

**ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY AMBASSADOR ALBERT SHINGIRO,  
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION OF  
BURUNDI ON THE OCCASION OF THE 46th MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE  
COUNCIL OF THE AFRICAN UNION ON THE REPORT OF THE FIFTEENTH  
(15TH) MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF TRADE MINISTERS OF THE AfCFTA**

- 1) **Mr. Chairman**, allow me first of all to endorse the existing protocol and at the same time pay tribute to the work achieved at the fifteenth meeting of the Council of Trade Ministers of the African Continental Free Trade Area. Thanks to joint efforts, significant progress has been made in implementing the AfCFTA, notably in terms of ratifications, tariff commitments, certificates of origin and the development of quality infrastructures.
- 2) **However**, as far as the report is concerned, there are still challenges that require particular attention. These include the effective implementation of tariff commitments, which must be accelerated if intra-African trade is to benefit fully from the advantages of the AfCFTA. The fact that some states have not yet submitted their schedules of specific commitments is slowing down the ongoing process of trade integration. It is therefore essential that we ensure that these commitments are met as soon as possible, in the interests of us all.
- 3) As you know, Burundi attaches particular importance to the role of small and medium-sized enterprises as a driver of economic growth, and to the role of women and young people in trade. Rapid implementation of the Protocol on Women and Youth in Trade is essential to guarantee inclusive and sustainable economic integration. Supporting entrepreneurs, trade facilitation and access to financing must remain at the heart of our priorities. To facilitate access to bank loans for women and youth, Burundi has set up a women's investment and development bank and a youth investment bank. Today, these two banks

are operational and are radically changing the lives of young people and women entrepreneurs in our country.

- 4) **Mr. Chairman, our shared ambition is to make the AfCFTA** a driver of development and prosperity for Africa. To achieve this, we must ensure that the decisions taken by our bodies are translated into concrete actions on the ground, and significantly transform the living conditions of our populations.
- 5) **Burundi remains committed** to this momentum, and reaffirms its willingness to actively contribute to the success of our shared project to make Africa not only a continent that is respected and respectful of other nations, but also the world's largest market. We must therefore encourage 1.4 billion of African consumers to consume more African products in order to contribute to the economic growth of our continent and the well-being of our populations.
- 6) **Mr. Chairman**, by excessively consuming non-African products, we are contributing to the economic growth of other countries and thus to the well-being of non-African citizens. Every little purchase of an African product on the street corner of our villages and neighborhoods counts and can have a positive impact on intra-African trade, which today accounts for less than 15% of world trade. We need to turn the tide; Africa must not continue to be the weak link in world trade.

**Thank you for your kind attention!**