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Pre-recorded video Address

by

H.E. Albert M. Muchanga

**African Union Commissioner for Economic Development, Trade,
Industry and Mining**

Delivered at the

International Conference on Russia-Africa

**Organized by the Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign
Affairs of the Russian Federation**

18 May 2021

Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Participants;
All protocol observed;

Let me begin by expressing, on behalf of the Chairperson of the Commission; H. E. Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat who designated me to make this address on His behalf; the heartfelt appreciation of the African Union Commission to the **Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation** for the kind invitation extended to us to attend this important International Conference on Russia-Africa.

Russia and Africa enjoy long standing cordial relations which have continued to grow as exemplified in the recent past by the first ever Russia-Africa Summit which successfully took place in Sochi on 23 and 24 October 2019 under the leadership of H.E. Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation and the 47 African Heads of State and Government who attended the Summit.

The Summit led to the signing of two important Memoranda of Understanding, one of which focuses on cooperation in the areas of infrastructure, agriculture, trade, investment and private sector development; as well as regional economic integration.

In this context, we see our presence at this International Conference on Russia-Africa as a continuation of engagements on how to further deepen of the cooperation that we are forging.

Your Excellencies;
Distinguished Participants.

This International Conference on Russia-Africa is even more important in the context of the current COVID-19 Pandemic, which has negatively impacted our world and literally changed the way we do business. I am certain that if not due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, I would be physically attending this conference.

Several of our economic development initiatives and projects have been put on hold due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Added to this, Africa last year fell into a recession for the first time in 25 years.

Although the Pandemic has relatively come under control, the situation remains uncertain and delicate, as some of our countries continue to go through the second wave of the Pandemic. At the same time, new variants of the virus are emerging on the Continent. In addition, Africa remains the Continent with the lowest rate of COVID-19 vaccinations in the World. The WHO Office for Africa reported that as of 14 May 2021, less than 1% of the 1.3 billion COVID-19 vaccines given globally have been administered in Africa so far, and, that's down from 2% in April.

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic also lie opportunities for enhanced cooperation between Africa and Russia. This is because one of the lessons that the COVID-19 Pandemic has taught us is that international solidarity is vitally important. No country on earth will be safe until all countries have achieved herd immunity from the COVID-19 Pandemic.

In this regard, I would like to record our appreciation to the Government of the Russian Federation for availing over 300 million doses of the Sputnik V COVID-19 vaccine to Africa.

Furthermore, we are pleased to see that the Government of Russia has facilitated the signing of a business deal between the developers of the vaccine and a leading Egyptian Pharmaceutical Company to manufacture more about 40 million doses annually in Cairo. This will help address the critical issue of availability and affordability of the COVID-19 vaccines that Africa currently faces.

Your Excellencies;

Distinguished Participants.

As we look to the post COVID-19 Pandemic era, we at the African Union Commission aim at working with the African Union Member States as well as Africa's friends such as the Russian Federation, to move Africa towards higher levels of inclusive sustainable development anchored among others on the following: developing internal capabilities in technology development and innovation; mobilization of the African private sector to drive the growth of manufacturing and agro-processing across the continent, elimination of illicit

financial flows from Africa as the anchor for boosting domestic resources as well as deepening Africa's continental economic integration.

I urge participants to this International Conference will reflect on some of the avenues of cooperation between the Russian Federation and Africa in some of these areas.

Let me conclude by thanking once again the Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation for the invitation extended to us to attend this important International Conference. I look forward to receiving and reading the outcome document after your deliberations.

I THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR KIND ATTENTION