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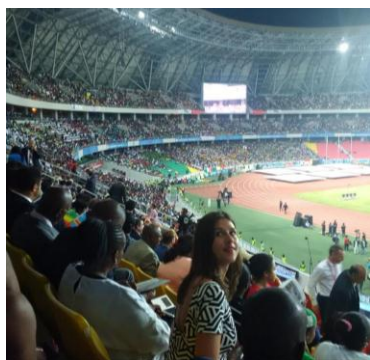
### Press Release N°213/2015

## CURTAIN RISES ON AFRICA'S PREMIUM SPORTING EVENT AS THE AFRICAN UNION OWNED AFRICAN GAMES ARE OFFICIALLY OPENED IN BRAZZAVILLE



**Brazzaville, Congo 5 September 2015-** On September 4<sup>th</sup> in Brazzaville Congo, the curtain rose on what promises to be a memorable and historic event for the continent, the 11<sup>th</sup> Edition of the African Games. Brand new infrastructure, including the hugely impressive Kintele stadium and sporting complex, and bright banners (including those of the African Union), added to the anticipation of what was to come. The AU delegation to the games was headed by the Chairperson of the African Union Commission (AUC) Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma

accompanied by the Commissioner of Social Affairs Dr Mustapha Sidiki Kaloko and the Commissioner of Human Resources Science and Technology Dr Martial de Paul Ikounga. President Denis Sassou Nguesso of Congo was honoured with the presence of his regional counterparts who joined him and his people to launch Africa's premium sports tournament, owned by the African Union.



Brazzaville was abuzz with excitement. Spectators dressed variously in Congolese national dress, African Union t-shirts and caps, and other attires filled the stands, blowing vuvuzelas, horns and beating drums. These games are, in a sense, a homecoming. Exactly fifty years ago, in 1965, the first edition of the Games was hosted in Congo. Back then there were only 29 participating countries with 2,500 athletes. But on September 4, 49 participating countries with 6500 athletes took part in the opening ceremony.

The ceremony itself was marked by much fanfare. It included the raising of flags of each of the participating countries, singing of anthems (including the AU anthem), arrival of the Games Mascot and playing of the theme song, parade of participants, and salute of the head of state by the competitors. Able bodied and disabled athletes alike did one round around the stadium before taking up their place in the center. It was a grand view



to soak in the atmosphere and salute their leadership and country men and women.



of the African Union, which owns the games, the Chairperson thanked all the organisers and volunteers who have worked behind the scenes to put the games together. She wished all the athletes the best in their endeavours throughout the 11 day tournament.



uphold the values and regulations of the games.

as wave after wave of athletes, wearing their national team colours and proudly waving their national flags, entered the stadium to the applause of their supporters. It was a grand African tapestry of green, yellow, white, black, gold, brown, blue and red; the dressing ranging from tracksuits to traditional wear and even the more formal wear of dress suits and trousers and waistcoat. The biggest applause was naturally, reserved for the host country team which brought in the rear, with hundreds of athletes who took their time round the stadium

In her opening remarks, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission said sport is one of the vehicles of achieving Agenda 2063. Dr Dlamini Zuma recalled that it was Congo which, in 1965, hosted the very first edition of the African Games, making this 11<sup>th</sup> edition, the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the games. "Today the African games return to their birthplace. Sport has a place to contribute to the achievement of the African vision of prosperity, peace and integration", said Dr Dlamini Zuma. On behalf

Dr Dlamini Zuma then had the honour to introduce H.E Dennis Sassou Nguesso, President of the Republic of Congo to declare open the 11th Edition of the 2015 African Games, who after a few remarks officially opened the games. Thereafter the Chairperson of the African Union Commission handed over the flag of the African Union to the mayor of the city of Brazzaville. Representatives of the athletes and the officials were called upon to make vows on behalf of their constituents, to

Thereafter the crowd was treated to entertainment, with a heavy infusion of African rhumba music and drum beats. Young Congolese put their martial arts skills on show, while a beautifully choreographed show promoted the virtues of conserving natural resources. The Games flame arrived; brought in by a runner. Spectacular fireworks



brought the curtain down on an exciting day, their booming sound as they exploded reverberating across the Brazzaville night sky, and reminding those that did not attend the show, of the great significance of the day. From the 5<sup>th</sup> of September, the athletes took over, competing in 22 sporting codes. Africa's premium sporting talent will be on display for the whole continent to watch and

appreciate, till the 19<sup>th</sup> of September when the games will come to an end. **WZM**

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