

PRESS RELEASE N°17 / 20th AU SUMMIT

20th ORDINARY SESSION OF THE AU ASSEMBLY OPENS WITH A FOCUS ON PANAFRICANISM AND AFRICAN RENAISSANCE



Addis Ababa, Ethiopia 27 January 2013- *“Today we look to the future calmly, confidently and courageously”* said Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, Chairperson of the African Union Commission (AUC), while addressing the 20th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union today, 27 January 2013 at the headquarters of the African Union in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The Summit, bringing together Heads of State and Government or their accredited

representatives is holding under the theme: **“Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance”**. A minute of silence was observed at the opening ceremony in memory of late President John Atta Mills of Ghana and late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia.



Referring to the theme of the Summit and the 50th anniversary celebration of the Organisation of African Union (OAU) created on 25 May 1963, the AUC Chairperson explained that, the spirit of Pan-Africanism and the ideals of the African Renaissance has delivered and will propel its citizens towards an integrated, people-centred, prosperous Africa at peace with itself. She added that it is this spirit and ideals that inspired the adoption of the Lagos Plan of Action in 1980, the Abuja Treaty in 1990 and NEPAD in

2001. According to Dr. Dlamini-Zuma, “the African dream is not only achievable but it can be done in a shorter time.”

To secure decent livelihoods and the free movement of people, goods and services, Dr. Dlamini-Zuma said, “we must accelerate integration and connectivity”. She expressed satisfaction with the progress on the implementation of the priority infrastructure projects of PIDA in the areas of transport, energy and ICT. The Chairperson of the AUC further underscored the need for the Union to enhance youth and women’s development alongside education. “The Pan African University and the general expansion of our higher education sector will equip our young people with critical abilities to drive innovation, sciences, entrepreneurship, research, social development and industrialization”, she underlined. (See complete speech of AUC Chairperson on the AU website: www.au.int .



Mr. Ban Ki-Moon, Secretary General of the United Nations (UN) recalled in his speech, that Africa is the world’s youngest continent. He reiterated the UN’s commitment to help the people of Mali “This is a moral imperative for all in the international community.....I am personally committed to ensuring that the United Nations stands ready, once the regrettably necessary combat operations are over, to undertake a major system-wide effort for peace-building, governance and security sector reform, physical reconstruction, and regional cooperation” he emphasised.

Mr. Ban Ki-Moon said the United Nations is proud to support the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and Sahel Initiative. “I hope all African countries will continue to contribute to progress on climate change and my Sustainable Energy for all Initiative as this can open the way for enormous gains” he underlined. she underlined. (See complete speech of UN SG on the AU website: www.au.int .



Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, President of Palestine National Authority (PNA) and Chairman of Palestine Liberation Organisation Executive Committee congratulated the AU for the achievements by many countries in the promotion of governance and democracy which has led to economic growth. He also commended the Union’s efforts in the consolidation of peace and security as well as conflict resolution on the continent.

He expressed gratitude at the adoption of the request of the Palestinian State to have observer status at the UN General Assembly. “The most pressing issue for the Palestinian National Authority now is how to alleviate the suffering of refugees from Syria”, he said.

New chairperson for the AU elected



Before passing on the baton to the new Chairperson of the Union, Mr. Hailemariam Dessalegn, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, the outgoing Chairperson of the Union, Dr. Boni Yayi, who is also President of the Republic of Benin, in his speech, urged the Assembly to respect the AU institutions and its constitutive Act. He stressed on the importance of regional integration and political unity, as well as re-enforcement of the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) . President Yayi called on Africans to invest and encourage business ventures in the continent.

New African Presidents welcomed

The Assembly welcomed newly elected presidents and each of them took the floor to present a vote of thanks. They are: President John Dramani Mahama of the Republic of Ghana and President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud of the federal Republic of Somalia.

In conclusion, honorary awards were presented to the former Commissioners of the African Union by the new Chairperson of the Union and the AUC Chairperson.

ETA/