**OPENING REMARKS OF AMB. SAHLE-WORK ZEWDE**

**DIRECTOR GENERAL UNON TO THE PAMCIT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**28 SEPTEMBER 2017**

My Dear Friend and Colleague, Mr. Carlos Alegria,

Dear Partners and our guest representative from Kenyatta University,

Course Directors,

Participants and Facilitators,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to this Fifth PAMCIT Executive Committee Meeting, the third of its kind to be held at the United Nations Headquarters in Africa. In fact, the number of ExCom meetings held here attests, yet again, to the importance that the UN, through UNON, places in its direct contributions to activities within the UN 2030 development agenda.

Indeed, I frame the work we are doing through this Project squarely within the framework of contributions to achieving some of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals which, as you know, were approved by the UN General Assembly for the period 2015-2030. Supporting interpretation and translation students, we are engaging youth and public academic institutions of excellence to develop skills for seamless, two-way communication in a multiplicity of languages.

You all know my personal commitment to this Project and I have just spoken to how it reflects the UN core value of Multilingualism. A week ago today, the UN was celebrating the International Day of Peace. As we continue with our concerted efforts to build a culture of peace in these troubled times, through this PAMCIT Project I like to believe that we are placing our own small white stones on the path to global peace.

The programmatic mission of the five universities represented here is to promote intercultural dialogue through the highest quality of training for language professionals. A list of the 49 graduates, who have qualified since the PAMCIT Secretariat became operational, is now being circulated to key agencies and institutional employers of interpreters and translators, globally.

As you are already aware, cost, efficiency and effectiveness are key principles underpinning the way forward as Secretary General Guterres’ proposed reforms come into effect. With our support to this network of universities, trainers and students, in scrupulous respect of our Financial Rules and Regulations, we guide the implementing partners to ensure strict adherence to the Project Cooperation Agreement (PCA) signed with each of them at project inception.

Indeed, the five universities bound by these PCAs all agreed to sign the revised Memorandum of Understanding that incorporates the addition to the Consortium of Université Gaston Berger in St. Louis, Senegal. Through the Course Directors, I would like to thank the Vice Chancellors who have already signed the revised MoU. The document is being carefully hand-carried across Africa as I speak, to reach the two other universities in Douala and Maputo for signature.

Since our last meeting in Addis Ababa, the member universities continue with programme implementation despite various difficulties that can be attributed to teething problems of learning grant management within an academic setting, when they were not attributable to national issues of a socio-political nature, completely outside of the control of the academies.

Here at UNON, we have also contributed many person hours to some of these students, receiving PAMCIT interns in the booths and giving guidance in translation – for which I would like to thank my staff who gave such dedicated supervision and support to the young graduates. The UN New York Headquarters is working right now with translation interns from Senegal and we continue to assist the universities with preparations for the UN Language Competitive Examinations. These, and other facts and figures illustrating encouraging results, will be reported during your technical discussions.

I remember that adjustments were made to the PAMCIT programme design so that operational support could be given to university staff managing the PAMCIT grant, in addition to their academic workload. This is an illustration of how, whilst remaining within our agreed legal frameworks, we try to respond to the implementing partners’ needs as we progress, recognizing obstacles to programme implementation and speedily proposing solutions, within the PAMCIT budget allocations.

Talking about budgets, our prime concern is to ensure the sustainability of this PAMCIT programme. We are at the halfway mark for this Grant and this Executive Committee’s deliberations will be crucial to informing the way forward. For our part, we continue reaching out for broader support. A second mission from UNON is to be organized next month to the African Development Bank and I shall continue to seek ways and means to work with the African Union Commission as a potential African partner with whom we can seek additional finance in order to ensure programme sustainability beyond 2019.

My special thanks go to our European Partner – the Commission - for their continued technical backstopping. Together, as was so amply illustrated by the ripple effect created by the European Development Days last June – where even President, Macky Sall of Senegal, visited the PAMCIT stand – we continue our efforts to expand partnerships.

Work is ongoing with interested universities as we consolidate our achievements whilst not neglecting to explore new avenues, such as cooperation to support Public Service Interpretation. This follows up on the wish expressed at last year’s ExCom by Mrs. Fink Hooijer herself, so ably represented here by my friend Mr. Carlos Alegria. In her intervention by videoconference, she reminded us that the PAMCIT Project is required to reflect on ways of expanding the MA in Conference Interpretation with new disciplines, for better programme viability and sustainability. She called for the development of useful skills under the third pillar of PAMCIT: Public Service and Community Interpretation. My conviction is that the need to go beyond postgraduate and post-doctoral levels of education, and to train community interpreters and translators for the courts, hospitals, social welfare and decentralized democratic institutions is evident.

Once again, our joint focus is on coordination. The Project has already brought together trainers in interpretation and translation from all over the continent, many of whom have participated in Training of Trainers programmes on the continent, as well as those the Commission organizes in Brussels.

What a long way we have come since the ‘African Project’ was an expression of hope at the first pan‑African conference on the training of translators, conference and public interpreters, held right here in Nairobi, in 2009. I would like to thank all of you who have supported us throughout this venture and express my appreciation, to all my staff here at UNON, to you – our Partners – and particularly to the students and trainers who, under the supervision of their Course Directors, have stood by this commitment to a quality investment in Africa’s future.

The United Nations Office at Nairobi continues supporting this Consortium, in collaboration with the several African and International Universities that are willing to join the network, as non-funded partners for now, sharing information and providing counsel. Together, we plan to prepare for the hoped-for PAMCIT Phase Two.

Thank you and I wish you fruitful deliberations.