



## Press Statement

# On the Italian Deputy Prime Minister comments on African Migrants

**Addis Ababa, 18 September 2018:** The African Union Commission expresses dismay at the comments made by the Italian Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Matteo Salvini, at a recent conference in Vienna at which he likened African immigrants to slaves. It is the view of the African Union that name-calling will not resolve the migration challenges facing Africa and Europe.

It is common knowledge that emigration from Italy in the last two centuries has been the most important case of mass migration in modern European history. During the period from 1861 to 1976, more than 26 million people left the country, principally for other European countries and the Americas. Approximately, one Italian out of four emigrated, and it is on record that Italy has benefited greatly from its huge diaspora through remittances and trade.

The history, geo-politics and future of Africa and Europe are so inter-twined that the two continents cannot wish each other away. The current 'migration crisis' in Europe provides an opportunity for Africa and Europe to engage in a dialogue that not only focuses on migration issues, but also on the broader development cooperation between the two continents. Thus, the migration-and-development debate should increasingly take place within the context of the debate on the socio-economic development of the continent, and not as a separate issue that responds to the 'migration crisis' in Europe.

In the interests of constructive engagement on the migration debate between the two continents, the African Union requests the Italian Deputy Prime Minister to retract his derogatory statement about African migrants and further urge Italy to emulate and support other European Union member states, like Spain, which have extended support and protection to migrants in distress, irrespective of their origin and legal status, before their admission status is determined.

Further, the Commission wishes to express concern at the increasing number of migrants still finding their way to Europe through dangerous routes, despite the many efforts that the African Union, together with the United Nations and the European Union, has deployed to sensitize African citizens on the danger posed by these movements.