

and Women's Empowerment

Chairperson
Excellencies, Heads of Delegations

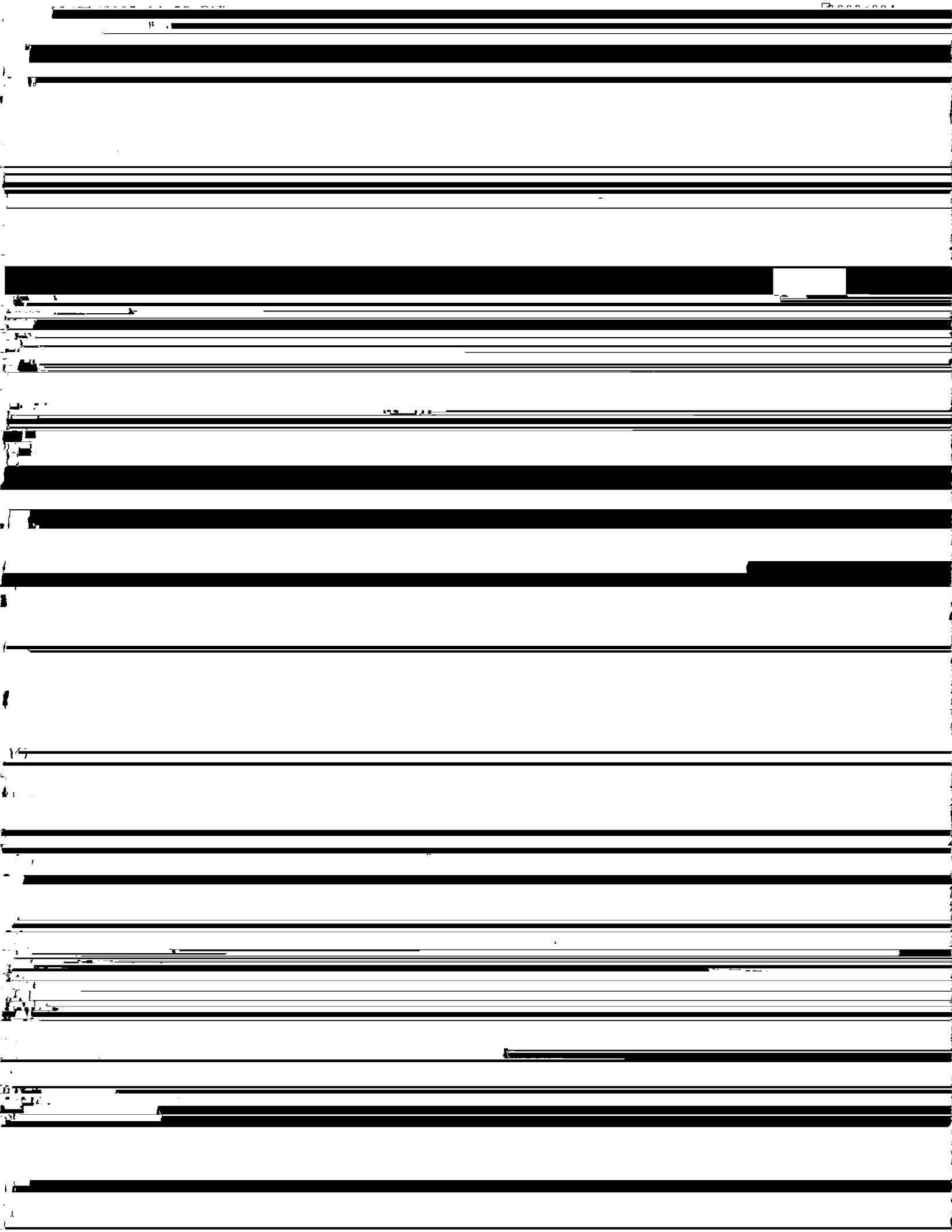
Distinction of the African Union

It is a great honour to speak at this panel on the role of intergovernmental organizations in promoting gender equality.

The African Union is the successor of the Organization of African Unity. It was established three years ago, as an organization for the integration of the continent, and its vision is that of *"a peaceful, integrated and prosperous Africa, driven by its people, a dynamic force in the global community"*. The Secretariat of the Union is the African Union Commission, and its roles include providing political leadership especially in the area of peace and security, harmonization of social, economic and other policies, setting and monitoring common standards, and advocacy especially in the global arena.

The transformation of the Organization of African Unity into the African Union has brought with it several innovative changes regarding the way gender is perceived and gender issues are handled in the Union. The Constitutive Act of the African Union provides that the organisation "shall function in accordance with the principle of the promotion of gender equality," [AU Constitutive Act article 4(1)]. Secondly, the Statutes of the African Union Commission specifically provide that *"gender issues are cross-cutting through all the portfolios of the Commission"*.

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It is the responsibility of the Gender Directorate, to lead the implementation of these programme components

Madam Chair,

These landmark decisions and steps taken in the first two years of the

existence of the African Union, reflect the collective determination of Member States to own the gender equality agenda, to hold each other accountable on it and to open themselves up to be monitored by civil society. They also reflect the advocacy and championing efforts of the AU Commission under the leadership of Dr. Akin Adesina.