

**WELCOME REMARKS BY DR. ALFRED N. MUTUA, E.G.H.,
CABINET SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AND DIASPORA
AFFAIRS DURING THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE 43RD
ORDINARY SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL, 13TH JULY,
2023, NAIROBI**

**Your Excellency Mr. Dhoahir Dhoulkamal, Minister of Foreign Affairs
and International Cooperation in charge of Diaspora and Francophony of
the Union of the Comoros and the Chairperson of the Executive Council,
Excellencies Ministers of Foreign Affairs,
Your Excellency Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African
Union Commission,
Your Excellency Ahmed Bin Abdulaziz Kattan, our Special Guest from
the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Excellencies Permanent Representatives to the African Union,
Commissioners of the African Union Commission,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

All Protocols observed,

It's a great honour and privilege to address this august meeting on the occasion
of the 43rd Ordinary Session of the Executive Council.

I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of the Government and people
of the Republic of Kenya to welcome you to our beautiful city, Nairobi. Kenya
is immensely honoured to be hosting this year's Executive Council meeting.

Karibu

Welcome

Bienvenue

Bienvenido

Marhaban

Mr. Chairperson,

Our meeting here in Nairobi could not have come at an opportune time like this during the running theme of the year 2023, *“Year of AfCFTA: Acceleration of the African Continental Free Trade Area Implementation”*. Our continent remains well endowed with resources both beneath and above the ground and yet millions of our people continue to suffer in poverty, disease, food insecurity and instability. Millions of young people do not have access to education and the educated cannot find job opportunities within their borders.

Our continent is rich in renewable energy resources, 30 percent of the world’s mineral resources, arable land, diverse flora and fauna and above all a youthful population, yet for a long time, we have always been characterized as a poor continent. I dare say, we are not.

In order for us to unlock our collective socio-economic potential, it is critical that we accelerate our integration and create synergies and build on comparative advantages that allows us to freely trade with each other. We have to consolidate our markets and trade more with each other and allow free movement of people across our borders.

We have to counter what the colonialists did in Berlin when they subdivided our continent at times separating brother from sister. They then taught us to fear and keep off from one another.

Let me use a few African examples. Today the Europeans, for example can travel within their continent without requiring visas. On our continent of Africa the lessons from our former colonies, that we should keep off from each other still prevails.

The reality is that for an African to visit a European nation is like trying to milk an elephant. The visa process is near impossible. However, for a European to visit an African nation is like going to the beach or for a cup of tea.

But that is nothing. The Tragedy is that for an African to visit a fellow African, the visa restriction in many of our nations against our own brothers and sisters are like trying to brush the teeth of a crocodile. We have been taught to keep each other at bay, so that we can remain poor.

For us to really enjoy the true economic benefits of the Africa Continental Free Trade Area, we need to behave like the Europeans and allow for the free movement of people and trade. Our development agencies – such as the African Union Development Agency cannot really succeed when we restrict each other.

In our contribution to this continental aspiration, Kenya is committed to progressively abolish visas to citizens from African Union Member States and make it easier to invest and do business in Kenya and across our continent. We are going to open our borders to all Africans to come to Kenya to visit, to trade, to enjoy, to do business, make money, because that is the right thing to do. I call upon all of us to open our borders for fellow Africans who are mostly unwanted everywhere else in the world.

**Mr. Chairperson,
Excellencies,**

Climate change continues to ravage lives and livelihoods of millions of people in Africa as a result of droughts, floods, erratic rainfall patterns, extreme heat conditions among others. This has significantly distorted our agriculturally based economies with devastating losses.

Previous global climate meetings have spent a lot of time in long conversations and stories without tangible commitments to reverse the adverse effects of climate change. Going forward, the future on this matter, Africa's voice must be consolidated and amplified to underscore our special circumstances and call for a fair International Financial System where all of us participate in and we are all shareholders. We need to discuss Moratorium and refinancing our debts

– which we want to pay, but to be given time to recover from the devastation of climate changes.

In order to consolidate our thoughts prior to the COP 28 scheduled to take place in Dubai, later this year, **His Excellency Hon. William Ruto, President of the Republic of Kenya** and in his capacity as the Chairperson of the Committee of African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change (CAHOSCC) will be convening an **African Climate Summit** from **4th to 5th September, 2023 in Nairobi**. Once again, on behalf of His Excellency the President and on my own behalf, I extend an invitation to all of you to participate in this important and timely conversation. Please come so that we can have a unified African Position that will ensure the success of our agenda.

We encourage member states to actively participate in the summit by showcasing unique projects and activities that speak to the themes. Your active participation will ensure the inclusivity of African concerns, voices and actions as the driving force in the Africa climate week.

Mr. Chairperson,

Kenya remains true to the fulfillment of the mandate of the Africa region as envisioned under our 2063 aspirations. We must also remain faithful in the implementation of decisions that we make in our sessions.

Africa Union needs to be self-reliant. As long as the bulk of the AU funds comes from outside, we somehow find ourselves dancing to the music that is not of our own making. Therefore, we must address the issue of reforms that will enable us to find our programmes. Funding coming from friends will just be for support and not for our lifeline. This calls for a critical look at the architecture of the AU and the way we implement our decisions.

Mr. Chairperson,

Bearing in mind that there can be no development without peace, Kenya has remained committed to the Silencing the Guns initiative. We reaffirm that we must work tirelessly towards ending all civil wars, conflicts, gender based violence and the prevention of genocide. Kenya has actively participated in peace and mediation efforts at the regional level.

Kenya is also spearheading the “Nairobi Process” to bring an end to hostilities in the Eastern region of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and have deployed our Defence forces to this region as part of peace keeping and enforcement measures. Additionally, Kenya is currently chairing the IGAD Quartet Group of Countries for the Resolution of the situation in the Republic of the Sudan.

**The Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The destiny of Africa lies in our hands to shape it to a place of prosperity, full of socio-economic opportunities and hope for our people. Our agencies such as the AU Development agency, or infrastructure, health, agriculture, etc have a lot of work to do and they are capable. It’s in our ability to transform Africa as a place to be and reverse the migration trajectory, with our hands on the deck and commitment to walk the talk to OUR DESTINATION OF THE AFRICA WE WANT WHERE NO CHILD SHALL SLEEP ON AN EMPTY STOMACH, guns shall be fused to protect the freedom of our people and resources will provide a solid base for industrial revolution and create jobs for our people while providing the much needed global supply chain diversification option.

With those few remarks, let me wish all fruitful deliberations and enjoyable stay in Nairobi.

Asante Sana
Thank You
Meci Beacoup
Shukran
Ameseginalehu