

Message from H.E. Ambassador Bankole Adeoye
Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security,
African Union Commission,
on the occasion of the celebrations of the 12th edition of the
African Border Day, 07 June 2022

Fellow African Citizens,

On 7 June, we will celebrate the 12th edition of the African Border Day under the theme **"The development of border zones through the ratification and implementation of the African Union Convention on Cross-border Cooperation (Niamey Convention)"**. I am pleased to recall that African Border Day was established following a recommendation by African Ministers in Charge of Borders held on 25 May 2010. The proposal was subsequently adopted by the 17th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council [EX.CL/Dec.563(XVII)] held in Kampala, Uganda on 25 July 2010.

More than a festive moment, the commemoration of the African Border Day offers us the opportunity to reflect on the African Union Border Programme. Even a superficial assessment shows that from 2007 to the present day, the Programme has made significant progress and registered important achievements.

It has enabled the African Union to adopt and utilize instruments that support its vision of inter-State borders.

The first instrument is the African Union Convention on Cross-border Cooperation also known as the Niamey Convention. Adopted in 2014, it defines the modalities and areas of cooperation across borders between neighbouring States and local authorities for the benefit of border communities. The Niamey Convention contributes, if implemented, to peace, security, and stability as well as to the socio-economic development of border areas.

The second instrument, adopted in 2020, is the African Union Strategy for Better Integrated Border Governance. The Strategy provides relevant guidance, guidelines and recommendations to Member States wishing to develop their own national border policy. It covers various and complementary areas such as conflict prevention and the fight against transnational threats; mobility, migration, and trade facilitation; cooperative border management and border areas development.

On behalf of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, H.E Moussa Fake Mahamat, I urge Member States to draw inspiration from the recommendations of the African Union Border Governance Strategy in developing their national border policies. I also take this opportunity to reiterate the African Union Commission's

call to Member States that have not yet done so to sign, ratify and domesticate the Niamey Convention.

The African Union Border Programme is also characterized by sustained action at the continental, regional and national levels. The progress made in fifteen years of implementation attests to the continued relevance of the initial choice to work in the areas of delimitation and demarcation; cross-border cooperation and capacity building of border stakeholders

Across the continent, joint commissions of the Member States are relentlessly working to delimit and demarcate their common inter-State boundaries. Demarcation treaties and cross-border cooperation conventions continue to be written and signed between Member States. National border management policies are being developed and national programmes and plans for their implementation are being drafted. Diverse measures of cross-border cooperation are being taken. Various training sessions for national border experts continue to be organized. Educational tools and knowledge on border management are being produced and widely disseminated. Efforts to coordinate and to build coherence in the interventions are being made between the continental and regional levels.

Through this Programme, we are collectively and resolutely working to transform Africa's interstate borders into development zones and gateways that promote the free movement of people, goods and services and thus contribute to the objectives of the AfCFTA. This orientation justifies the theme of this 12th edition: **"The Economic and Social Development of Border Zones through the Ratification and Implementation of the African Union Convention on Cross-border Cooperation"**.

In fact, the message I am sending on this day of celebrations is a message of amplification and widening of cross-border cooperation initiatives. This is even more an imperative as the current security stakes and challenges are concentrated, for a significant part, in the border areas. More than ever, it is in these places, sanctuaries of organized crime, cross-border crime, and terrorist groups, that we must focus our attention and our actions to prevent conflicts, promote peace, security, and stability.

At the same time, it is incumbent on us to combine our efforts to instill an even stronger dynamic of resilience to counter the challenges inherent to border areas and to equip local communities with the tools to address and resolve said challenges. The adoption of more cooperative cross-border strategies is a guarantee of effectiveness and efficiency in the management of forced displacement of populations, food crises, humanitarian tragedies and conflicts related to control and access to natural resources.

It is in this hope of achieving the widest possible continental convergence that I launch a strong appeal to all Member States of the African Union to commemorate this 2022 edition of African Border Day under the banner of the promotion of cross-border cooperation and the implementation of the provisions contained in the African Union Convention on Cross-border Cooperation.

My most ardent wish is to see, on this day, events across the continent commemorating this theme via television, and radio programs; conferences-debates and fora for reflections; fun and educational activities in schools; sport and cultural events and various inaugurations in border areas.

I wish you a happy African Border Day.