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STATEMENT DELIVERED

BY

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TRADE, INDUSTRY, AND MINING (ETIM)

AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION

AT THE

**WORKSHOP FOR THE PROMOTION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF
AFRICA'S DEEP SEABED RESOURCES IN SUPPORT TO AFRICA'S BLUE
ECONOMY**

1st June, 2021

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Your Excellences, Ministers responsible for Minerals Development in the Member States of the African Union here present;

Your Excellency Mr. Jens Frølich Holte, State Secretary of the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs;

Your Excellency Mr. Michael W. Lodge, Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority;

Your Excellency Mr. Jagdish D. Koonjul, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Mauritius to the United Nations;

Distinguished Workshop Participants,

Ladies, and Gentlemen.

I warmly greet each and every one of you.

The African Union Commission is happy to participate in this very important workshop.

Accordingly, it is also appropriate that we thank the International Seabed Authority (ISA), under the dynamic leadership of Secretary General **Mr. Michael W. Lodge**, for organizing this virtual workshop focused on the Promotion of Sustainable Development of Africa's Deep Seabed Resources in Support to Africa's Blue Economy.

The partnership with the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs is equally acknowledged and deeply appreciated.

Right from the beginning, let me express my confidence that the outcome of this workshop will greatly contribute in advancing the inclusive, integrated, and sustainable socio-economic transformation of the continent, one of the aspirations of the African Union Agenda 2063.

It is with this in mind that we warmly accepted the invitation to participate in this workshop.

The African Union Commission is undergoing institutional reforms, and consequently, realignment of functions and responsibilities.

The college of the new Commission, with a Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson and six Commissioners has been elected and installed.

We are now at the state of permanent placement of professional staff from Director-General to the lower levels through a competitive process, taking into account regional and gender balance as well as national quotas. For the first time ever, we also have Junior Professional Officer positions in the new Commission. Africa is a young continent, it follows we should create positions for the African youth who wish to pursue careers in the African Union.

Still on the issue of the African Union institutional reform process, let me also say that we have six Departments of the reformed Commission. I come here representing the Department of Economic Development, Trade, Industry and Mining. It is through the overall focus on economic development and sector focus on minerals that this Department is mainly involved on matters of deep sea mining to advance Africa's blue economy.

We also have the Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy, and Sustainable Environment (ARBE). This is the Department with overall policy focus on matters of the blue economy, and to this end, the Department developed and launched the Africa Blue Economy Strategy in October 2019.

The Africa Blue Economy Strategy is comprehensive and incorporates the best international standards and practices in inclusive sustainable development, anchored on the blue economy.

Our Department is focusing on the Strategy Thematic Area number 4 which aims at unlocking sustainable energy, mineral resources, and industrial innovation for the accelerated prosperity of Africa. This role will be easy to perform because our new Department has Divisions on: Economic Policy and Sustainable Development; Trade; Economic Integration; Industry; Tourism; Innovation; Investment; Entrepreneurship; and, Mining- which also includes oil and gas. These Divisions, will, in various but aligned ways, assist us in the implementation of the Africa Blue Economy Strategy.

On 27th May, this year, we signed, with the Government of the Republic of Guinea, a Host Agreement for the African Minerals Development Centre (AMDC). This is a Specialized Agency of the African Union.

The African Minerals Development Centre has the key task of accelerating the implementation of the Africa Mining Vision and the Addis Ababa Declaration on Building a Sustainable Future for Africa's Extractive Industry.

Work is currently underway to relocate the transition staff of the African Mineral Resources Development Centre from Addis Ababa to the permanent headquarters Guinea, Conakry.

I am sure we will closely work with the International Seabed Authority in supporting the operationalization of this planned centre of excellence. This would be good for the sustainable development of minerals in Africa. It would also be in line with the theme of the United Nations Oceans Conference which took place in New York from 5 to 9 June 2017; namely: ***"Fostering cooperation to promote the sustainable development of Africa's deep seabed resources in support to Africa's Blue Economy"***.

The importance of cooperation is also anchored on the fact that thirty-eight (38) African countries are geographically placed along a coastline-the Continental shelf- with exclusive economic zones that can be exploited to benefit and develop not only those

countries but the entire continent. This is because the African Union recognizes that sustainable protection and exploitation of the African maritime resources in a collaborative manner, offers huge possibilities for wealth creation, not only along this coastline, but also beyond into the international waters.

I will conclude by stating that the African Union Commission is looking forward to strengthening and consolidating the strategic partnership with the International Seabed Authority in deep-sea mineral resources development, marine scientific research and technology as well as specialized training of our young researchers.

I thank you all for your kind attention and look forward to reading the outcome document of this important workshop.