



GRAND-DUCHÉ DE LUXEMBOURG

Ministère des Affaires étrangères

**Contribution by
Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs
of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg,
H.E. Mr. Jean Asselborn,
on the occasion of the twentieth session of the Executive Council
of the African Union**

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Thursday, January 26, 2012

Mr. President,
Mr. Ministers,
Excellencies,
Dear colleagues,

It is a great honour for me to have the opportunity to take the floor on this occasion.

I already had the honour to address the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union, almost two years ago, on January 31, 2010. At that time, Luxembourg had just accredited its Permanent Representative to the African Union. It was a non-resident Permanent Representative. Today, I am proud and happy to announce that we have taken a further step in strengthening our relationship with the African Union and its Member States. Indeed, Luxembourg is now physically present in Addis Ababa, where we have just opened a diplomatic mission that will operate both as a Permanent Representation to the African Union and as an Embassy in Ethiopia. The physical establishment of Luxembourg in Addis Ababa illustrates Luxembourg's wish to strengthen its political and diplomatic relations but also its economic and cultural relations with the African Continent, this in addition to its traditional partnership for development and cooperation.

But let's come back to the topic that has been chosen as the theme for this session of the Executive Council: "Boosting intra-African trade". It is obvious that in this time of economic and financial turmoil, the subject is of particular importance. No doubt, Dear Colleagues, that you will adopt and implement guidelines that will help achieving this promising goal. Let me tell you that my country is willing to support all efforts in order to help achieving this goal. I wish also to recall that, as a committed and responsible and reliable player, Luxembourg has already taken several steps in this direction, either by acting in favour of the promotion of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in Africa (1), by developing programs to support micro-finance (2), by contributing to the promotion of peace and security in Africa (3) and of course by substantially contributing to the development of Africa (4). Let me briefly touch upon these four areas where Luxembourg has established a strong partnership with Africa.

(1) Firstly, let me refer to Luxembourg's engagement in favour of the promotion of ICTs in Africa. It is clear that boosting intra-African trade requires fast and reliable means of communication across the African continent. In this context, I can only be delighted to see that my country - which has a strong reputation as media centre and related services - contributes to the development of information technologies in Africa. I made this commitment in 2010 to the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union. Today, I am pleased to see that this commitment has been fulfilled, as four major projects have indeed been launched for ICT development in Africa with a significant contribution of the Luxembourg cooperation:

- The first program is called "eHealth for Sub-Saharan Africa Program" (EHSA)
- Another project called "African Internet Exchange System" (AXIS) aims at developing a robust Internet infrastructure across the continent.
- The next one is a project that has provided technical assistance to the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) in the field of information and communication Technologies.

- There is also the platform “Emergency.lu”, aimed at rapidly deploying communication means. This comprehensive, integrated telecommunications platform is designed to help the humanitarian community and civil protection teams on the spot to (re)establish communication services. The platform provides the infrastructure and satellite capacities, communication terminals and necessary logistics for rapid deployment. “Emergency.lu” has just completed its first operational deployment in South Soudan together with the World Food Program (WFP). Even if by now, the platform is primarily intended to be deployed in response to natural disasters or man-made crisis, it is possible to use the platform in other situations. In this regard, we are open to any suggestions from your side.

- Additionally, there is a project for e-regulation, implemented by UNCTAD. The main goal is to establish a digital One-Stop Shop service to reduce the complexity of administrative procedures for businesses, especially for micro and small enterprises (MSEs) and thus promote entrepreneurship. In doing so, this initiative facilitates domestic and foreign investments in activities generating employment and income.

Luxembourg’s commitment to the development of ICT in Africa is real. Be assured that Luxembourg wishes to bring this partnership with Africa forward and is open to any proposal which could further strengthen its cooperation with Africa in activities which are essential for both economic and social development.

(2) Secondly, it is certain that boosting intra-African trade goes hand in hand with the development of inclusive finances. In this context, I am proud to note that Luxembourg, a known and recognized financial centre, is committed to support the financial sector, either through training on financial matters, via its national Agency for Financial Technology Transfer (ATTF), or by supporting projects, like the project developed in collaboration with the Central Bank of West African States (BCEAO) to support micro-finance in all eight countries of the WAEMU area. In recent years, Luxembourg has established itself as a centre of excellence worldwide in micro-finance and definitely stands ready to share its knowledge.

(3) Thirdly, it seems clear that peace and security are two fundamental prerequisites to promote trade and economics. Let me emphasize here the long-standing commitment of my country in favour of peace and security in Africa.

Luxembourg is a country that intends to assume its responsibilities, in this area too, particularly in the context of operations under international mandate, if necessary. Currently, Luxembourg is present in the Democratic Republic of Congo as part of EUSEC RDC. Luxembourg also provides two surveillance and patrol aircrafts to the EU maritime operation (EU NAVFOR ATALANTA) involved in the fight against piracy in Somalia and participated in the training mission of Somali security Forces (EUTM Somalia).

In addition, Luxembourg makes financial contributions to various Trust Funds of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and of the Political Affairs Department of the UN. Luxembourg has also been a member of the Peace Building Commission (PBC) of the UN from 2007 to 2009 and remains very committed to Peace Building related issues within UN bodies. Luxembourg is indeed a regular contributor to the Peace Building Fund (PBF), member of the Guinea-Bissau configuration since July

2010 and Chairman of the Guinea configuration of the Peace Building Commission since its establishment last February.

In addition, we have also initiated a specific cooperation with the African Union Commission (AUC) in the field of security sector reform by financially supporting the organization of a meeting of African experts who examined the draft AU Policy Framework on Security Sector Reform (SSR). I am particularly pleased that this has contributed to the emergence of an African approach in the field of Security Sector Reform.

(4) Fourthly, it is certain that the intensification of intra-African trade goes together with the development of Africa. In this context, I am particularly proud that my country is among the few countries that meet the commitment made in 1970 at the UN General Assembly to allocate at least 0.70 % of the GNI to development assistance. In 2010, Luxembourg devoted 1.05% of its GNI to development assistance, bringing it to the forefront worldwide. Despite the actual economic situation, Luxembourg has decided to keep its development assistance at the same level. I am proud to confirm here that we will maintain our commitment in this area.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me assure you that you can count on the support of Luxembourg, a committed responsible and reliable partner to continue and strengthen our partnership both with individual African States and through the African Union and sub-regional organizations.

Thank you for your attention.

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