



Press Communiqué

The Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Dr Jean Ping reiterates the importance of Africa-Arab cooperation, at the 2nd Afro-Arab Summit in Sirte, Libya

The Second Afro-Arab Summit in three decades took place on 10 October 2010 in Sirte, Libya, to explore avenues and opportunities for greater cooperation between the two regions. Jointly organised by the African Union (AU), the League of Arab States and the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. The Summit was attended by several Heads of State and Government from both regions, including, Host Leader Muammar Kaddafi of Libya, President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, Chairperson of the First African-Arab Summit in 1977, President Ali Bongo of Gabon, the Vice Chairperson of the African Union, as well as the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Dr Jean Ping and the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, Mr. Amr Moussa.

Addressing the leaders of both regions, the Chairperson of the AU Commission, Dr. Jean Ping stated that for geopolitical, historical, cultural and economic reasons, the promotion of cooperation with the Arab world is a top priority for Africa. The relations between the two regions, he added, are characterised by a high level of interdependence and complementarity which render cooperation imperative.

“Africa is a vast continent comprised of 53 out of 193 Member States of the United Nations. Its population of over one billion constitutes one seventh of consumers in the global market. Africa is ten times as large as Europe, ten times bigger than India, four times as big as the United States and three times the size of China. Its enormous natural resources and huge reserves of raw materials place Africa at the centre of world attention and interest.” Dr. Ping pointed out, adding that Africa had much to offer the Arab world and vice versa.

The Chairperson noted that on their part, Arab states have huge currency reserves and savings. Their vast financial resources endow Arab states with immense investment capabilities. Thus, both regions can complement each other, as Africa continues the struggle to rid itself of economic marginalisation, notably through enhanced foreign investment and trade. Geographical proximity offers both regions a strong comparative advantage in a complementary partnership.

“For the African Union, this Summit is quite timely; it enables us to re-launch political dialogue at the highest level after three decades of silence and give our partnership a new, more diversified contemporaneous vision,” the Chairperson stated. He urged the leaders of the two regions to create a favourable environment for the private and public

sectors to play a greater role in the Africa Arab partnership, otherwise, the hopes and aspirations of both peoples for concrete results would remain unfulfilled.

Dr. Ping noted that cooperation between Africa and the Arab World during the past three decades had achieved some positive developments.

“I recall with appreciation the strong brotherly support that Africa received from its Arab partners during its struggle against colonialism and Apartheid. On its part, Africa also provided a strong and continuous support to the legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people for their inalienable right to self-determination. The commitment of Africa towards ensuring the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people is unflinching, and the matter, as reflected in the Declaration submitted for your attention, continues to be a regular item on the agenda of its Policy Organs”, he underlined.

The Chairperson further observed that while significant milestones in the partnership between Africa and the Arab World had been recorded in the areas of political and diplomatic cooperation, there remain challenging issues on the continent for instance, Darfur, South Sudan and Somalia, that demand the collaborative engagement of both regions.

The Chairperson pledged the firm resolve of the African Union Commission to spare no efforts to ensure the implementation of the new Africa Arab Partnership Strategy and its six-year Action Plan. The Strategy Document adopted at the Summit replaces the African-Arab Cooperation Action Plan of March 1977.

Sirte, Libya, 11 October 2010

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