



Press Communiqué

The Chairperson of the African Union Commission underscores the importance of Good Governance, at Forum on Regional Economic Integration

The Chairperson of the African Union (AU) Commission, Dr. Jean Ping, has underscored the importance of good governance for development, while addressing delegates at the Forum on Regional Economic Integration, held in Port-Louis, Mauritius on 21 November 2010. The Forum was organized back to back with the 5th Ordinary Session of the Board of Administration of the Coalition of Dialogue on Africa (CoDA), an initiative supported by the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). CoDA is chaired by the Former President of Botswana, His Excellency Mr. Festus Mogae.

The Forum was attended by eminent personalities, including: Mo Ibrahim, Founder and Chairman of the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, Cheikh Modibo Diarra, Middle East and Africa Chairman of Microsoft, Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Managing Director of the World Bank, Dr. Donald Kaberuka, President of the African Development Bank, Abdoulie Janneh, Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Africa, Dr. Mohamed El-Baradei, Former Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Joachim Chisano, Former President of Mozambique and Frene Ginwala, Former Speaker of the South African Parliament. The Forum discussed CoDA's role in Africa's regional integration agenda.

In his opening remarks at the Forum which followed the welcome address by the Prime Minister of Mauritius, His Excellency Mr. Navin Ramgoolam, the Chairperson warmly congratulated the Republic of Mauritius for leading the continent in good governance for the 3rd consecutive year in the Mo Ibrahim Africa Governance Index. He also commended Guinea for its recent presidential election, the first free, pluralistic, competitive, democratic election in the 50-year post-independence history of the country, which culminated in the 2nd round election of long time opposition leader, Alpha Condé. Dr. Ping described the successful organization of the election as a major breakthrough and a significant achievement for Africa.

“Good governance is not self-evident, it does not just happen; it is built and nurtured through sustained effort and must be willingly accepted by both the government and the governed. Africa is working to enhance good governance based on shared values with the rest of the world. It is a key duty of the African Union Commission to promote these values in Member States and I can affirm that progress, albeit uneven, has been made in good governance on the continent,” he observed. Dr. Ping added that the theme of next year's African Union Summit: *“Towards Greater Unity and Integration Through Shared Values”*, eloquently speaks to Africa's determination to promote good governance within the framework of enhanced regional integration.

On Africa's economic prospects, the Chairperson stated that the world seems to have finally come to the realization that it will be increasingly difficult to continue to systematically ignore a whole continent of 53 states out of the 192 Member States of the United Nations; a continent populated by over a billion inhabitants, one seventh of the world's population with a rising GDP in most of its countries; a continent that represents a potential market of 1.4 billion consumers by 2020/2025; a continent with a surface area of 30,3 million km², 10 times the size of Europe, 10 times the size of India, four times the size of the United States and three times the size of China; a continent with enormous resources and some of the biggest reserves of primary products on the planet.

The Chairperson, however, acknowledged that the fragmentation of Africa into 53 states divided by 165 borders, with some states having less than 500,000 inhabitants, represents a major challenge to trade and development. He noted with regret that inadequate transportation and communications infrastructure is also a hindrance to intra-African trade, and this has imposed on the continent a pattern of exporting all it produces and importing all it consumes.

Regional integration will help redress the situation by enhancing the unity, cohesion and solidarity of African states and achieve economies of scale through an integrated transportation, energy and communications infrastructure, the Chairperson submitted.

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