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**STATEMENT OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE AUC
H.E. MOUSSA FAKI MAHAMAT
ON THE OCCASION OF THE 1ST STRATEGIC REFLECTION
ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CESSATION OF
HOSTILITIES AGREEMENT
ADDIS ABABA, 11 MARCH 2024**

Your Excellency Olusegun Obasanjo, AU High Representative for the Horn of Africa, and member of the AU Panel of the Ethiopia Peace Process

Your Excellency Uhuru Kenyatta, Former President of the Republic of Kenya, and member of the AU Panel

Your Excellency Ambassador Redwain Hussein , Director General of the National Intelligence and Security Service and Head of the Delegation of the government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE),

Your Excellency, Getachew Reda, President of the Interim Regional Administration of Tigray

Dr. Debretsion Gebremichael, Chairman of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF),

Ambassadors and Representatives of the United States, the EU and other Partners,

Today marks almost one year and a half since the 2nd November 2022 Pretoria Cessation of Hostilities Agreement.

To date, and thanks to our collective action, the process has already achieved steady and commendable progress.

Indeed, following the Agreement, the AU has held two successful Senior Commanders' meetings in Nairobi and established the Monitoring, Verification, and Compliance Mission in Mekele.

Through collaboration between the High-Level Panel, the Joint Committee, and Monitoring Verification and Compliance Mission, the AU has been able to track progress on the implementation of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement.

Some of the key achievements since the signing of the agreement include the immediate cessation of hostilities, the handover of heavy and medium weapons, the resumption of essential services, and the reopening of schools and economic activities in most parts of the Tigray region.

Additionally, the establishment of the Interim Regional Administration in Tigray and the National Commission for Reintegration, with the support of the AU to the working group on transitional justice has also registered progress.

I also authorized the disbursement of one million United States Dollars from the Crisis Reserve Facility of the AU Peace Fund to support the DDR programme. In so doing, Ethiopia became the first AU Member State to benefit from the revitalized Peace Fund.

At this juncture, let me express the AU's gratitude to Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa for their continued support to the implementation of the COHA. Their contribution facilitated the deployment of a Team of African Experts, who diligently serve under the MVCN in Tigray region.

Here let me also take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the African Development Bank (AfDB), the United Nations (UN), the EU and the government of the United States of America for their continued support to our collective peace-making efforts in Northern Ethiopia.

Today's meeting is an important and timely opportunity for strategic reflection to take stock of the continued challenges and outstanding issues that remain to be resolved. It is therefore, you the Parties, who are best

placed to point out the outstanding issues and how they can best be resolved.

Despite the undeniable achievements made so far, the process of political dialogue, transitional justice and Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration are among the important issues that need your urgent attention.

Your continued leadership to collaborate and compromise, cannot be underestimated. I therefore urge you to demonstrate the same commitment and candour that has become the hallmark of this process, which is essential to achieve peace for the region of Tigray.

The role of the African Union in this process has always been, and will continue to be to support your efforts to achieve what has remained a truly Ethiopian -owned and led process, since the signature of the Agreement to date. We look forward to your guidance on how best and the AU can continue to support you in this noble endeavor

Indeed, durable and lasting peace in Tigray will not only be a key peace dividend for Ethiopia but also for the Horn of African region. So I cannot urge you enough, my brothers and sisters, to stay the course as we have reached a crucial point of this process, to be able to consolidate the key gains made so far.

We remain determined to continue to support your efforts to restore lasting peace, stability and development to Tigray.

In closing, today also marks the beginning of Ramadan and the Orthodox fasting period. An auspicious and happy coincidence!

May God the Almighty bring peace to our hearts and strengthen our resolve to work towards the Africa we want and deserve, one that is integrated, prosperous and most of all, peaceful.

It is now my honour to declare this inaugural strategic reflection meeting open and wish you fruitful deliberations.

Thank you.