



The African Union

**REMARKS BY THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION DEPUTY
CHAIRPERSON
DURING THE DINNER HOSTED IN HONOUR OF HONOURABLE
MINISTER DR. WALTER MZEMBI
THE AFRICAN UNION CANDIDATE FOR THE POST OF
SECRETARY GENETRAL
OF THE UNITED NATIONS WORLD TOURISM ORGANISATION
ADDIS ABABA - ETHIOPIA - 19 APRIL 2017**

Honourable Ministers

Excellencies Ambassadors, and Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Your Excellency, Dr Taleb Rifai, Secretary General of the UNWTO

Distinguished Executive Directors of the UNWTO

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my honour and privilege, as the Deputy Chairperson of African Union Commission and on behalf of the Chairperson H.E Moussa Faki, to join you this evening at the dinner hosted in honour of Honorable Minister Dr Walter Mzembi, the candidate for the post of Secretary General of the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO).

Dr Mzembi and I had a long discussion yesterday and I must say I was encouraged by his vision but most importantly his passion to drive Africa to the next level on the global tourism architecture. Honorable Minister let me take this opportunity to congratulate you for the endorsement of the 15 countries of the Southern African Development Community and, even more importantly, the unanimous endorsement of the Heads of State and Government of the-then 54 Member States of the African Union. We are now 55 members as you know Morocco was readmitted this year and I have no doubt, they too, will support your candidature.

Let me also add the vision you seek to push under the banner "Visit. Trade. Invest" is very timely and I believe, achievable. As you are aware, the African Union did launch the African passport in 2016 to facilitate ease of movement for the African citizenry within the continent, to be able to integrate but also trade and encourage intra-African investments within the continent. We are still pushing for the full implementation of the Yamoussoukro Decision for the open skies. There is great

prospects for Africa in the full liberalization of intra-African air transport services and this would also come in handy with the launch of the Continental Free Trade area.

We are seeking seamless borders and although we may have challenges in here and there, the African Union remains committed to seek the various avenues to address these challenges.

So, Honorable minister, we shall hold you to your word to help us address some of the challenges especially those related to our tourism sector, issues such as security concerns, which we are seeking collective action from all of us. Some of these problems can be addressed through the provision of education to every child as well as boosting the economic growth and job opportunities within the continent to levels where the people are not easily swayed and enticed into fanaticism and radicalization as a means of livelihood.

Excellencies

Ladies and gentlemen

This year we have dedicated it to the theme of "Harnessing the demographic dividends of the youth through investments" and therefore, the UN World Tourism Organization would provide the continent yet another opportunity to be able to create avenues and job opportunities for the youth to contribute meaningfully into the continental GDP. And I believe that can be achieved. UNWTO forecasts international tourist arrivals will reach 1.8 billion by 2030, so question here is, what will be Africa's growth share to the numbers? As Dr Mzembi has previously stated in his vision, will we move from the 3% global share currently to a double digit?

There is potential and opportunity for Africa in claiming its share in these International seats, to serve the world and move us to the next level, as a continent.

Excellencies

Ladies and gentlemen

Africa needs to build on the remarkable legacy of His Excellency, Dr Taleb Rifai, who has taken the global tourism to new heights of relevance, recognition and results.

It is therefore imperative for us to maintain unity in the continent, and to practically demonstrate this unity by putting our support singularly, to the candidates endorsed for the positions within the international system. I call upon all of us, especially the ten votes Africa enjoys, to vote as one united bloc to increase our chances of winning, and we must win this one for the first time in history. We are also hoping for the support of the Asian and Latin votes and we continue to call for their support.

Allow me to conclude by stating that the African Union acknowledges tourism as an effective vehicle for sustainable development in the continent, key in the building of deeper understanding between peoples and cultures and for the reinforcement of the quest for greater global harmony and peace.

Our continental Agenda for development, Agenda 2063, places great importance on the role of tourism in contributing to poverty alleviation, employment creation and empowerment of the youth and women.

Honorable Minister, take my assurances that you enjoy our full support before and even after May 12th. I wish you well.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen allow me to call upon Dr Mzembi, to address you.

I thank you.