



PRESS RELEASE

OUTCOMES OF THE 31ST ORDINARY SESSION OF THE AFRICAN UNION ASSEMBLY OF HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation would like to inform the general public that Malawi participated in the 31st Ordinary Session of the African Union (AU) Assembly of Heads of State and Government, held in Nouakchott, Mauritania, from 1st to 2nd July, 2018.

His Excellency Prof. Arthur Peter Mutharika, President of the Republic of Malawi, was represented by Hon. Dr. Emmanuel Fabiano M.P., Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, who led the Republic of Malawi Delegation. The AU Summit was held under the theme **“Winning the Fight against Corruption: A Sustainable Path to Africa’s Transformation”**.

The main objective of the Summit was to review progress made in the reforms of the African Union towards realizing Agenda 2063. In this regard, the Summit noted the following achievements:

1. African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)

- Forty nine (49) of the 55 Member States of the African Union (AU) had signed the agreement establishing the AfCFTA, while 6 countries had ratified it by the date of the Summit. The AfCFTA is expected to create one of the biggest single markets globally.
- In this regard, 7 countries including Malawi requested for special consideration on the level of liberalization ambition. It was agreed that the 7 countries should make submissions on the justification for the period of the application of preferential treatment.

- The Assembly also noted progress being made on the African Common Position on negotiations with the European Union for a New Partnership Framework Agreement once the current Cotonou Agreement expires in 2020.

2. Institutional Reforms of the African Union

- The Assembly directed the finalization of the proposals and recommendations based on the initial findings, on the following organs: the Pan African Parliament; the Peace and Security Council; the African Court on Human and People's Rights; the African Commission on Human and People's Rights; the African peer Review Mechanism; and the Advisory Board on Corruption. The review will also include the division of labour between the AU Commission and regional economic communities.
- The Assembly approved the 2019 AU budget of US\$681,485,337.00 which had 3 components: operational, programmes; and peace support operations. The Assembly commended the Executive Council and the AU Commission (AUC) for reducing the AUC budget by 12% compared to the 2018 budget.

3. Peace and Security in Africa

- On peace and security, the Assembly welcomed the normalization of relations between Ethiopia and Eritrea after years of tensions and conflict over their boundary. The Assembly also welcomed the signing of a Peace Agreement between the Government and rebels in South Sudan.
- The Assembly endorsed various other recommendations aimed at resolving conflicts and promoting peace and security on the African continent.
- It also noted progress being made on the Master Roadmap on Practical Steps to Silence Guns in Africa by 2020.

4. Combating Corruption

The Assembly received a Presentation on Progress made on the Fight against Corruption by His Excellency Muhammadu Buhari, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The Presentation was followed by a Panel Discussion on the illegal financial flows, estimated to be over USD50 billion annually and more than twice the amount of Official Development Assistance received by the African continent annually. The Malawi Government renewed its commitment to fighting corruption at the domestic level and in contributing towards ending corruption on the continent.

5. Contribution by Malawi Delegation

On the Pan African Parliament, the Malawi delegation sought clarification on the dismissal of a Malawian citizen, Mr. Vipya Harawa, who worked as Clerk of Parliament of the Pan African Parliament in South Africa. The AU Commission informed that it had instituted investigations on the matter and any other allegations of malpractice at the institution and that it would report accordingly once investigations are completed.

On child rights during plenary of the Permanent Representatives Committee (PRC) and the Executive Council Sessions, the Malawi delegation confirmed the Malawi Government's commitment towards full protection of rights of the child. The Sessions were informed that the Malawi Parliament had amended the Republic of Malawi Constitution Section which defined the age of a child by raising it from 16 to 18 years.

Following the amendment of the Constitution, the definition section of Child Care Protection and Justice Act which defines a child as any person under the age of 18 has now become operational.

6. Theme for 2019

- The Assembly designated that the theme for 2019 would be: **“The Year of Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons in Africa: Towards Durable Solutions to Forced Displacement”**. In this regard, it was agreed that the African Union will formulate and implement strategies to deal with forced displacement which disrupts the wellbeing of the continents’ citizens and retards development on the continent.

7. Conclusion

Malawi’s participation at the 31st Ordinary Session of the African Union Assembly of Heads of State and Government was extremely important particularly as it afforded Malawi to lobby for more time for our private sector to prepare for practical realities in terms of opportunities and challenges of a single free market.