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I thank you, Excellencies, as well as the organizations for African, Caribbean, and Pacific States, and the Nigerian Diaspora Commission (NIDCOM), which is one of the strongest diaspora institutions. It is also a privilege to be hosted here again in this State House where Her Excellency, Honorable Dr. Abike, hosted me during my previous visit for an experience-sharing visit, leading the delegation of the Ethiopian various sectors.

Excellencies, although the question of migration and diaspora come to the forefront of the global and African agenda over the past decade, especially with the proliferation of diaspora conferences, symposiums, diaspora-related institutions, and to some extent, impactful projects, this Global African Diaspora Symposium is, in one way, the first of its kind from the Organization of the African Caribbean and Pacific States perspective. On the other hand, it is a perfect follow-up summit following the African Union's three-phase diaspora consultation approach.

Excellencies and distinguished guests, it is well-known that the African Union has gone through a three-phase consultation approach to ensure the operationalization of the organization's diaspora initiative. The first phase was a series of regional consultation conferences to foster effective partnerships between Africa and its diaspora."

The second phase involved bringing this issue to the attention of the head of states and the ministerial level. The third phase was the Global African Diaspora Summit, which took place in Johannesburg, aimed at realizing a united and integrated Africa and its diaspora based on a shared vision for sustainable development to address common challenges.

However, until very recently, African governments, continental, and regional institutions had not developed a coherent framework for engaging with and mobilizing the African diaspora, in contrast to the practice of regions and countries with impactful approaches in harnessing the potential of their diaspora. This represents an important gap in development strategies that such platforms should address.

Although the Organizations of the African Union, regional institutions, and member states have made progress in establishing collaboration with the African diaspora, focusing on the brain drain and attracting more remittances, the time we are in requires a holistic view of development that includes the flow of knowledge, finance, social remittances, ideas, and practices. A relationship between flows of capital and flows of capital from the diaspora may not be directly proportional to the positive contribution to the overall development of recipient countries."

"Perhaps the top 10 countries that receive more remittances, or the top 5 African countries receiving more remittances, may not rank as high in other development dynamics. Therefore, engagement with the diaspora needs a holistic approach. Through various continental and regional efforts, the African Union's policy efforts on diaspora matters have been sustained and aligned well with the continent's priorities and long-term development vision. However, the harmonization of frameworks and scaling up of best practices remain a challenge that such platforms should address.

This requires a new approach that embraces the fundamental commonalities and differences among the African diaspora, taking into account social contexts, contemporary circumstances, and political and economic factors.

Experience in diaspora engagement must embrace diversity - diversity in size, trends, and priorities - while also focusing on commonalities. From a global and continental perspective, diaspora engagement varies broadly from country to country, as all countries have their own priorities and demands. However, generally speaking, diaspora mobilization projects have evolved away from philanthropic, one-sided initiatives towards collaborative partnerships with mutual benefit at their core. For example, the People's Republic of China shifted in 1990 from a "return and serve" model to a "serve" model, no longer seeing physical presence as a barrier to contributions. Mexico, Morocco, the Philippines, and other countries can also be considered as models for diaspora engagement.

In harnessing the diaspora's potential, connecting and systematically engaging the African diaspora is a top priority and an emerging phenomenon at the continental and global level. Diaspora is increasingly viewed as an engine for development and brain gain. In this aspect, I will focus on the case of East African countries as I represent the East Africa region for SAP. Similarly, the East African region has made significant efforts to foster the diaspora's contribution to the development of their home countries while also making their diaspora an asset for their host countries.

Almost all the East African countries and their member states acknowledge the role and potential of their diaspora. They recognize that diaspora contributions have a big impact on the national economy and development. They have established various legal frameworks that grant political rights, including dual citizenship and the right to vote, as well as investment packages.

In addition, they have nominated different focal points at various events. Almost 55% of the East African region countries have a kind of diaspora policy. They do have innovative diaspora engagement products that range from investment to knowledge and experience sharing, from second generation to other engagement areas.

However, with all these innovative packages and legal and institutional frameworks, harmonization of policies within the region and also as per the AU perspective remains a challenge. Support for capacity building and experience sharing from other effective countries needs to be the focus of such platforms. As a focal person of the region, I encourage the African and Caribbean States organization to focus more on the experiences within the member states, within the South-South learning experiences, and also fostering the best practices within the member states. Thank you.