
PRESS RELEASE

Rebuttal of the Malicious and False Allegations Against H.E Ambassador Arikana Chihombori Quao by Chairperson of the African Union Commission H.E Moussa Faki Mahamat

December 4th 2019, Washington DC, USA:

I, Ambassador Dr. Arikana Chihombori Quao have taken note of the Communique issued by the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat through his spokesperson, Ms. Ebba Kalondo dated November 15th 2019. This Communique was brought to my attention by a friend, who saw it on the AU website and subsequently on social media outlets. This Communique was issued five weeks after my termination letter dated October 7th 2019 and fifteen days after leaving office.

A delegation was sent from the AU Headquarters in Ethiopia to the AU Mission in Washington DC on October 16th 2019. They informed me that they were the Transition Team and it was routine for the Team to visit when there is a change of leadership at AU Representational Missions around the world. The purpose of their visit was to make sure that all issues were resolved and cleared before my departure.

The following were in attendance:

1. Team Lead – Mr. Tordeta Ratebaye, Deputy Chief of Staff, Bureau of the Chairperson (Leader of Delegation)
2. Amb. Dr. Namira Negm - The Legal Counsel
3. Mr. Adeyemo Biodun - Acting Director, Programming, Budgeting, Finance and Accounting
4. Mr. Melckzedek Magoke - Deputy Director, Office of Internal Audit
5. Ms. Ebba Kalondo - Spokesperson of the Chairperson
6. Mr. Rico Bien Aime - Head of Administrative and Facilities Management

The team led by Mr. Tordeta Ratebaye disabled my computer and email without my knowledge on October 17th 2019. Per AU rules, I should have had access to my email until two weeks after I left office. I was still legally employed by the AU until November 1st 2019. I decided not to make an issue of this.

Of interest is the fact that the Transition Team was sent to the AU Mission in Washington two weeks after I received my termination of contract letter. I answered all their questions and provided the requested supporting documents. At the end of their visit, they gave me a Clearance Form which was signed by myself as well as some of the Transition Team members. The Clearance Form specifically indicated there were **NO** pending issues. The Transition Team left the AU Mission in Washington DC on a good note on October 25th 2019.

My last day in Office was October 31st 2019, which was five days after the Transition Team departed. Two weeks later, someone forwarded me a Communique which was circulating on social media in which I was falsely accused of misdoings while in Office. All of the issues had already been discussed and appropriate explanations and clarifications given. Ms. Ebba Kalondo, the spokesperson for the AU Chairperson was present in all our discussions and privy to the information discussed and shared.

The programs they were questioning were all included in my quarterly reports which were sent to the Chairperson via his Secretary and Chief of Staff. The same activities were also in our bi-annual magazine (Invest in Africa). This magazine was given to all African Heads of State and H.E Moussa Faki Mahamat during the bi-annual AU Summits. Because of the above, I fail to understand why the Chairperson was not aware of the activities taking place at the Mission as I reported them to him quarterly as required. One would assume that the Transition Team would have been briefed of the Mission's activities prior to coming to the AU Mission in Washington, DC. Of interest to note is the fact that the Focal Point for our Mission in the Chairperson's Office was not part of the Team.

In hindsight, the Communique now gives the impression that the Transition Team actually came to find a reason retrospectively as to why my contract was terminated. If the Team thought they had found anything credible, why was it not indicated on the Clearance Form? The Form clearly stated there were no outstanding issues.

The termination letter dated October 7th 2019 had praised me for the wonderful job I had done and urged me to continue the good work. This is in sharp contrast to the accusatory Communique from the Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat's Spokesperson Ebba Kalondo dated November 15th 2019. The question is, what brought this change of heart, especially as I was no longer an AU employee. This simply does not make sense and makes a mockery of the Chairperson and his Office.

The Diaspora started two petitions. The first one titled, "**Reinstate African Union Ambassador Chihombori Quao**" which garnered over 106,000 signatures. The second one came much later when the Chairperson did not respond to the requests from the Diaspora. This petition was titled: "**Moussa Faki Mahamat Must Go.**" It is my humble opinion that this Communique was in response to the overwhelming global support I received from many people around the world whose lives have been impacted through my work as the AU Ambassador to the USA. H.E Chairperson, Moussa Faki Mahamat blatantly ignored the overwhelming social media outcry from the people and instead embarked on a smear campaign against me. I find his behavior shameful and beneath the Office of the Chairperson of the African Union.

Itemized Responses to The False Accusations

The Transition Team and I went over the different initiatives and programs which I started during my tenure. These programs were designed to assist me in delivering on my mandate. Three of the top mandates were: Promoting Africa in the Americas, Engaging the US Government and Mobilizing the African Diaspora to participate in the development of Africa. Through these programs, I was able to exceptionally deliver on all my mandates. The petition which garnered over 106,000 signatures in support of my reinstatement is evidence of the extent to which I delivered on my mandate.

- **ADHI (Africa Diaspora Health Initiative)**

I was appointed the Chair of African Diaspora Health Initiative (ADHI) by my predecessor. This entity was established in 2009 as a decision from the African Ministers of Health at a meeting held from April 4-9th 2009. ADHI was established for the purpose of galvanizing African Diaspora Healthcare workers to participate in the development of healthcare infrastructure in Africa. This I did when I was the Chair of ADHI long before my appointment as the AU Ambassador to the USA. The entity became dormant when I came to Washington. I recently reinstated it and a steering committee was established to identify potential board members. The intention was to have a completely Civil Society driven Organization once the Board was constituted. ADHI did not receive any funds during my tenure as the African Diaspora were in the process of organizing themselves and establishing a board. My role was a facilitator in the process. If this entity was not an AU approved program, why was this issue not raised during my predecessor's tenure? I did ask the Transition Team this question but they did not give me an answer.

- **Social Initiatives:**

1. Pan African Diaspora Women's Association (PADWA);
2. Pan African Diaspora Men's Association (PADMA);
3. Pan African Diaspora Youth Association (PADYA);

These were all social associations which were not registered. They were created for the purposes of mobilizing the African Diaspora. Again, this was explained in writing to the Transition Team. I am puzzled as to why this issue is being brought up again but this time through the Social Media.

1. Miss African Union Pageant
2. African Diaspora Youth Leaders' Summit
3. African Diaspora Retreat.

The above three programs were approved by **CIDO** (Citizens and Diaspora Directorate.) This is the department that deals with the Diaspora at the AU Headquarters in Ethiopia. The request for approval of these programs was referred to the Director of CIDO by the Chairman's Chief of Staff. The Director approved them and then sent them back to the Chief of Staff who gave the final approval.

Miss AU Pageant for this year was scheduled for December 14th 2019 and the **Diaspora Retreat** was going to take place on December 21st 2019. The Youth Event had been held already this year.

I fail to understand how the Chairperson would claim that the above programs were my personal programs. If he felt these were my personal programs, why did he accept my quarterly activity reports and why did his Chief of Staff approve them? This behavior defies any logic.

- **Wakanda One Village Project Initiative**
- **African Diaspora Global Fund**
- **African Diaspora Federal Credit Union (PADFCU)**

The above three initiatives are still in the conceptual phase. I was in discussion with the Diaspora and I recommended the above initiatives in preparation for the implementation of the AfCFTA (African Continental Free Trade Area.) To date, they remain a conversation among the Diaspora who are working to actualize them. None of these programs have been implemented as of yet. No funds have been raised.

- **African Electoral Integrity Initiative Inc.**
- **African Union Trading Company LLC;**

I am not aware of the above two organizations. I do believe that the African Electoral Integrity Initiative Inc may be a case of wrong address from the IRS. They showed me a letter from the IRS addressed to the Entity but had the AU address. Quite often the IRS does not have updated records. The letter should have been returned to sender.

I only knew of the African Union Trading Company LLC in the Social Media Communique. I did not register this company and I am not aware of it. It was not brought to my attention during the hand-over.

I must state emphatically that I did not register any entities during my tenure as AU Ambassador to the US.

Other False Accusations

- I have never received any donations for the AU during my tenure. The Mission could not accept any funds. Had we received any donations; we were obligated to forward them to the AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa.
- The donation from Chevron for the \$10,000 was made out to **Constituency for Africa** (Mr. Mel Foote) not to the AU. Mr. Foote sent an email stating exactly that. The Transition Team including Ms. Ebba Kalondo has a copy of this email. No funds were sent to the AU by Chevron.

- The use of the AU Logo was only for programs that supported the mandate of the Mission such as events mobilizing Diaspora in support of Agenda 2063. The use was always limited to the single event as long as the program was supporting Agenda 2063. In all of these cases, I was the keynote Speaker.
- I identified a handful of Steering Committee members in the Diaspora for the purposes of mobilizing and organizing themselves according to regions within the United States. These were not diplomatic appointments. Diplomatic status can only be awarded by a country. I am not sure on what platform I could have done this. One of the individuals was an African Diaspora who was already an Honorary Consul of an African Country and already registered with the State Department. He helped the Mission organize the African Consuls in his State of Residence.

In summary, I took a virtually unknown Mission that had been relegated to a Protocol Office and turned it into a vibrant well-respected Mission, not only in Washington DC but around the world. I accomplished all this with limited staff (three secretaries, one book keeper and one officer who went on sabbatical six months after I came on board) and very limited resources. I worked tirelessly, an average of sixteen-eighteen-hour days, seven days a week during my tenure. I attended as many meetings and events as I could promoting Africa and the African Union not only in the United States of America but also in other parts of the Americas. I realized that this is what it took to bring awareness to the people of an entity that was otherwise unknown.

It is unfortunate that the High Office of Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat representing 1.27 billion people would engage in the peddling of a Smear Campaign against me using blatantly false, mis-leading and malicious lies. It is important to note that throughout all of this, Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat has never spoken to me at all. He had his Chief of Staff call to inform me of his decision to terminate my contract. This call was followed by the letter terminating my contract. The manner in which this entire process has been handled is very unprofessional and disgraces the Office of our beloved institution.

The AU is our gift from our Pan-African Fathers. It is as good as we make it. I will continue to support the AU through the mobilization of the African Diaspora.

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