

## Remarks by H.E. Mr. Issimail Chanfi, Permanent Representative of Comoros to the United Nations and Chair of the African Group for the month of May

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

All protocols observed.

It is my pleasure to participate in the closing session of the Africa Dialogue Series in my capacity as chair of the month of the Group of African Ambassadors.

Today, we finalize three days of enriching debate, but also one month of activities that have celebrated Africa's arts, culture and heritage are triggered enticing conversations about the interrelation between culture, peace and development.

In this regard, allow me to start by thanking the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa and the African Union Permanent Observer Mission for having virtually brought Africa to New York for one month; for having transformed May into the month of Africa in the UN headquarters.

Madam Under-Secretary-General, dear sister Cristina, you have set the bar quite high for next year! Rest assured that the African Group will continue to support your initiatives to bring Africa's reality to the policy debates in New York and to promote a new narrative for Africa and from Africa.

Ladies and gentlemen,

During this month of Africa Dialogue Series we have witnessed that a new narrative is indeed possible if only we give voice to African experts. We have heard African filmmakers highlight the role that cinema can play in promoting an African identity and alert about the risks that global platforms pose to Africa's cultural diversity.

We have learnt about the power of museums in promoting unity and social cohesion by fighting misinformation and disinformation and showing the common history that we Africans share.

We have shown the world that Africa is a continent full of innovators who are ready to face emerging challenges from an African perspective and taking into account Africa's needs and realities.

All in all, we have realized that culture and identity are powerful tools that can enable African countries to take ownership of their development. But for that purpose, as the theme of the Africa Dialogue Series suggests, we need to reshape mindsets, we need to change the perspective.

Africa should not continue to be addressed as a continent in need of "aid". Africa's past and present are full of success stories. We have seen many of them during this month of African history that the Africa Dialogue Series has brought to New York. Great civilizations were born in the continent without the "help" of external players. Ambitious projects are being promoted in our day and age, such as the African Continental Free Trade Area, meant to be the largest and most important market in the world.

African countries are ready to lead a new approach to development. The only approach possible if the world is to succeed in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. In order to implement this

new approach, African countries need partners who are committed; partners who respect Africa's role as a global player; partners who ensure that past inequalities are not used to maintain a global imbalance.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

2021 is a year of hope and opportunity for Africa and for the world. As it has been noted during these three days of discussions, the disruptions triggered by the COVID-19 provide an opportunity for all of us to build forward and to build better. The COVID-19 has laid down clearly what the priorities should be:

It has shown the importance of human capital. Health and education cannot continue to be perceived as "social rights" only. They are fundamental components of development. Investing in health and education, investing in human capital, is ensuring that our societies will be resilient and able to overcome future pandemics.

The COVID-19 has also proved how necessary it is to live in communion with nature. Economic growth needs to be approached from a perspective of environmental sustainability. Initiatives such as the Blue Economy promoted by African countries and the African Union, based on the sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods and ecosystem health, are the future.

The COVID-19 has also demonstrated that Africa's industrialization is a priority and a responsibility of African countries and their international partners.

As Under-Secretary-General Duarte noted at the beginning of this Forum, every time that the world has undergone a crisis or a revolution, a new divide has appeared: the industrial divide, the digital divide... and now the COVID divide.

But as I said before: let's make of the crisis an opportunity. Let's transform the risk of a vaccine divide into an opportunity to create a stronger Africa that contributes to the global prosperity. Instead of trying to solve the shortage of vaccines worldwide in the traditional way, that is, by discussing how much can developed countries increase their production and how many donations can be made, we need to seize the opportunity to increase Africa's capacity to produce its own vaccines and, consequently, strengthening the continent's resilience and its path toward development. We have the tools: the Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Plan for Africa. We just need political will and the commitment of our partners to make this plan a reality.

Furthermore, the start of trade under the AfCFTA provides a perfect opportunity to transform the pharmaceutical industry into a trigger of growth and development in the continent.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me to conclude by thanking again Under-Secretary-General Duarte, Ambassador Mohamed and all panelists and participants for their contributions to this edition of the African Dialogue Series. I look forward to our continued collaboration.

I thank you.