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Report on the inaugural session of the Pan-African Parliament

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Report on the inaugural session of the Pan-African Parliament

1. Introduction

1. The Inaugural Session of the Pan-African Parliament was held from 18 to 20 March 2004, in Addis Ababa. This session was marked by the opening ceremony and the 1st Session of the Parliament.
2. Two hundred and two (202) Pan-African Parliamentarians elected or nominated out of a total of 205 from forty-one (41) Member States of the African Union that had ratified the Protocol to the Treaty establishing the African Economic Community relating to the Pan-African Parliament, participated in the deliberations of the session.
3. The list of Parliamentarians is annexed to the present report.

A. Inaugural Session of the Pan-African Parliament

4. Under the chairmanship of Mr. Joaquim Alberto Chissano, President of the Republic of Mozambique and Current Chairperson of the African Union, the inaugural session which opened on 18 March 2004, was marked essentially by the swearing of the oath of office/solemn declaration by the Pan-African Parliamentarians and the election of the President of the Parliament.
5. The deliberations of this inaugural session took place at the United Nations Conference Centre.
6. It was graced by the presence of the following personalities:
 - Mr. Girma Woide-Giorgis, President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia;
 - Mr. Meles Zenawi, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia;
 - Mr. Alpha Gumar Konare, Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union;
 - Mr. K. Y. Amoako, Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa and representative of the UN Secretary General;
 - and representatives of parliamentary and inter-parliamentary organizations as well as distinguished invitees, the list of which is annexed to the report.

Opening ceremony

7. After a word of introduction by Mrs. Julia Dolly JOINER, Commissioner for Political Affairs of the African Union Commission, the Current Chairperson of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union entered the plenary hall accompanied by the President and the Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia as well as the Chairperson of the AU Commission.
8. In his capacity as Chairperson of the session, in keeping with Article 14-1 of the Protocol, President Chissano declared the session open at 9:15 hours. After a rendition of the African Union anthem followed by a minute of meditation or prayers, depending on the choice of the participant, a number of speeches were made.

Welcome address by Prof. Alpha Oumar Konare, Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union

9. Mr. Alpha Oumar Konare began by saying how happy he was to finally witness the inception of the Pan-African Parliament. He hailed the presence of all participants and expressed his concern at the wave of terrorist attacks perpetrated worldwide. In this regard, he deplored the recent bomb explosions in Spain and the Near East, which claimed so many lives.
10. He then traced the origins of the African Union from Marcus Garvey in 1904 to Haile Selassie, Emperor of Ethiopia, culminating in the establishment of the Pan-African Parliament in 2004. He reviewed the contributions of great statesmen of Africa and the African Diaspora in the process leading up to the establishment of the African Union. He paid special tribute to Haile Selassie for his dedication to the cause of African Unity.
11. Alluding to the problems bedeviling the African continent, he said that Africa should create the channels for its own progress. He said that the protection of human rights, the consolidation of culture and democratic institutions, good governance, the promotion of peace and security and the consolidation of solidarity among African peoples were the major principles underpinning the Union and that the Pan-African Parliamentarians should wage their battle on the basis of these principles.
12. He intimated that the 21st Century is Africa's century, adding that the immense human potential of 1.5 billion inhabitants, including 800 million youths, which Africa would have in the next twenty years, could be considered an invaluable wealth. He also mentioned the issue of NEPAD, inviting the Parliamentarians to work towards its effective implementation.
13. He concluded by calling on all Africans to keep hoping for a glorious future for our Continent.

Speech by Mr. Meles Zenawi, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

14. The Ethiopian Prime Minister first welcomed all participants to his country. He dwelt on the expectations of the African peoples, namely, peace and security, development and solidarity. He expressed the hope that an Africa reunited today through the Pan-African Parliament would emerge greater, united and inter-dependent.
15. These two speeches were followed by checking attendance, after which the Pan-African Parliamentarians were invited to take the oath of office or make a solemn declaration according to their choice.

Swearing of the oath of office or solemn declaration

16. This ceremony of assumption of office was conducted by four (04) nominated senior parliamentary officials, on the basis of the different working languages of the Pan-African Parliament, namely: Arabic, English, French and Portuguese. The senior parliamentarians were as follows:
 - for the French language group, Mr. DOUTI N'Sarma Mabiba of Togo;
 - for the English language group, Mr. Fidele Rwingamba of Rwanda;
 - for the Arabic language group, Mr. Muftah Suisse of Libya;
 - for the Portuguese language group, Mr. Amilcar Mario Quinta of Angola.
17. Thus, 202 Pan-African Parliamentarians from 41 States took the oath or made their solemn declaration in the working language of their choice. Classified in four groups, they took the oath of office or made a solemn declaration in the following order:

- Parliamentarians of the Arabic language group
 - Parliamentarians of the English language group
 - Parliamentarians of the French language group, and
 - Parliamentarians of the Portuguese language group.
18. After this ceremony, the Current Chairperson of the African Union made his speech.

Speech by the Current Chairperson of the African Union, Mr. Joaquim Chissano

19. In his speech, President Chissano congratulated the Pan-African Parliamentarians who had just assumed office and hailed the inception of the Pan-African Parliament expected to fulfil the hopes and aspirations of the African peoples. Placing Africa in its present context marked by profound changes and conflict situations, President Chissano felt that the establishment of this new institution was another step towards the resolution of all its difficulties. He said that the Pan-African Parliament should, through its actions, raise the hopes of our African populations.
20. He was of the opinion that without economic development, it would be futile to expect stable political institutions and invited the Pan-African Parliamentarians to strive for the rapid growth and development of the Continent.
21. He then expressed his profound gratitude to the founding fathers of the Organization of African Unity whose efforts made it possible to establish this Parliament today. He urged the Pan-African Parliamentarians to work towards ensuring that Africa's voice was heard more strongly in the concert of nations.
22. He believed that NEPAD is a futuristic vision of development for whose success the Pan-African Parliamentarians should ensure in terms of improved living conditions for the people they represent. To this end, President Chissano invited the Pan-African Parliament to initiate sessions on NEPAD in order to gain a better understanding of the programme. He also invited the Parliament to organize brainstorming sessions on the current major challenges with other organs of the African Union to facilitate the adoption of appropriate strategies and methods to coordinate their respective actions.
23. President Chissano concluded his speech by stating his conviction that Africa would be able to take up all the challenges.
24. After President Chissano's speech, the Pan-African Parliamentarians proceeded to elect the President of the Pan-African Parliament.

Election of the President of the Pan-African Parliament

25. Before conducting this election, the parliamentarians adopted the rules for the election of the President of the Parliament. In compliance with the Protocol, the President was to be elected by secret ballot, by simple majority of the members present and voting.
26. Three candidatures were announced, namely the candidatures of Ghana, The Sudan and Tanzania. At the end of various consultations, Ghana and The Sudan withdrew in favour of Tanzania. Therefore, Mrs. Mongella Gertrude Ibengwe, Tanzanian Parliamentarian (East Africa), became the sole candidate for this post.
27. On the occasion, a ballot was designed and presented with the following characteristics: the ballot bore the name of the sole candidate with a box beside it. Each parliamentarian was requested to vote by indicating his/her vote in the box.
28. For the different voting exercises, an election officer assisted by four (04) deputies had been nominated by the Chairperson of the session.

29. At the end of the voting exercise, the following results were obtained:

Voting: 201 parliamentarians

- i. 166 for;
- ii. 21 against;
- iii. 13 abstentions.

30. In the light of these results, President Chissano declared Mrs. Mongella Gertrude Ibengwe President of the Pan-African Parliament. She was then invited to take the oath of office.

Swearing in of the President elect of the Parliament

31. Mrs. Mongella Gertrude Ibengwe, President elect of the Pan-African Parliament then took the oath of office.

Acceptance Speech by the President elect of the Pan-African Parliament

32. Mrs. Mongella Gertrude Ibengwe made an acceptance statement in which she thanked her parliamentary colleagues for the trust they had just reposed in her.

33. She welcomed the selection of a woman to lead this prestigious institution and expressed satisfaction at the collective awareness by fully associating women in the management of the affairs of the Continent.

34. She promised to work in the interest of the African peoples and solicited the support of each and everyone in order to achieve the set objectives of the Pan-African Parliament.

35. After this statement, the President elect assumed the chair for the rest of the inaugural session.

36. The deliberations of the inaugural session continued under the presidency of Mrs. Mongella Gertrude Ibengwe, President of the Pan-African Parliament with the reading of the vote of thanks by an Ethiopian Parliamentarian.

Vote of thanks presented by a member of the Pan-African Parliament

37. The vote of thanks was read by an Ethiopian member of parliament in the person of Mr. Mulualem Bessie. In this vote of thanks, Mr. Bessie welcomed the establishment of the Pan-African Parliament and thanked the Ethiopian authorities for the hospitality and warm welcome extended to participants. He also thanked the AU Commission and the Steering Committee for the efforts deployed to prepare the launch of the Pan-African Parliament. He expressed the hope that the Pan-African Parliament, an institution of the African Union, would meet the expectations of the African peoples it represents.

38. The inaugural session of the Pan-African Parliament was adjourned at 14:20 hours.

39. It resumed at the headquarters of the African Union with the holding of the First Session of the Parliament.

B. First session of the Pan-African Parliament

40. The Pan-African Parliament held its 1st session at the headquarters of the African Union on this same 18th day of March 2004, chaired by Mrs. Mongella Gertrude Ibengwe, President of the Pan-African Parliament.

41. The session opened at 17:20 hours, according to the following agenda:

- Election, of the four (04) Vice-Presidents of the PAP;

- Establishment of the Bureau of the PAP;
- Adoption of Rules for the Constitution of Committees and Rules of Debate;
- Constitution of the Committees of the PAP;
- Debate on the statements of the Current Chairperson of the African Union and the Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union.

Election of the Four (04) Vice-Presidents of the PAP

42. Prior to the elections, the Parliamentarians adopted the rules for these elections. According to the rules, each region shall present two (02) candidates including one woman and the region of origin of the President shall be excluded from the candidature for vice-president. The elections shall be conducted by secret ballots.
43. The ballot comprised two sections, namely, a first section reserved for candidates and a second section listing all the candidates.
44. Each parliamentarian was to vote for the candidate of his/her choice in the first section of the ballot.
45. Each parliamentarian was also to vote for a candidate from each of the regions as indicated in the second section of the ballot.
46. The votes in the second section of the ballot would be counted first.
47. In case no female candidate was among the first four, the woman with the greatest number of votes in the first section of the ballot would replace the candidate of the region corresponding with the second section of the ballot.
48. The first section of the ballot would only be taken into account if no female candidate was elected Vice-President in the second section of the ballot.
49. The election shall be decided by a simple majority of parliamentarians present and voting.
50. The order of nomination of Vice-Presidents shall be the first, second, third and fourth Vice-Presidents in accordance with the results of the vote.
51. The following results were obtained in the election of Vice-Presidents:
 - for the North African region: Mrs. Amal Nuri Safar (Libya): 25 votes Dr. Mohammed Lufti Farhat (Libya): 142 votes
 - for the Central African region: Mr. Shadrack Niyonkuru (Burundi): 50 votes Mrs. Loun Ndoadoumngue (Chad): 125 votes
 - for the West African region: Dr. Princess Baba-Jigida (Sierra Leone): 71 votes Mr. Jerome Sacca Kina (Benin): 107 votes
 - for the Southern African region: Mr. Van-Dunem Fernando Jose de Franca (Angola): 160 votes Mrs. Raditapole Khauhelo Deborah (Lesotho): 15 votes.
52. At the end of the elections, the following were elected as Vice-Presidents:
 - for the Northern African region: Dr. Mohammed Lufti Farhat
 - for the Central African region: Mrs, Loun Ndoadoumngue Elise
 - for the West African region: Mr. Jerome Sacca Kina Guezere
 - for the Southern African region: Mr. Van-Dunem Fernando Jose de Franca.
53. Pursuant to Article 12-4 of the Protocol, the elected Vice-Presidents are ranked in accordance with the result of the vote as follows:

- Hon. Van Dunem Fernando Jose de Franca became 1st - Vice-President;
 - Hon. Dr. Mohammed Lufti Farhat - 2nd Vice-President;
 - Hon. Loun Ndoadoumngue - 3rd Vice-President;
 - Hon. Jerome Sacca Kina Guezere - 4th Vice-President.
54. The session was adjourned at 21:17hours to resume the next day 19 March 2004 at 10:00 hours.
55. The session resumed on 19 March 2004 at 10:17hours to continue consideration of the agenda of the first session.
56. On resumption of deliberations, the results of the election of VicePresidents were once again announced.
57. The elected Vice-Presidents took the oath of office or made a solemn declaration.

Establishment of the Bureau of the PAP

58. After taking the oath of office, the Vice-Presidents were invited by the President of the Parliament to take their seats on the podium. The Pan-African Parliament was thus endowed with a bureau composed as follows:
- Hon. Mongella Gertrude Ibengwe - President;
 - Hon. Van Dunem Fernando Jose de Franca - 1st Vice-President;
 - Hon. Dr. Mohammed Lufti Farhat - 2nd Vice-President;
 - Hon. Loun Ndoadoumngue - 3rd Vice-President;
 - Hon. Jerome Sacca Kina Guezere - 4th Vice-President.
59. The session was once again adjourned at 13:12hours and resumed at 17:00hours.
60. On resumption and before moving on to the next item on the agenda, the parliamentarians had a lengthy discussion on the possibility of adopting African languages as working languages of the Parliament, in this instance, Swahili. From the discussions, it emerged that in view of the difficulties experienced in editing documents in the other languages, it would not be inappropriate to envisage the adoption of another working language.

Adoption of Rules for the Constitution of Committees and Rules of Debate

61. Three (03) *Ad Hoc* Committees were set up to prepare the basic texts for the operation of the Parliament. The Committees are as follows:
- Legal Affairs Committee;
 - Budget Committee;
 - Credentials Committee.
62. The principle of fifteen (15) parliamentarians per *Ad Hoc* Committee at a rate of three (03) per region was adopted.
63. The bureau of each *Ad Hoc* Committee shall comprise a Chairperson and Deputy-Chairperson.
64. With regard to the rules governing deliberations, it was agreed that each parliamentarian could speak in the working language of his/her choice and that any speech made in a given language would be simultaneously interpreted into the other languages. No parliamentarian may take the floor without the

authorization of the Chairperson of the session. Requests for the floor shall be recorded according to the order in which they were made. The Chairperson when giving the floor shall ensure that parliamentarians from different regions speak alternatively. Each speaker shall not exceed five (05) minutes.

Constitution of the Committees of the PAP

65. The composition of the committees and their respective bureaus were adopted by the parliamentarians at the end of a marathon session.
66. The composition of these committees is annexed to the present report.
67. The session was adjourned at 19:00hours to resume the following day, 20 March at 10:00hours.

Debate on the Statements by the Current Chairperson of the African Union and the Chairperson of the Commission

68. The Session resumed on 20 March 2004 at 10 hours under the Chair of Honourable Mongolia Gertrude Ibengwe, President of the Pan-African Parliament.
69. The Pan-African Parliamentarians expressed their views on the issues raised by the Chairperson of the African Union and the Chairperson of the Commission in their respective statements made at the inaugural session of the Pan-African Parliament.
70. Parliamentarians from the following countries took the floor: Tunisia, South Africa, Senegal, The Sudan, Congo, Algeria, Namibia, Djibouti, Gabon, Ghana, Egypt, Lesotho, Uganda, Benin, Libya, Tanzania, Botswana, Burundi, The Gambia, Mauritania, Mauritius, Rwanda, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Zambia, Kenya, Niger, Cameroon, Zimbabwe, Mali, Guinea Conakry, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Togo, Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, Ethiopia.
71. In their respective interventions, all the Parliamentarians welcomed the birth of the Pan-African Parliament in which would be involved the African populations in the management of the affairs of the African Union. They extended their warm and sincere felicitations to the Current Chairperson of the African Union and the Chairperson of the Commission for their brilliant statements at the inaugural session of the Parliament.
72. Almost all the Pan African Parliamentarians who took the floor during the debate, amongst other things, hailed the effective launching of the Parliament as an historic event and milestone on Africa's path on the meaningful and people-centered regional integration and development.
73. As representatives and the voices of African peoples rather than States or governments, the PAP underscored the magnitude of the responsibility, trust, and confidence conferred on them by African peoples themselves, and by the Constitutive Act and Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union (AU) to ensure the responsiveness of the AU to the highest aspirations of all segments of the African people, on which the success of the AU would also be judged. In this light, the PAP noted the expectations of the African people's were high, resolving that failure was not an option, and the mobilization of adequate resources, and all necessary measures to ensure the smooth and effective conduct of its activities was crucial.
74. Further to the historic decision of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the AU in Durban, South Africa, establishing gender parity at the AU Commission, the brilliant election of Ambassador G. I. Mongella to the high and historic office of 1st President of PAP was hailed as outstanding achievement of Africa with respect to the rest of the world, and in particular and testimony and a high mark of Africa's irreversible thrust and democratic maturity;
75. The PAP also underscored the personal efforts, long struggles and outstanding achievements of Mrs. Mongella as a mother, educationist, politician and diplomat which amongst other high offices in her native Tanzania, in Africa, and within the United Nations System, witnessed her elevation to the high office of Secretary General of the World Conference on Women of 1994, in Beijing, China.

76. The election was particularly hailed as Africa's recognition of the outstanding contributions and relentless efforts of the women of the Africa in the struggles of the liberation of Africa, including decolonization, apartheid and neo-colonization, and in development at all levels.
77. The PAP observed the unique contribution it would bring to the AU by transforming the extensive diversity of cultures and wealth of knowledge of various African peoples, the diversity of parliamentary cultures and best practices, as well as the individual proximity of the Pan African Parliamentarians to the African peoples, their profound knowledge, abilities, experiences and the demonstrated commitment of the Parliamentarians themselves, into unifying poles of strength that would enrich and harness regional integration, unity and development in Africa. In this regard, the PAP stressed the need for speedy establishment of a common African citizenship status for its members, in order to break with the current multiplicity of lines of loyalty and identity, and begin the process of imbuing the African people with a meaningful sense of their common origin and belonging, towards a common identity and future.
78. As directly elected representatives of the African peoples, the PAP stressed the urgency and centrality of its work for ensuring a people-driven and centered AU in all respects. Members thus stressed the need for PAP to evolve speedily from the current consultative status to a legislative body, and thus for all necessary measures to be taken to ensure that the 5-year timeframe established for the end of the present transition period be respected unfailingly.
79. The Parliament underscored the need for its activities to be geared towards reinvigorating social development in Africa, notably by reawakening the civic conscience of Africans, pride and solidarity as a key African virtue that can enable the people retake control over their future.
80. Several members who took the floor stressed the need for unity of action amongst Africans for sustainable social development, particularly in transforming NEPAD as the socio-economic agenda of African into concrete opportunities for improving the lives of Africans. Several members also stressed the need to break the linguistic barriers imposed on Africans by ruthless colonization towards the realisation of meaningful integration. In this regard, it was suggested that adequate measures be taken to communicate the work of PAP to all Africans. It was proposed that affirmative action schemes be developed and implemented in favour of backward segments of the African people, communities, countries and regions.
81. The promotion of a culture of peace and tolerance was particularly stressed as a critical element of durable peace and security in the continent.
82. The need to mobilise more compelling action to address major social challenges facing the continent, in particular, pervasive poverty, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the collapse of family and community structures, the rights of women and children, the refugee crises and the disillusionment of the youth was underscored. The PAP also emphasized the need to address food security challenges facing the Continent.
83. The PAP also stressed the need for addressing various challenges relating to education and literacy in Africa, in the light of the population growth projections provided in the speech of the Chairperson of the Commission. A member proposed the creation of adult education centers in villages throughout Africa.
84. The debate also noted the opportunity provided by the new African renaissance, stressing the need for the rebirth to be anchored in the history of Africa. In this regard, the PAP stressed the need to reinvigorate the teaching of African history and the promotion of African culture for greater understanding of the African identity.
85. The plight of the African child and youth was noted as an urgent issue needing courageous action. Some members proposed the creation of centers and seminars for youth as frameworks for building common understanding amongst themselves, and for mobilising their strengths.
86. The PAP condemned corruption as a cancer that must be strongly combated in order to create conducive conditions for social progress and development. It was stressed that people, and not profit, must be placed at the fore of development efforts through greater accountability and responsibility.
87. The importance of building close partnership with African civil society was underscored.
88. The Pan-African Parliament expressed their determination as to the strategies and measures to be adopted to find appropriate solutions to all these problems.

89. They believed that Africa should rely on its own forces and, in this connection, called on African States to speed up the economic integration process. They said that it was needful that African States adopt economic policies to promote co-operation among them and reduce co-operation with the developed countries. To this end, African States should commit themselves to remove the artificial barriers created by colonialism.
90. The African Parliamentarians pledged to reflect with the other organs of the African Union on possible ways and means of enabling Africa to address the challenges facing it.
91. With regard to economic and social issues, the parliamentarians focused their discussions on the following:
92. NEPAD is a programme of Africa and shows the determination of Heads of State and Government to take charge of the challenges of globalisation. Parliamentarians were of the view that it should be discussed and studied in national Parliaments in order to strengthen the capacity of the AU and engage in the implementation of NEPAD by charting a way forward through the translation of ideas into programmes. Above all, the PAP must follow closely on the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) which should be broadened to include other sectors.
93. The PAP observed that poverty had become feminized for it affects mostly women, and consequently children. It is one of the priorities of the Beijing and Dakar Platforms of Action as well as other programmes such as Education for All. To combat it, the full participation of women at all levels is necessary and this should be accompanied by better access to health, mother and child care, promotion of human rights, conflict resolution, debt cancellation, all of which must be discussed in national Parliaments. Poverty is deepened by the inability and crumbling efforts of government to pay debt. Democracy, peace, rule of law, solidarity, good governance, social progress for the people, are all instruments to put in place in order to do away with poverty.
94. Independence does not bring economic emancipation. About 30 million Africans passed across the continent through slavery. Through brain drain, Africa is also losing human power. There is a need to create a conducive environment for the intellectuals, engineers and other qualified Africans to return to the continent.
95. Parliamentarians ought to ask themselves why is it that China, India, for example, two countries with greater populations and lesser mineral, energy and natural resources, are running ahead of Africa. It is time to make an introspection before putting the blame on others. Africa should change its mindset, engage in courageous political decision-making, focus on real issues and ensure that effective policies are put in place so as to become more responsive to the African people's needs and aspirations.
96. The PAP should remain seized with the monitoring of the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). A Newsletter of the PAP should be issued in various languages.
97. Parliamentarians proposed that those Africans charged with integrating Africa should be given a special status and that there was a need to have an African citizenship without which the PAP will not be able to work effectively. They also insisted that there should be free movement in a united Africa. In addition, money should be able to be moved across African countries instead of being moved to Swiss banks.
98. Parliamentarians observed that since decolonisation, trade has been hindered by market access constraints. They also believed that the sales of African goods should be promoted and that Africa should stop becoming the dumping ground of goods of inferior quality from other countries.
99. Parliamentarians noted that Africa had become worse off with trade liberalization and globalisation, and that they should therefore look for the proper policies to put in place in order to combat poverty, ensure food security, eliminate trade-distorting mechanisms and integrate Africa into the new world economic order. As a first step, they proposed to reassess their level of preparedness to meet the daunting challenges and to grasp opportunities. They believed that in establishing a roadmap for future action, the spirit and act of unity and solidarity should prevail. They proposed that resources and skills should be mobilized to set up national trade policy fora that would then develop into regional trade development policy fora. In addition, they called on the PAP to establish a Special Committee on Agriculture and International Trade in order to harmonise policies. They also pointed out the need to identify, through umbrella organizations

such as the AU and the ACP, a commonality of interests so as to strengthen Africa's negotiating positions vis-a-vis its US and EU trade partners. They further highlighted the need to build regional economic cooperation in order to ensure effectiveness through predictability and reliability in trade, to set up Free Trade Areas, Customs Unions, and eventually the African Economic Community, for one should not forget that Africa has a market of 340 million people.

100. They also recommended that the AU should set up the mechanism or organ to harmonise the different levels of economic development of the regions and not allow African countries to be relegated to the LDC status.
101. They observed that Africa was strong and united in Cancun and that it should continue to be so in the future. They also pointed out that policies on market access, trade preferences, export subsidies and domestic support, tariff and non-tariff barriers should not be dictated by OECD countries. They underlined that 300 billion dollars are spent annually to impoverish third world farmers, including the cotton producers of Mali. They also highlighted the fact that, while the ACP was being unbundled into regional and sub-regional blocks, the EU and the US were agreeing on a strategy of mutual forgiveness of their own protectionist practices while pressuring developing countries to open up their markets. They recommended that the concept of Special and Differential Treatment, specificities of vulnerable and small economies and land-locked countries, special safeguard mechanisms and acquired preferences of ACP should be well entrenched in the provisions of WTO in order to level the playing field. They stressed that Africa should be united and build bridges of solidarity with the Caribbean and Pacific and other developing countries to enable its voice to be heard forcefully at the WTO.

Closing

102. At the end of a very fruitful discussion, the President delivered a closing speech in which she renewed her sincere thanks for the confidence reposed in her and her Parliamentarians colleagues. She reviewed the work accomplished during the inaugural session. She informed the meeting that the Bureau had met and adopted the following decisions:
 - The imminent recruitment of the parliament administrative staff on a temporary basis for a one-year period. The recruitment will follow the same procedure as obtained in the Commission of the African Union.
 - The period of the meetings of the *Ad Hoc* Committees that were set up has been scheduled between April and May 2004, followed by the meeting of the Bureau.
 - Concerning the *Ad Hoc* Committee on Budgetary Matters, it is recommended that it prepares a first budget covering the last six (6) months of 2004 and a second budget for 2005.
 - The Second Session of the Pan-African Parliament is scheduled for July/August, after the Summit of Heads of State and Government of the African Union.
 - The Third Session is planned before the end of 2004.
103. The President then wished the Pan-African Parliamentarians a safe return to their respective countries and declared the First Session of the PanAfrican Parliament closed at 5:42 p.m.