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**STATEMENT BY DR MARGARET AGAMA-ANYETEI, AFRICAN UNION ACTING
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH AND HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS**

Protocol

Honorable Ministers, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure and honor to be addressing this august body at the opening of the Seventy-first session of the WHO Regional Committee for Africa. I bring you the greetings of Her Excellency Mrs. Amira Elfadil, Commissioner for Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development of the African Union Commission.

Honorable Ministers, ladies and gentlemen,

Africa's aspiration for all of its citizens to be 'healthy and well-nourished' by 2063 shall be tested by gains made in the spheres of global health security and diplomacy. Lessons that have been learnt from the on-going COVID-19 pandemic, such as multi-sectoral collaboration to address the widening health inequalities shall be essential to defining the nature of long term investments in health, and health systems that are essential, resilient and ultimately cost-effective.

Honorable Ministers, ladies and gentlemen,

The Africa CDC's COVID-19 vaccine efforts mark a unique milestone for the African continent. It is the first time Africa has undertaken a procurement of this magnitude on behalf of all its Member States. While there are notable and laudable successes, there are challenges that need to be addressed, including the recognition and security of COVID-19 certification of vaccination that are being issued by each of the 55 AU Member States. This is one of the reasons that the Commission is pleased with the status of ratification of the Treaty that establishes the Africa Medicines Agency (AMA) as it is important for the continent to harmonize its regulation of medicines, medical products and technologies.

To date, twenty two (22) AU Member States have signed the Treaty for the establishment of the AMA, 15 member States have ratified and eleven (11) have deposited their instrument of ratification at the Commission. The AMA shall come in to force 30 days after the deposit of the 15th instrument of ratification and the Commission urges its Member States to deposit the ratified instrument as soon as possible. Upon the coming into Force of the Treaty, the Commission will embark on the operationalization of the Agency, which shall include, the convening of the Conference of State Parties, establishment of the Governing Board and Appointment of the Director General. The Commission has already begun the process of identifying the hosting country for the AMA Headquarters. The Commission continues to encourage all AU Member States to sign and ratify the AMA Treaty at the earliest.

Honorable Ministers, ladies and gentlemen,

In conclusion, I would like to underscore the following:

1. That the existing health inequalities, shall continue to widen if there is not strengthened and collective continental engagement in global health diplomacy
2. That long term sustained domestic investments in health security will significantly contribute to Global Health Security
3. That the Africa Medicines Agency shall be essential to improving continental health security from a harmonized collective approach.

The Commission wishes you fruitful deliberations. I thank you all for your kind attention.