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OPENING STATEMENT

DELIVERED BY

**HER EXCELLENCY MRS JULIA DOLLY JOINER
COMMISSIONER FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS
AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION**

AT THE

**HIGH LEVEL SEMINAR ON THE THEME OF THE 16th
AFRICAN UNION SUMMIT ON SHARED VALUES**

8th DECEMBER 2010

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

Hon. Dalmas Otieno Anyango, Minister of State for Public Service of the Republic of Kenya and Chairperson of the Bureau of the 6th Conference of African Ministers of Public Service

Eminent Personalities, Academics and Researchers

Representatives from Partner Organizations

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to begin by addressing, on behalf of the African Union Commission (AUC) and on my own behalf, a warm welcome to each and every one of you as we gather at the Headquarters of the African Union in preparation for the January 2011 Summit on the theme of shared values in Africa. We are delighted to be hosting you and eager to benefit from the interest you have demonstrated by accepting the invitation to this consultative session. Indeed, the very idea of shared values evokes a level of excitement and does from our more recent experiences, elicit a higher than expected level of participatory enthusiasm. Whilst financial and practical limitations often serve to restrain our eagerness to broaden consultations and invite as many stakeholders as possible, we have understood from the recently-concluded Civil Society, Gender and Youth Fora on the Summit Theme, that with small, manageable and focused groups, we are able to secure high quality inputs and guidance in taking forward the mandate that is ours. We thus remain convinced that a small group, such as this, will sustain the momentum and would be most influential in shaping reflections and providing additional perspectives on, in this case, African Union (AU) shared values challenges and the future policy path that would be most appropriate.

I am certain that you would have noticed, as you entered and moved around within the compound of the AUC that, in addition to the soon to be completed state-of-the-art Conference Centre and Office Complex, there is a new energetic vibrancy that is permeating the Commission and the Union as a whole. The organization that was born just under 10 years ago is maturing and is taking strides that show that it is responding to the vision established. As we are beginning to see and experience some visible changes, and as the forthcoming Summit takes place, almost a decade after the birth of the AU, it makes good sense that we reflect on the shared values at this point in the continuing journey. The decision by the AU Assembly that the Summit be focused on Shared Values is thus a very welcome coincidence and an immense opportunity for all of us. Ever since the decision was made, I have expressed to all that this particular Summit will provide us with an important prospect for renewal in all efforts directed at deepening the democracy, governance and human rights agenda in the Continent.

In translating the enthusiasm for the Summit into practical actions, the Commission has over the past few months focused attention on encouraging dialogue on the Theme and has, as some of you would know, initiated a number of consultative engagements. We have, as I mentioned earlier, just concluded engagements on the Theme within Gender and Youth Fora. A few weeks ago, we organized consultations with a selection of Civil Society representatives through the Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC) of the African Union and at the end of this week, we will interact with Officials from African Union Organs and Regional Economic Communities. It is expected that the consultative process will culminate in a Meeting of Member State Experts to be held from the 13th to the 15th of December 2010. Our

efforts, extensive as they may be, would have been incomplete if we did not find a way of convening this particular Seminar.

Whilst there have been earlier interactions with some of you on the Summit Theme and a number of independent intellectuals and eminent individuals have been a part of some of our previous engagements, it was still imperative for us to bring a group of you together so that we could benefit from deeper and more focused reflections. I have in the past cautioned that governance and democracy actions outside of careful reflection would inevitably lead to parochialism. We know very well that a propensity to act without a careful consideration of the consequences would lead us into making the same mistake again and again. I cannot thus overemphasize the importance of this gathering and efforts directed at encouraging critical reflections on all matters that fall within the terrain of shared values. We simply cannot afford a situation where governance and democracy related actions outpace the process of research and reflection.

In as much as I am encouraging of critical reflection and an enthusiastic engagement with some of the ideas that have emerged from within the Commission, I am also duty bound to advise that these be contextualized in the established shared values momentum within the AU. As such, it would be important that this Seminar's reflections, take as a starting point, the content of the Assembly and Executive Council Decisions that served to establish the Theme for the 16th African Union Summit. For the benefit of this Seminar, I would like to recall that within the actual Decisions, the Assembly and Executive Council made direct reference to the evolving African Governance Architecture and provided that reflections on shared values should include identifying obstacles and measures to be adopted to facilitate continental integration, in line with which the Theme for the Summit has been established as: "Towards Greater Unity and Integration through Shared Values".

As a measure of further situating reflections, it would be important that this Seminar also applies its mind to the overall evolution of shared values in the AU and the trajectory that has been established from the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) to the AU. I would, in this respect, postulate that the shared values transformation from the OAU to the AU, resides fundamentally in the growing emphasis that is placed on the principles of non-indifference. The practical expression of such a principle is the numerous shared values instruments that have been adopted. Even as we recognise that a number of instruments are in place, we also know that there continues to be gaps in the frameworks established and that as the development of shared values is a continuous process, further instruments will be generated as specific interests are championed. Allow me to mention, in the presence of Honourable Minister Dalmas Otieno Anyango that, one such instrument is the current draft Charter on the Principles and Values of Public Service and Administration. We remain hopeful that this positive shared instrument of our Ministers of Public Service would be adopted during the 16th Summit and stand to congratulate the Honourable Minister on the leadership he has provided over this process.

In our reflections on the positive path in framework development, it is equally imperative that we engage with the gaps and some of the challenges that emanate from the adoption, ratification and domestication of instruments. In this regard, allow me to indicate that one of the most complex of challenges that we face is that even

though we have established numerous normative frameworks and to some extent, the institutional frameworks to monitor domestication, the rate of ratification of some important instruments has been slower than widely expected. One explanation for this continuing challenge is that the AU has still not found a balance between the implementation imperatives that accompany the adoption of shared values and the perhaps contradictory demands that the AU appreciates the particularities of individual Member States. One consequence of this imbalance is a questioning of the wisdom embodied in establishing and promoting shared values in democracy and hence a propensity towards rejecting persuasive advice on developments within Member States.

As the Commission, we are duty bound to continue on the path of implementing decisions and hence correctly have to sustain the momentum directed at deepening shared values and ensuring that instruments are signed and ratified. It would nonetheless be most prudent if this Seminar could creatively focus on what can be done to move us beyond the adoption-domestication gap, towards a path wherein we can, with certainty, make the claim that the governance values we espouse are indeed shared values – to be protected by Member States and the peoples of our Continent.

The Theme established for the Summit invites us to reflect also on the efficacy of shared values for continental integration. Indeed, it can be concluded that Member States were driven by this recognition when they called for and adopted the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance at the level of the African Union. As I have alluded to before, whilst such an approach to shared values adoption is imperative as the momentum is established towards integration, we should not lose sight of the fact that there needs to be a balance between values communicated downwards and values that emerge from people-to-people engagements. We cannot but recognise that there is often a gap between continentally-espoused values and what unfolds within communities. This requires careful reflection, as contestations around shared values also embody dialogue and debate on African values vis-a-vis values absorbed from Africa's interactions with the global community. Finding the balance and ensuring that all perspectives are catered for remains important, as we mediate a policy path in a context of diversity and divergent perspectives.

I am in no doubt that current realities and future demands in shared values would entrench in our minds the value of open reflection. Whereas I am and will always be supportive of creative reflections that move beyond the confines of immediate policy need, in this instance, I must encourage you all again that the reflections of this Seminar be on the policy-influencing opportunity that stands before it. It is a given that the Summit will focus on shared values and that it will adopt a Declaration and Decisions that are relevant to the world of action. As such, it would be prudent that reflections be focused on providing guidance on what could feasibly be included in the Summit preparatory process and in particular the Summit Declaration on the Theme and post Summit initiatives in Governance and Democracy. The Commission and I remain most open to your thoughts and reflections. However, I also crave your understanding and recognition that policy processes are always complex and at times utterances made might not always feature immediately within policy documents. I must also remind us all that the Session on the Summit Theme itself remains fairly short and hence it is not possible for the Assembly to reflect on

matters of detail and operational conclusions that would normally feature in implementation programmes.

In conclusion, allow me to voice a further word of gratitude for accepting our invitation to be part of these reflections. Allow me also to restate the Commission's and my own commitment to sustain our interactions and work with all who are engaged in critical and independent reflections. As a final word, I am certain that you will appreciate that scheduling such a Seminar at short notice, after just managing to secure modest funds, is a challenge and have no doubt that you will be forgiving for any oversight or shortcomings on the part of the African Union Commission. I thus again humbly request your patience and indeed your energetic participation over the next two days. I remain hopeful that the perspectives that will be shared will serve to shape the deliberations during the Summit and will continue to be part of our engagements within the Governance and Democracy space. On that note of optimism, I have the pleasure to declare open the High Level Seminar on the Shared Values Theme for the African Union January 2011 Summit.