes, all other East African candidates for commissioner positions were automatically disqualified.

Southern African Development Community (SADC) member states were similarly divided on which candidates to support. This is unusual for SADC, which is known for its ability to reach consensus, albeit through intense negotiations and compromise on various issues.

In total, the SADC region nominated six candidates for two positions, which were won by the two incumbents from Angola and Zambia. The four other candidates from Southern Africa were automatically out of the race, including the South African candidate competing against Nigeria for the position of commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS).

West African states appeared more organised during the election process. They managed to reach consensus on which candidates to support at an extraordinary high-level summit of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) on 2 February, just before the AUC elections.

The summit decided to 'prioritise support for the candidature of Nigeria to the post of Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security'. It also decided to support a female candidate from Burkina Faso for the second commissioner position allocated to West Africa, which is still to be decided upon at a future meeting by the executive council.

As per the ECOWAS summit decisions, member states withdrew all candidates, and most notably that of the incumbent commissioner for Political Affairs from Burkina Faso, and all other female candidates.

Nigeria's – and the region's – drive to secure the PAPS position points to dissatisfaction with how peace and security has been managed within the AU. Increasingly, ECOWAS and the AU fail to see eye to eye on a number of peace and security issues affecting the region. Some of these include a proposal to deploy 3 000 troops to fight the terrorist threat in the Sahel region, as well as the AU's response to the August 2020 coup d'état in Mali.

### **Focus on skills and competencies**

For the first time in the history of the AU, the competence of candidates has been evaluated in a transparent

manner. Previously, the political support candidates had mobilised took precedence.

The new selection process has also improved gender parity at the level of the senior leadership of the AUC, notably between the chairperson and the deputy chairperson. For the first time, a woman holds the position of deputy chairperson.

In the final shortlist of qualified candidates, women ranked among the top three candidates for all positions, except one. Therefore, the competence-based selection process has given the lie to the widely held notion that women have been taking leadership positions at the AU only to ensure gender parity, rather than on the basis of their qualifications.

### **Nigeria's drive to secure the PAPS position points to dissatisfaction with how peace and security have been managed within the AU**

Going forward, the new rules will increasingly force member states to nominate qualified women for leadership positions at the AUC.

The new process also highlighted the importance of quota systems in ensuring women are represented in decision-making positions. Therefore, the quota system should be applied at all levels across the AUC.

### **Establishing a harmonious working environment**

There are high expectations for the newly elected commission.

The previous commission had been mired in rivalry amid clashing priorities. The expectation for the new commission is therefore first and foremost to reset a harmonious working relationship, and encourage unity among its members.

There are tremendous expectations for Faki to lead a bolder continental organisation, able to tackle some of the more prominent peace and security challenges in Africa.

The deputy chairperson, a Rwandese, is also facing colossal expectations to implement the AU reforms in the footsteps of President Paul Kagame, champion of the institutional reform process. At the same time, she is

expected to maintain independence, which will be a tricky balancing act. Her role is expected to be clearly demarcated from that of the AUC chair, to look inwards and reform the financial and administrative systems.

### High expectations for the PAPS commissioner

Newly elected Commissioner of Political Affairs, Peace and Security Bankole Adeoye, who got all 55 AU member states' votes, served Nigeria for three years as its permanent representative to the AU and is well aware of the challenges facing him as commissioner.

In particular, member states expect him to take full control of peace and security priorities and activities at the AUC. He is also expected to mend the department's fractured relations with the Peace and Security Council (PSC), improve communications and collaboration with the AUC chairperson, depoliticise the early warning data reaching member states and particularly the PSC, and improve relations with AU liaison offices across Africa.

Adeoye is furthermore expected to ensure more transparency in partner engagement – and in the financial support they provide to activities undertaken by the department. In addition, it is hoped that he will significantly improve the quality and timeliness of reports that reach member states, as well as the

documentation and overall support provided by the department to member states.

This is on top of expectations for him to operationalise the merger of two departments: Political Affairs and Peace and Security. The two directors meant to lead these newly merged departments are yet to be appointed. A plethora of other activities must also be undertaken, including developing a combined vision for the department, and a strategy for harmonising African Governance Architecture (AGA) and the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA).

It is hoped that there will be significant improvements in the efficiency of doing business within the AUC

The commissioner must also take the lead in 'silencing the guns', one of the AU's flagship initiatives.

It is hoped that there will be significant improvements in the efficiency of doing business, collaboration among departments, and unity of purpose within the AUC. However, the election of the new top leadership does not change the fact that member states dictate the issues to be addressed by the continental body. Therefore, the election will not significantly change how and to which crisis situations the AU responds.

Table 1: AU Commission election outcomes

Position	Elected	Country	Region
Chairperson	Moussa Faki Mahamat*	Chad	Central Africa
Deputy Chairperson	Monique Nsanzabaganwa	Rwanda	East Africa
Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment	Josefa Correia Sacko*	Angola	Southern Africa
Commissioner for Economic Development, Trade, Industry and Mining	Albert Muchanga*	Zambia	Southern Africa
Commissioner for Education, Science, Technology and Innovation	Election postponed		
Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy	Amani Abou-Zeid*	Egypt	Northern Africa
Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security	Bankole Adegboyega Adeoye	Nigeria	Western Africa
Commissioner for Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development	Election postponed		

\* Re-elected for another 4 years

## Time for the DRC to show leadership at the AU

On 6 February, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) President Félix Tshisekedi officially took over the rotating chairship of the African Union (AU) for 2021 – this as he manoeuvres to consolidate power at home.

He has broken off his alliance with former president Joseph Kabila and is trying to create a governing majority in Parliament. Tshisekedi's 'sacred union' seems to be taking shape. He's managed to have the speaker and president of the lower house, Jeanine Mabunda, as well as prime minister Sylvestre Ilunga Ilunkamba removed by the National Assembly. Both belong to Kabila's camp.

Tshisekedi seeks the appointment of a new and more loyal prime minister and government. His path is, however, not as clear as he would hope. The sacred union is a loose alliance that will be severely tested ahead of elections in 2023. Preparations for this poll may once again see the ambitions of DRC's political elites, including Tshisekedi himself, taking precedence over the country's political stability.

Faced with these internal political challenges, can Tshisekedi devote the necessary time and attention to the position of AU chair? And what about the fact that the DRC hasn't ratified at least one key AU instrument – the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union?

### Representing the Union

Chairing the AU comes with certain prerogatives captured under the duties of 'representing the Union and promoting the objectives and principles of the AU'. This presents an opportunity for Tshisekedi, who can use the AU's strategic importance to increase his stature in the multilateral space, and at home.

He ascended to power in the DRC under tumultuous circumstances that placed the AU and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) at loggerheads. This has given Tshisekedi first-hand experience of how crucial regional and continental organisations can be in one's bid for power.

Chairing the AU also requires a solid and well-oiled diplomatic machinery. Tshisekedi has appointed a high-level panel to prepare for the task and help him during

his 2021 AU chairship. The panel has a department for each priority area of his mandate.

He will focus on: the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and economic integration, Agenda 2063; the AU's external partnerships such as with the European Union; health (particularly COVID-19); and culture (as part of the AU's 2021 theme which is Arts, Culture, and Heritage: Levers for Building the Africa We Want).

Tshisekedi will also push for the prioritisation of and investment in the longstanding Grand Inga Dam hydroelectric project on the Congo River. In its current form, the scheme could meet up to 40% of the continent's electricity demand.

The sacred union is a loose alliance that will be severely tested ahead of elections in 2023

Dealing with COVID-19 and its effects will be high on Tshisekedi's list of priorities. He'll oversee the continental initiatives spearheaded by outgoing chair Cyril Ramaphosa, the AU Commission, and the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Africa is grappling with the timely acquisition of vaccines, which is being coordinated by the Africa-CDC.

### Diplomatic capacity

To execute these priorities, Tshisekedi will be counting on his foreign affairs minister, who has set up a task force for the chairship including the country's ambassador to Ethiopia and permanent representative to the AU. Diplomatic capacity will need to be mobilised, and whether the DRC has it readily available is an open question.

The details of the DRC's AU work for 2021 are yet to be revealed, but it's unlikely that Tshisekedi will have the standing to make any pronouncement on election issues in Africa.

Preparations for the DRC's role included a working visit to Kinshasa, on 5 December 2020, by AU Commission chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat. Tshisekedi also visited South Africa on 19 December, where, in addition to discussing bilateral relations with Ramaphosa, they covered AU-related matters as incoming and outgoing AU chairs. A budget prepared by Tshisekedi's AU panel was presented for fundraising to the DRC's partners in December 2020 in Kinshasa.

The DRC sits at the crossroads of many regions. It is a member of the Economic Community of Central African States, SADC and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region. The country has also signaled its interest in officially joining the East African Community. This could work in Tshisekedi's favour as he strives for consensus as AU chair.

The AU Commission and PSC could use Tshisekedi's chairship to place the AU squarely at the centre of regional security, economic and development cooperation in the Great Lakes

Since coming to power, Tshisekedi has shown his willingness to work with neighbouring countries, including Angola, Uganda, Rwanda and Zambia, and could look to them for support as AU chair. This is no guarantee that he will automatically rally these stakeholders around his work, but it could help expand and consolidate diplomatic engagements.

### **Cooperation in the Great Lakes Region**

The AU could be a useful platform to bolster security cooperation and promote good governance and development in the Great Lakes region. The continental body's convening power could help foster coherence and unity in the way all stakeholders approach the region's problems.

As one of the guarantors of the 2013 Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the DRC and the Region, the AU is responsible for helping to monitor its implementation. But the various AU representatives in the region – for DRC, Great Lakes and Burundi, and Central Africa – could play a more active role in tackling country-specific and regional challenges.

Whether Tshisekedi would want to use the AU as a vehicle for that endeavour remains unclear. The AU Commission and Peace and Security Council could also use Tshisekedi's chairship to place the AU squarely at the centre of regional security, economic and development cooperation in the Great Lakes.

Tshisekedi has his hands full for 2021. His present and future political fortune will be in great part determined by how he balances his domestic goal of consolidating power with continental duties that could cement key regional ties for him.

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2021

THE DRC CHAIRS  
THE AFRICAN UNION

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## The outcome of elections does not bode well for stability in the CAR

The PSC met on 16 February 2021 to discuss the situation in the Central African Republic (CAR). This meeting came exactly two years after the signing of the 6 February 2019 Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the CAR between the government and 14 armed groups, for which the African Union (AU) is a guarantor.

The CAR held presidential and legislative elections in December 2020. The elections saw the victory of incumbent Faustin-Archange Touadera in the first round with just over 53% of the vote.

In confirming Touadera's re-election, the constitutional court revised the voter turnout from 76% (as announced by the National Electoral Commission) to 35%. It then decided to confirm the election of only 22 members of Parliament, out of 140 seats. The remaining 118 seats will have to be filled by 2 May.

The low voter turnout in the presidential election and the cancellation of the voting process for 58 National Assembly seats are the result of attacks by armed groups trying to interfere in the elections.

In mid-December a coalition of six major armed groups, all signatories to the February 2019 peace agreement, was formed under the banner of the Coalition for Change (*Coalition pour le changement* [CPC]). The coalition subsequently launched attacks in several districts and tried to march on Bangui in early January following the announcement of Touadera's victory.

Although the poor voter turnout in the presidential election is explained by these armed groups' attempts to derail the process, it does raise questions about Touadera's legitimacy. This is particularly the case given the fact that the constitutional court significantly revised the voter turnout and validated only 22 seats.

This move by the court casts doubts over the credibility of the entire election. The coalition of major opposition parties, the Coalition of Democratic Opposition (*Coalition de l'opposition démocratique* [COD 2020]), continues to reject Touadera's re-election as fraudulent. It has also announced a boycott of the upcoming legislative elections.

In 2016 Touadera received about 63% of the vote in the second round of the polls, with a 62% voter turnout.

This played a major part in his securing the necessary legitimacy after a turbulent 'transition' period under interim president Catherine Samba Panza.

The fact that the government's legitimacy is being contested by both the political opposition and by the CPC does not bode well for stability in the CAR. It also raises the stakes in the upcoming elections for the remaining National Assembly seats. These will be hotly contested – if they actually do take place without the disruption witnessed in December and January. In short, the December 2020 elections may have complicated matters more than the CAR can afford at this point, especially with regards to the future of the 2019 peace agreement.

### The AU's role in the CAR

The AU as a guarantor of the February 2019 peace agreement is responsible, with the CAR's other partners, for monitoring and ensuring the proper implementation of the agreement.

Its role includes sending military observers to monitor the training and deployment of mixed special security units (MSSUs) tasked with ensuring security in the country. The MSSUs were to be composed of soldiers drawn from the CAR regular armed forces, the *Forces Armées Centrafricaines* (FACA), as well as individuals chosen from the armed groups that had signed the 2019 peace agreement.

Initially, the implementation of the peace agreement was slow, owing to challenges in agreeing on a detailed plan; the AU itself also did not have the human and financial resources readily available.

This is one of the reasons why AU military observers have still not been deployed, despite the fact that they were meant to on the ground two months after the signing of the peace agreement.

A memorandum of understanding had been signed between the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the CAR (MINUSCA) and the AU Observer Mission in the CAR (MOUACA) for the deployment of the AU military observers. The PSC had authorised the move at a meeting in July 2020.

However, the January 2021 report by the UN Panel of Experts on the CAR cites the absence of AU military observers as one of the challenges in the proper monitoring of MSSUs' deployment.

The second important element of the AU's role is that of holding spoilers of the peace agreement accountable, particularly through sanctions by the PSC. Since the signing of the peace agreement there have been several violations, with the first major incident taking place in May 2019. These have included violations committed by armed groups that had signed the 2019 peace agreement.

Yet no actual sanctions have been issued against the leaders of the implicated armed groups. This failure to take a tougher stance against violators has contributed to the escalation seen around the December 2020 elections. The AU and other guarantors of the peace agreement have struggled to strike a balance between preserving the peace agreement and curbing impunity.

### No actual sanctions have been issued against the leaders of the implicated armed groups

These issues aside, the implementation of the February 2019 peace agreement has generally been slow. One mistake was probably to spend a lot of energy on getting parties to sign the peace accord, while making little preparation for its implementation and the resources needed for this.

The history of CAR peace agreements suggests that more should have been done to make the peace deal stick. Belligerents in the country have signed several peace agreements that have failed in the implementation phase.

In spite of the recent attacks by the CPC (and the very fact of its existence), which are a blatant violation of the peace agreement and in a way signal the end of the accord, the AU and the UN have reaffirmed that the agreement is the only viable framework for peace and reconciliation in the CAR.

It will, however, take more than pronouncing the agreement alive for it to be so. If this agreement is to be saved, it must be revisited, spoilers must be held accountable and sanctioned where needed, and adequate human and material resources must be deployed.

In the face of Touadera's contested legitimacy and the need to organise credible legislative elections, political turbulence is bound to continue if the appropriate steps are not taken to defuse the situation. This requires the PSC to pronounce itself more firmly on the spoiler role of armed groups and the potential threat to subsequent electoral processes.

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53%

THE ELECTION WIN  
BY FAUSTIN-  
ARCHANGE TOUADERA

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## What the AU can do to promote arts, culture and heritage

The African Union (AU) theme for 2021, focusing on African arts, culture and heritage, is slightly off-topic. Recent AU themes included ending conflict (2020), the plight of refugees (2019), the fight against corruption (2018), empowering the youth (2017) and promoting gender equality (2015, 2016).

This year's theme was proposed by former Malian president Ibrahim Boubakar Keita, deposed in a coup in August 2020. Arguably, Mali is one of the African countries best placed to champion such a theme. It has a rich and undervalued cultural heritage – from the Touareg nomads in the desert north, Timbuktu and its ancient scrolls, and the Dogon sites near Mopti and Djenné to the Bambara culture with its rich history and ancestral belief systems.

Yet in the era of COVID-19, at a time of economic hardship and continuing strife across the continent (including Mali, on its knees due to terrorist attacks), is this something the AU can successfully take up? In the bigger scheme of things, 'Arts, culture and heritage – levers for building the Africa we want' is not a priority for most AU member states.

### Catalysts for socio-economic development

The documents outlining the theme of the year, presented at the recent AU summit, recognise the devastation caused by the coronavirus pandemic. They emphasise 'the role arts, culture and heritage can play as catalysts for the socio-economic development and integration of the African continent'. The project timeline set out by the AU includes events to promote African music, fashion design and visual arts.

African arts and culture could certainly be used as a vehicle for economic development, notably in promoting the revival of tourism in a post-COVID-19 era.

In-country tourism has also become a lifesaver for the tourism industry in many countries. Making citizens more aware of their own heritage at a time they cannot travel abroad is one of the hidden benefits of the pandemic lockdowns.

Valuing the contribution of indigenous strategies and remedies in the fight against illness and disease is another issue not widely acknowledged in discussions on Africa's resilience to the pandemic.

The continental institution can also help to speed up existing AU projects such as the Great Museum of Africa and promote African languages, as well as lobby for the protection of artefacts.

With the necessary buy-in and cooperation from organisations such as the United Nations Education, Science and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which is already on board, the AU could use its convening power and networks to weigh in on key issues, such as boosting efforts to have African artefacts returned.

Making citizens aware of their own heritage at a time they cannot travel abroad is one of the hidden benefits of the pandemic

The Great Museum of Africa in Algeria is one of the flagship projects of Agenda 2063 and could contribute to preserving and showcasing the continent's history and artefacts. The upgrading of museums across Africa, which UNESCO has been championing, should also flow from this.

Barring a few, museums on the continent have not received the investment and attention they deserve. In 2015 UNESCO outlined recommendations for 'rethinking' the museum in Africa and training museum employees to promote a more holistic view of the museum and its role in society.

### The language debate

Promoting African languages is a controversial issue and a topic of debate both in many continental institutions and at country level. Should English, French or Portuguese be promoted to encourage communication, modernisation and effective connections with the outside world? Or should mother-tongue education be supported at school and university level, in government and in the production of literature and arts?

The elevation of Swahili as one of the official languages of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in 2018, for example, still needs to be backed up by resources, political will and practical implementation to make it a reality. More will certainly be needed at the level of the AU, where this debate is far from settled.

This is despite the adoption of several plans of action and institutions dating back to the early 2000s. The African Academy of Languages was established as an AU institution in 2005 by former AU Commission chairperson and former Malian president Alpha Oumar Konaré.

Protecting Africa's cultural goods and recovering artefacts from Europe stolen during the colonial era have gained more recognition in the last few years following a promise of restitution by French President Emmanuel Macron.

### It is not only about the economic value of promoting and selling African arts and culture or about fighting illicit trafficking

A special commission led by scholars Felwine Sarr and Bénédicte Savoy recommended that around 90 000 artefacts be returned to Africa – a proposal that received a lukewarm reception in France. So far just a handful of objects have been returned to Benin and Senegal.

However, the AU can use its voice to put more pressure on European countries, including the United Kingdom, and strive to make this a continent-wide issue. Stopping the harmful trafficking that is making Africa lose so much of its precious cultural heritage should also be a priority.

Yet it is not only about the economic value of promoting and selling African arts and culture or about fighting illicit trafficking.

In his acceptance speech as the new AU chairperson on 6 February, the Democratic Republic of Congo's Felix Tshisekedi described arts, culture and heritage as 'the heart of the African Renaissance'.

He quoted former Senegalese president and renowned poet Léopold Sédar Senghor, who said 'culture is the beginning and the end of all things'. The theme for 2021 'is an opportunity to return to our roots,' he added.

COVID-19 has shown that African countries have more to gain by relying on their own structures and regional solidarity than on assistance from elsewhere. With the necessary investment, the AU theme of the year, although difficult to implement in practical terms, could be a key moment that sees the acceleration of pride in Africa's rich culture and heritage amid a world in crisis.



ASSISTING THE AU  
TO IMPLEMENT ITS  
2021 THEME

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## ***PSC Interview: ‘I will not promise unrealistic plans’*** **– Moussa Faki Mahamat**

The AU Assembly elected high-level officials to lead the AU Commission (AUC) during its summit on 6 February 2021. Moussa Faki Mahamat, the chairperson of the AUC since 2017, was the only candidate running for the position. The Institute for Security Studies’ *PSC Report* asked Mahamat about his plans ahead of the elections.

### **Firstly, why are you the only candidate running for the position of AUC chairperson? Are you confident of getting a two-thirds majority under these circumstances?**

First of all, I would like to thank the Institute for Security Studies for its partnership with the AU, providing timely research-based analysis on African peace and security issues.

To answer your question, I have been encouraged to run for a second term by many African heads of state. A majority declared their support, which is a great honour for me. I imagine many member states are at least partially satisfied with what I did and they hope I will do better during a second term as chair of the AUC.

I am not the one who decides that I am the only candidate for the position. These decisions belong to the member states. I am aware some have tried to suggest that this is not a democratic process. It has to be clear that the opportunity for member states to submit candidates for the position was open for months. No country, except Chad, has presented a candidate for the position. It is therefore member states that decided that I become the only candidate to run for the chairmanship. We cannot impose on member states to submit candidates.

As for getting a two-thirds majority, I have to say, as you may guess, that an election is never won until it is won. But I have no reason at all not to trust our heads of state who declared their full support for me. That is why I am optimistic.

### **In your view, what are the major successes you have registered as chairperson of the AUC in the last four years?**

It is always difficult for one to assess one’s own achievements. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all those who supported me in the last four

years. All I have achieved has been in collaboration with dedicated colleagues who worked night and day, as duty called. Member states also engaged my office with an open-door policy, a key factor for all that we have accomplished in the last four years.

I am particularly proud to have contributed to the success of two major AU flagship projects. These are the institutional reform process and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), launched on 1 January 2021 under the auspices of its champion President Mahamadou Issoufou of Niger. I am confident the institutional and financial reform process under the leadership of President Paul Kagame of Rwanda will make the organisation more efficient, effective and independent in implementing its mandate.

*It has to be clear that the opportunity for member states to submit candidates for the position was open for months*

With a population of 1.2 billion people, Africa’s economic integration is another venture that promises to fulfil the vision of the founding members of the Organization for African Unity (OAU) for a united, peaceful and prosperous Africa. So far, 54 members out of 55 have signed it and 35 have ratified it. We expect more countries to ratify the agreement in the coming days. These have been key milestones. In relation to this, a protocol on freedom of movement and rights of establishment was signed in 2018. This will facilitate the free movement of Africans within the continent. The establishment of the Single African Air Transport Market and the Continental Blue Economy Strategy is also geared towards ensuring the integration and sustainable development of Africa. Progress registered in these spheres has been undeniably a success story in the last four years.

We have also been part of initiatives to mitigate and resolve crises in Africa. Some of these include Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, Mali and the Central African Republic, as well as continual efforts to mobilise support for the fight against terrorism in the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin. We have also provided significant support to electoral processes in Africa.

This does not mean we did not face challenges and setbacks and made mistakes. More than anyone, I am aware of the limitations the AU is facing in silencing the guns. These are issues we have to tackle in the future. Nonetheless, I am pleased to report that as we speak, there are no conflicts between African states. This is indeed a major milestone for peace and security on the continent.

We have also done a lot to enhance the role of the AU in the international political arena and amplify African voices and positions. Partnerships with other multilateral organisations have also been established and enriched.

These are some of the highlights of the achievements from my term as chairperson of the AUC.

#### **What are your key priorities for the next four years if you are elected as AUC chairperson for a second term?**

As I wrote in my vision for a second term, I wish to focus on limited priorities. I will not be a demagogue and promise to implement unrealistic plans. My vision is ambitious but realistic.

My priorities will include finalising the institutional reform process and improving internal organisation functioning, which was not satisfying. I hope that the new deputy chairperson who is responsible for carrying out these responsibilities will work towards consolidating our success on flagship projects. We have reached key milestones in these aspects, but a lot remains to be done and there are many challenges to overcome. Other priorities will include improving our results on silencing the guns, and intensifying the inclusion of youth and women in political decision-making.

I am among those dissatisfied by the pace of implementing flagship projects, as well as other initiatives. I wish for implementation to progress more rapidly in 2021 and beyond. For this we will require the support of member states, AU organs and our staff.

We also need to renovate African thought leadership on fundamental matters such as constitutionalism, communitarianism, African doctrines related to crisis resolution, national consensus, democratic governance, and humanitarian multilateralism. The ISS, along with many others, will be asked to contribute to achieving this priority.

#### **Do you think the new merit-based system to elect commissioners will ensure a more efficient AUC?**

That was one of the major aims of the institutional reform. The AU Panel of Eminent African Personalities did a good job in selecting candidates on the basis of rational criteria. The process has been transparent, participatory and competitive.

It is my deepest hope that the new commission will meet our needs in competency, efficiency and leadership. We cross our fingers!

#### **The restructuring of the AUC will come into effect in 2021. What are the opportunities and challenges you expect in this regard?**

The goal of the institutional reform is to put in place an efficient organisation that can adequately implement its mandate. One of the major opportunities is that the reform addresses challenges related to administrative and financial management.

I inherited a very sluggish organisation, riddled with administrative and financial mismanagement. This is why, in consultation with member states, we initiated the structural reforms that not only reduced the number of commissioners but also established a team of 10 experts from the five regions to overhaul the recruitment process.

The current financial and administrative system is also not up to standard. Matters related to administration, human resource management and financial management are undertaken at the level of the deputy chairperson. The deputy chairperson oversees the departments of human resources and finance, including the appointment and recruitment committee. The chairperson is not expected to interfere in the administrative function of the commission. However, various incidents have compelled me, as the head of the institution, to intervene at different times. This issue is known to member states.

We have also identified that the current internal mechanism for staff recruitment is not adequate. Performance oversight, merit-based staffing and career

development are issues that have undermined staff morale at the AU over the years. I have the will to tackle this issue with the new deputy chairperson if I am elected.

The structural reforms are therefore of utmost priority for this reason. The reform process has set a standard for the deputy chairperson to have high qualifications in terms of financial management and administration. The reform process will also ensure the execution of the AU budget is overseen by 15 finance ministers, to ensure a more transparent financial management process. A number of AU organs are set to be similarly reformed.

I therefore hope the reform process will ensure the AU emerges as an efficient and transparent organisation at all levels.

### **How can the AU's role be enhanced to make the continental body more effective in preventing conflicts and ensuring peace and security across Africa?**

Ensuring peace and security in Africa is one of the top priorities of the AU. This fact led to an ambitious goal by member states to collectively silence the guns by 2020. As I mentioned earlier, Africa is far from silencing the guns in general, but we are witnessing the end of inter-state conflicts. This is a significant achievement for the continent.

I hope the reform process will ensure the AU emerges as an efficient and transparent organisation at all levels

Nonetheless, Africa continues to face numerous challenges to its stability. Terrorism, though not limited to Africa, is one of the major causes of insecurity on the continent. Libya, Somalia, the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin, and, increasingly, new territories such as Mozambique's Cabo Delgado are destabilised by violent extremists. The AU continues to support these member states, including in garnering international support in the fight against terrorist groups.

The root causes of violent extremism as well as other crises witnessed across the continent are increasingly related to internal socio-political and economic governance deficits. The AU has registered success in

resolving a number of internal political crisis situations with the potential to lead to instability, such as our support to Sudan's political transition. We also tried something similar in the Central African Republic and other member states, with limited success. On the basis of the subsidiarity principle, our regional economic communities have been very active in some conflicts, such as South Sudan and Mali.

We managed to successfully relaunch the AU Peace Fund in 2018, which was initially established in 1993. The contribution of member states to the Peace Fund has reached US\$200 million. This has enhanced the ability of the continent to achieve some of its peace and security priorities through its own means. We hope to be able to scale this contribution in the coming years, given the growing conviction among member states of the need to self-finance a number of peace and security initiatives.

Despite these successes, there are several challenges that limit the ability of the AU in responding to crisis situations. For example, it is obvious that democracy and constitutionalism in Africa are facing great setbacks. We have the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance that guides member states in this regard. However, I am of the view that these provisions continue to be disregarded by some member states for various reasons. Elections, meant to serve as the basis for the peaceful transfer of power, have in some cases become the cause of instability on the continent.

Africa is as a result at a crossroads and should seriously consider why our continental provisions for democracy, elections and governance are blatantly disregarded. We cannot go on denying the severity of the issue as a continent. We have seen an increase in mass protests, and unless we manage to respond to the demands of our citizens, we will continue to witness military coups, rebellions, uprisings and revolutions. African leadership should respond to these demands for reform. Unless we address these issues, it will not be possible to silence the guns in Africa.

At the AU, we have tried to ensure that countries respect their constitutions as related to elections, term limits and the peaceful transfer of power. We try to convince member states to respect the provisions of their constitutions and their commitments based on the model of governance they have chosen for themselves. Beyond that, the powers of the AUC and the chairperson

are quite limited. This is all we can do. Members are sovereign states and will not abide any interference from outside parties. Our role is therefore limited to that of advisers and counsellors.

The time has come to interrogate the rules of engagement of the AU. We should collectively review whether we have chosen the most appropriate models. We should also ask whether our governance models correspond to our realities and the expectations of our citizens.

As part of my vision for the next term, I have proposed to have intellectual and policy debates on these issues with political authorities, academia and civil society. This is in the hope of coming up with the best democratic model for the continent, and mechanisms that will allow the AU to deliver on its mandate related to the prevention and resolution of crisis situations.

I strongly believe that good governance is the best method to prevent crises. Good economic, democratic and electoral governance and more concrete results in fighting poverty, corruption and exclusion are the best way to prevent crises throughout our continent.

#### **How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the work of the commission and how will it address that in 2021?**

COVID-19 is a global disaster that has negatively impacted all countries around the world. Africa is part of that world. Africa was comparatively less affected by the pandemic as compared to other continents. Despite this fact, around 90 000 people have lost their lives and more than 3.5 million have been infected.

Even though Africa is facing numerous challenges, the continent has shown remarkable resilience and a spirit of solidarity. I should commend here the role played by AU Chairperson President Cyril Ramaphosa for the leadership he has shown in these difficult circumstances. The Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention and the African Vaccine Acquisition Task Team also continue to play a crucial role in responding to the pandemic. I also have to mention the leadership of our Department of Social Affairs in implementing the African strategy against COVID-19.

The current challenge is to ensure that Africa will not remain behind in acquiring the necessary number of vaccine doses to reach 60% of the population, required for collective immunity. We put in place a COVID solidarity fund of around US\$50 million. Under the global COVAX initiative, led by the World Health Organization, Africa is assured to receive vaccines for 20% of our population. The task team has negotiated an additional 270 million vaccine doses to be delivered in 2021. This will enable us to vaccinate 36% of the population. We will continue to mobilise our resources to secure additional vaccines for Africa.

Without a doubt the work of the AU has suffered under these circumstances. We hope to redouble our efforts with a highly competent and experienced leadership that will be elected in February during the summit. We hope to achieve continental goals despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, for our collective future.

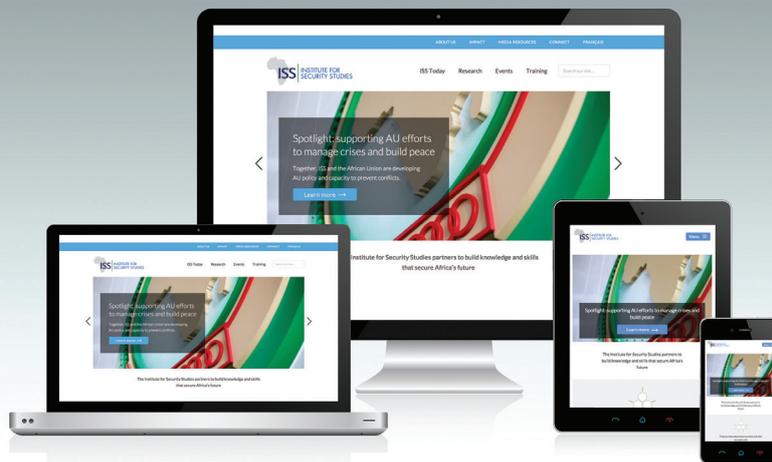


IN THE AU PEACE FUND

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