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DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

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African and Arab Heads of State and Government Commence Their Meeting in Kuwait

Kuwait City, 19 November 2013- A meeting of the Africa Arab partnership is ongoing at Heads of State and government level in the State of Kuwait. The meeting will review progress in the partnership to date and endorse concrete proposals to advance political, peace and security; economic, trade and finance; agriculture and food and security; and socio-cultural cooperation between the two regions for the mutual benefit of their people. Being held under the theme “Partnership in Development and Investment”, the summit is being attended by over 60 countries from both regions. It comes after preceding preparatory meetings by ministers and experts from both regions.

African speakers at the summit’s opening ceremony today advocated strongly for Africa as a continent that has overcome many hardships and that has potential for growth and investment.

“We are the only continent whose working age population is set to grow rather than shrink..... Returns on investment (in Africa) in virtually every sector are higher than any other part of the world... Africa remains endowed with mineral, energy and other natural resources”, said AU Commission Chairperson Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma.

African Union Chairperson and Prime Minister of Ethiopia Mr. Hailemariam Desalegn, who is also co-chairperson of the meeting, spoke of an Africa that has moved on from being considered a “basket case” to one that now offers new markets for growth opportunities. “With vast arable lands, water and other resources, Africa has huge potential to satisfy the food needs of the Arab world” he said.

Both Dr Dlamini Zuma and Mr Desalegn however conceded that the continent faces some challenges, such as conflict, aggression and terrorism. Mr Desalegn strongly highlighted the issue of migration and migrant labour, saying “It’s our collective responsibility”, and urged both sides to give serious and urgent attention to the issue.

The Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmed Al Jaber Al Sabah who is co Chairperson of the summit used the occasion to announce two major developments.

“....I directed officials of the Kuwaiti Fund to offer soft loans to African countries in the amount of 1 billion dollars over the next five years, he told his peers.” He also

announced the intention by the State of Kuwait to earmark an annual financial award of one million dollars focusing on development research in Africa.

The 3rd Africa Arab summit will emphasize the link between stronger economic cooperation and regional integration. It will endorse private sector engagement in translating political objectives into concrete results. It will also call for increased economic cooperation. At the meeting, the Heads of State will be given an overview of the successes and challenges since the Sirte meeting of 2010, which adopted a new partnership strategy and action plan 2011-2016.

At its conclusion on 20 November, the summit is expected to adopt the “Kuwait Declaration”, which will underline the determination of the heads of state and government from the two regions to achieve results across the four pillar of the partnership i.e. political, peace and security; economic, trade and finance; agriculture and food and security; and socio-cultural cooperation.

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