

**STATEMENT DELIVERED BY HIS EXCELLENCY MR. GBEZOHN GAR
M. FINDLEY, MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC
OF LIBERIA, AT THE 31ST ORDINARY SESSION OF HEADS OF STATE
AND GOVERNMENT OF THE AFRICAN UNION, NOUAKCHOTT,
MAURITANIA**

JULY 1, 2018.

Excellency Mr. Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, Excellency Mr. Paul Kagame, Chairperson of the African Union; Excellences Heads of State and Government Excellency Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union Commission Distinguished Colleagues and Delegates;

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I bring you warm greetings from His Excellency Dr. George Manneh Weah, President of the Republic of Liberia who could not attend this sitting of the Assembly due to urgent national matters. He sends felicitations and best wishes to your excellences and wish that deliberations at this Summit will bring the continent closer to achieving the Africa We Want.

Mr. Chairperson, I would like to express deep appreciation to His Excellency President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, the Government and people of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, for the hearty welcome and hospitality my delegation and I have received since our arrival in this great and beautiful country.

Permit me to also extend thanks and appreciation to you for capably leading our Union and for your unwavering commitment to moving Africa forward. Similarly, I wish to commend His Excellency Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union Commission for the strong and professional leadership he continues to provide at the Commission.

Mr. Chairman,

Africa is charting a new course that protects the rightful place of the continent and the interest of its people. In the march to 2063, the African Union is breaking new grounds in free trade, and unhindered movement of the African people across the continent.

Mr. Chairman, peace and stability through silencing the guns is indeed crucial to guaranteeing socio-economic development for the African people. Liberia wishes to commend the leaders of our continent for these great achievements and commits to playing its part in moving the continent forward. I wish to inform this Assembly that on March 30, 2018, UNMIL ended its peacekeeping Mission in Liberia and we thank the African Union for all its support.

Mr. Chairman,

In these efforts, one critical challenge that faces the continent and is attempting to hold back its continued success and progress is corruption. I would like to thank His Excellency Mr. Muhammadu Buhari, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and Champion of the theme of the year.

It is surely not my desire to weary you on the effects of corruption which you already know. But due to the grave impact which corruption has on our continent, I wish to join other distinguished delegates to reiterate that corruption, in a variety of ways hurts the bedrock of development of our individual countries as well as our continent.

Economically, corruption diverts vital resources undermining the legitimacy of political systems and severely affects social cohesion.

Across the spectrum of Africa, it remains defiant. Defeating it calls for concerted initiatives and practical actions, one of which is the current debate, which in our view presents an opportunity for the Union to proffer suggestions on how to deal with this menace.

The Union has a number of instruments designed to fight corruption. Perhaps the critical challenge has been our inability to effectuate these instruments. Tackling corruption at both the national and regional levels is critical to winning the fight. As a Union, our institutions must remain robust and endeavor to eliminate corruption. It only by true and dignified deeds at the highest level can the Union develop and nurture the integrity and political will to support national governments and regional groups in the fight against corruption.

I thank you for your kind attention.