Talking points for H.E Dr Mothae Anthony Maruping on the occasion Africa Review Meeting on the Implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action held in Addis Ababa on the 16th to 18th July 2013

- Allow me Moderator to commence by expressing profound gratitude of the AUC to the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS) for graciously co-organising, together with the AUC, this event, which is the critical review of the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action, specifically focused on Africa. From lessons of experience, with the wisdom of hindsight and given the emerged and emerging terrain and new dynamics in the global arena, together we try to chart the way forward.

- How one recalls that in September 2000, the UN Member States committed themselves to addressing the special needs of the landlocked countries (LLDCs). In 2001, The General Assembly established the post of the UN-OHRLLS to promote global awareness, understanding, appreciation and support to addressing peculiar challenges faced by such countries.

- In pursuit of these commitments, a Ministerial conference was organised in August 2003 in Almaty, Kazakhstan, the outcome of which was the Almaty Programme of Action (APoA). That is where and when APoA was born.

- APoA provided an opportune framework for the establishment of mutually beneficial relationships between LLDCs, their transit neighbours and other development partners, and to mitigate the negative effects and vulnerabilities from which LLDCs’ economies suffer.

- Since 2003, a number of conferences have been held in the context of
the implementation of the APoA. Among them one can mention:

- The Thematic Meeting on Transit Transport Infrastructure Development, Ouagadougou Burkina Faso- 18th to 20th June 2007.
- Third Meeting of Trade Ministers of LLDCs, Ezulwini, Swaziland- 21-22 October 2009.
- Pre-Conference event on Transport Development and Trade Facilitation co-organised by OHRLLS and the World Bank- 12th June 2013, Washington, DC.
- One is fully aware that the LLDCs envoys also hold frequent consultative meetings both in Geneva (WTO and UNCTAD) and New York. I had the privilege to address one such meeting in New York.

- Africa has 16 landlocked countries and Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest concentration of landlocked countries. Hence the plight of LLDCs is of particular interest to the AUC.

- The geographical conditions of LLDCs pose special challenges in their efforts to integrate into the global trading system. First, their goods must be transported through one or more neighbouring countries in order to get to port. Secondly, the transit corridors- roads, rail and other modes of transport may be of poor quality. Third, they face port and customs clearance delays and lastly they face cumbersome customs procedures and other regulatory constraints to name but a few.

- These factors underlie the high costs on a number of fronts, unreliable transport services and highly impaired competitiveness of the LLDCs in
the world markets.

- We are surely aware that the responsibility for establishing effective transit systems rests with both the landlocked and transit developing countries for mutual benefit in these days of regionalisation or economic communities. In any case some transit countries are so enormous that they have remote inland regions that face the same challenges as LLDCs except for border barriers to trade. Regionalisation programmes make this mutual responsibility imperative.

- AU has decided to realise the still untapped benefits of increased intra-Africa Trade. Progress in pursuit of this Agenda calls for closer cooperation between the landlocked and transit developing countries based on mutual interest. This is because transit neighbours of landlocked developing countries are themselves developing countries, often of broadly similar economic structure and beset by similar challenges.

- In order to realise increased intra-African trade, African countries need to overcome constraints caused by infrastructure deficits and trade facilitation challenges on the bilateral, regional and continental basis, among many other factors. Construction of transit infrastructure, especially the missing links to complete regional networks, generation and distribution of energy and the improvement of communications, among others, will unlock Africa’s potential to trade within itself. In addition, effective trade facilitation will require the implementation of harmonized laws and regulations and procedures and efficient management of border control services (i.e. efficient one-stop-service border posts).

- The Private Sector can be a worthy development partner, even in the area of the development of infrastructure through PPPs and BOTs and other formats. This year’s UNCTAD Economic Development in Africa Report 2013, sub-titled, intra-Africa Trade: Unlocking Private
**Sector Dynamism** is instructive in this regard. It has stressed the importance of strengthening the private sector to boost intra-African trade. The report argues that for African countries to realise expected gains from intra-African trade, and regional integration, they will need to place the building of productive capacities and domestic entrepreneurship at the heart of the policy agenda for boosting intra-African trade. That is, what is to be traded has to be produced through industrialisation and development of agriculture as well as human development, as means to diversification and the report argues that, that is best done by African enterprises, largely.

- The report further recommends Developmental Regionalism to achieving wider African integration and transformation objectives (The Model based on the case of the Mekong neighbourhood successful experiment. It is an exemplary LLDCs and transit countries cooperation.

- What is good for LLDCs is also good for transit countries particularly through regionalism. Functional regionalism has been proven to bring about strong and sustained economic growth and resilience for the regional economy to external shocks. It is for these reasons that one would like to see more active engagement and commitment of transit countries in issues of special interest to LLDCs.

- The plight of LLDCs should be heeded more intently than before and should form an integral part of the Post-2015 Global Development Agenda which is currently being developed by the international community.

- AUC welcomes the Aid For Trade (AFT) initiative aimed at integrating developing countries trade firmly into the multilateral trading system. ATF can nurture increased trade of LLDCs through development of trade and transport corridors and implementation of trade facilitation measures.

- AUC wishes to acknowledge and express its support to the efforts and commitment of various stakeholders to the successful review and updating of the Almaty Programme of Action. There is need to adapt it
to new terrain and dynamics in the world. AUC wishes to urge the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), World Trade Organisation (WTO), The World Bank Group, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UN-OHRLLS and other regional UN Commissions and regional development banks, to step up advocacy and to continue to provide financial, technical and capacity building support to the LLDCs in the journey into into the Almaty 2.

• I also wish to commend the authorities of Uruguay, Kazakhstan and Mongolia for their exceptionally active leadership in LLDCs issues. Their active role and remarkable contributions to the cause of LLDCs has not gone on unnoticed. It is very much appreciated.

• Lastly, AUC overseeing 16 LLDCs wishes to reaffirm its commitment to the Almaty Programme of Action in addressing the special needs of the landlocked developing countries especially with respect to transit transport infrastructure development, communications, trade facilitation and addressing the challenges confronted by their transit developing neighbours.

• AUC wishes participants fruitful deliberations. We do need an updated APOA.

• Thank You for Your kind attention.