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**DRAFT STATEMENT BY
H.E MOUSSA FAKI MAHAMAT AT THE COMMEMORATION
OF THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE NAKBAH**

**ADDIS ABABA
15 MAY 2023**

**Mr. Chair,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Ladies and gentlemen,**

I have the honor to deliver the following statement on behalf of H.E Mousa Faki Mahamat, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission.

And I quote: Mr. Chair, "I send you my warm personal greetings and those of the African Union Commission on the 75th anniversary of Nakba.

The year 2023, marks the 75th anniversary of Nakba or, "catastrophe" in English. It refers to the mass killing and displacement of Palestinians that occurred in 1948 when half of the Palestinians turned into refugees.

The Nakba resulted in the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians and has had a profound and ongoing impact on the region and on Palestinian society.

As we meet today, the situation in the occupied territories is deteriorating. The Israeli airstrikes on Gaza have claimed tens of lives including children and women as well as the destruction of homes and public institutions buildings. The ongoing tensions have dramatically deteriorated in an already fragile situation and have led to the displacement of civilians, many of them seeking refuge in UNRWA schools across Gaza.

The ongoing violence is causing immense suffering and further displacement for Palestinians, including children and civilians. The cost of civilian population is unbearable and unacceptable the universal conscience.

Even after 75 years of the Nakba, the displacement of civilian Palestinians is still ongoing. Many Palestinians continue to face displacement and eviction from their homes and lands, particularly in areas under Israeli occupation, including East Jerusalem and the West Bank. Further exacerbating the ongoing humanitarian crisis in the occupied territories.

Mr. Chairman,

We gather to commemorate this Sade day in recognition of the Palestinian cause and send a message to the Palestinian people to express our support to that their legitimate cause.

The African Union Commission expresses its grave and deep concern over the critical situation of the Palestine refugees. The Israeli occupation in Palestine continues to greatly define every aspect of the daily lives of youth and camp residents, affecting everything from security and freedom of movement to livelihoods and employment. Palestine refugees continue to face serious protection challenges due to the ongoing occupation, armed conflict and displacement. Palestine refugees in many places face existential threats and are sinking deeper into poverty and desperation. This disastrous

situation for Palestinians has been deepened and worsened as a result of the conflict in the region.

Mr. Chairman,

For many decades, Israel continues its policy of building settlements in the Palestinian occupied territory in clear violation of international norms and standards. These illegal settlements are built on confiscated or stolen Palestinian lands. These illegal settlements contribute to forced displacement, severely limit Palestinian access to basic resources including land, water, religious sites, and prolong a system of segregation and structural inequality between Palestinians and Israelis.

Today more than ever before, there is an urgent need for all those involved to take concrete steps to bring an end to the violence and comply strictly with the international humanitarian law and the international human rights law. We should intensify our efforts to find a just and lasting solution to the conflict, based on the two States solution, Israel and Palestine, living side-by-side in peace, within the framework of the relevant African Union and United Nations pronouncements. The current situation calls for urgent action towards ending the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian land.

I call upon the parties to stop the war and come to negotiations table in good faith and will.

War has brought nothing but death, destruction and widespread trauma throughout the Occupied Palestinian territory and Israel

Mr. Chairman,

African support to the Palestinian cause is based on the values of freedom, justice, and humanitarian principles that Africa defends in the international fora alongside all those striving to ensure that Palestine regains its right to exist as a key viable State in the Middle East. Africa has consistently expressed deep concerns at the consequences of unilateral policies, actions, and provocations, including the ongoing attacks in Gaza Strip.

The continuation of the Israeli occupation and its persistence with settlement activities, arrests and detention of civilians, extrajudicial killings of youth and children, the blockade of Gaza, home demolitions, repeated attacks by Israeli settlers against the Palestinian people and their properties, and provocations and incitement against the holy places go against the principles that we have signed up to as members of the United Nations and therefore we must continue the efforts to find a lasting solution.

The African Union Commission continues to call on the international community to assume its responsibilities concerning the question of Palestine and the implementation of all UN resolutions adopted from 1948 to date, to compel Israel to comply with international law.

We hence call upon all stakeholders to commit to re-launch the peace process in the Middle East to find a just and lasting solution to the conflict that would establish a sovereign Palestinian viable State with the East Jerusalem as its capital in accordance with the relevant UN resolutions” end of quote.

Thank you.