



**MESSAGE OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMMISSION ON THE OCCASION
OF THE CELEBRATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE**

21 SEPTEMBER 2012

**Friends,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It gives me great pleasure to address you today on the occasion of the International Day of Peace or 'Peace Day', proclaimed by the United Nations in 1982.

Two years ago, the African Union launched the '*Year of Peace and Security in Africa*', with the aim of engaging all stakeholders to contribute towards '*Making Peace Happen*'. We have since continued to take steps to sustain the achievements made through this campaign. Every year, these efforts culminate into one day – the 21st of September - Peace Day.

While peace cannot be achieved in a day, 21st September nevertheless affords Africans the opportunity to celebrate notable successes in the realm of peace-making, peacekeeping and peace-building and to put peace in practice through a collective, cooperative moment of unity. Peace Day is a day of cessation of hostilities, tolerance and reconciliation between individuals, families and communities.

A successful Peace Day will create hope for a better future for the entire continent. Indeed, the activities of a single day can energize Africans from all walks of life, helping to generate a widespread grassroots peace movement across the continent. And that up-swelling of demand for peace, and actions to make peace happen, may indeed help fulfill our common promise of a conflict-free Africa.

We believe that everyone can contribute to making sustainable peace a reality even through the expression of small acts of kindness to one another. These are the simple things that make this day special.

This year, we will be giving special attention to the issue of women and children in armed conflicts in Africa, for they are the ones who bear the heaviest burden of conflicts, and endure the bitter pain and suffering that war brings.

As we celebrate Peace Day, I would like to stress that despite the trials and tribulations that our continent has suffered over the years, Africa's spirit has not been jaded and our optimism has not faded away. Ours is not blind optimism, far from it. We understand Africa and its problems, and we know the potential our continent holds.

Today is yet another opportunity for all of us to make renewed efforts towards the achievement of the AU's vision of *'an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena.'* This year, Peace Day holds particular significance for our continent as it coincides with the commemoration of the 10th anniversary of the African Union.

I implore each and every one of us to strive to build a culture of peace. Let us remain determined in our efforts to see sustainable peace on our continent; let us not waiver; let us renew our resolve today to 'Make Peace Happen.'