Turkey's foreign minister discussed strategic relations and global issues with the head of the African Union (AU) Commission on Thursday.

During Moussa Faki’s first official visit to Turkey, Mevlut Cavusoglu said they discussed preparations for the third Turkey-Africa Partnership Summit, scheduled for Dec. 17-18 in Istanbul.

Çavuşoğlu underlined that they expected a successful and fruitful summit, noting that Turkey has been a strategic partner of Africa since 2008. "We aim to support Africa's development efforts and increase commercial, cultural and human relations between us," he added.

"The African Union is the most inclusive organization of the continent. The voice of Africa and the breath of Africa," he stressed.

He went on to say that the number of Turkish embassies on the continent, which had been 12 in 2002, was now 43, adding that this number would soon rise to 44 with the opening of an mission in Guinea-Bissau.

Stressing that Turkey's activities in Africa have become richer thanks to Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency, Yunus Emre Institute, Turkish Diyanet Foundation, Anadolu Agency, and Turkish Airlines, he said the total value of the projects conducted by Turkish companies on the continent exceeds $70 billion.

The volume of bilateral trade has reached over $25 billion by the end of 2020, he added, noting that Ankara is determined to raise this figure to $50 billion.

Developments in Africa

On recent military takeovers in the West African nations of Guinea and Mali, he reiterated Turkey's opposition to any kind of coup. "We want both countries to return to civil democracy as soon as possible. We have said that we, as Turkey, will give the necessary support in this direction."

Drawing attention to problems existing between Ethiopia and Sudan, to developments
in Somalia, and the terror threat in the Sahel region, he said Turkey is assisting African countries in their fight against terrorism.

Çavuşoğlu also touched on COVID-19 vaccination efforts, saying that the Turkic Council had agreed to support the African Union with shipments of vaccine doses. He said that Turkey would share its COVID-19 vaccine candidate, Turkovac, with the region once the jab is ready.

For his part, Faki, the African Union Commission chairperson, hailed the deep-rooted relations between African countries and Turkey.

Noting that Africa has considered Turkey a strategic partner since 2008, he said they aimed to boost the partnership in many fields, including peace, security, development, and trade.

He praised Turkey's solid support for the region and urged the international community to take action against terrorism threats.

On the coronavirus pandemic, he said only 3% of Africa's 1.3 billion population had been vaccinated.

He stressed that they could not handle pandemic only by importing vaccines and drugs and that African countries were looking for alternative solutions. Faki said vaccine production work is planned in countries such as Rwanda, Senegal, Egypt, and Morocco.

The priority of the continent is to develop human resources, he said, adding that it was "scandalous and unacceptable" that starvation continued to plague its people.