



## Press Release N°011/2017

### **AU commemorates 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the adoption of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance**

**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia – 15 February 2017:** The outgoing Chairperson of the African Union Commission, H.E. Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, joins the rest of Africa to celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG). As the continent commemorates this major milestone at a time of increased quest for democratic governance within the framework of Agenda 2063, - The Africa We Want, Dr. Dlamini Zuma calls on Member States that have not yet signed and ratified the Charter to do so in 2017, as the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Charter.

Adopted on 30 January 2007, by the AU Assembly of the Heads of State and Government and entered into force on 15 February 2012, ACDEG draws inspiration from several AU Declarations, Charters and Instruments including the AU Constitutive Act. The Charter asserts the eminence of democratic governance as key to achieving our continental goals of an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa. The Charter fundamentally guides AU Member States on how best to inculcate a culture of democracy and peace predicated on credible and transparent elections, constitutionalism and rule of law, democratic decentralisation, human rights, gender equality, youth empowerment, among others.

The outgoing Chairperson is gratified that since the adoption of the Charter in 2012, the continent has recorded modest gains in deepening a culture of democratic and participatory governance, respect for human rights, constitutionalism, justice and the rule of law.

The African continent has also made inroads towards broadening the democratic space with women and young people as they increasingly play pivotal roles in our electoral, political and governance processes. Furthermore, State Parties to the Charter continue to record successes in strengthening democratic institutions including the establishment of independent election management bodies, enhancing the capabilities of the judicial sector and institutions of accountability and transparency mechanisms.

While we celebrate these achievements, the outgoing AU Commission Chairperson acknowledges the democratic governance deficits that Africa continues to grapple with, including constitutional manipulations to prolong tenure by incumbents, shrinking political and civic spaces, low participation of citizens, refusal to accept election results, violations of freedom of expression and speech, violations of human rights, arbitrary arrests and detentions, limited access to media platforms, intentional internet access blockade and restrictions, amongst others. These challenges undoubtedly limit the realisation of the promises of democracy - of improved livelihoods, inclusive popular participation, gender equity, youth empowerment and a conducive environment that upholds human and people's rights on the continent.

The outgoing Chairperson congratulates the 28 ACDEG State Parties, Namibia, Seychelles, Comoros and Algeria being the latest Member States to accede to the Charter, and calls on Member States that have not yet signed and ratified the Charter to do so during this historic year of its 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. She further encourages State Parties that are due to submit State reports on the administrative and legislative measures taken, to give effect to the principles of the Charter, to submit their reports to the AU Commission.

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