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Speech by Dr Jean PING, Outgoing Chairperson of the African Union, at the official handing over ceremony

ddis Ababa, 15 October 2012

Your Excellency, the Chairman of the African Union,

Your Excellency Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia,

Madam Chairperson of the African Union Commission,

Honourable Ministers,

Your Excellency Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa,

Your Excellencies Ambassadors and Permanent Representatives of African Union Member States,

Your Excellencies Ambassadors and Permanent Representatives of Partner Organizations of the African Union,

Distinguished Representatives of International and Regional Organizations,

Distinguished Invited guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. « **To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven**” states the Book of Ecclesiastes, chapter 3 verse 1. I want to devote greater part of this moment to the duty of expressing gratitude. I would first of all like to thank the Chairman of the African Union and the Prime Minister of the Democratic Federal Republic of Ethiopia, as well as all the personalities who have graced this occasion with their presence.
2. I would like to express my deep gratitude to all the High Authorities of Member States for the confidence they reposed in me during my tenure and

for their support and cooperation without which the Commission would not have been able to successfully carry out its mission. By appointing me to occupy the prestigious post of the Chairperson of the Commission, they, first and foremost, conferred an immense honour on my country.

3. I would also like to express my gratitude to the Authorities of the host country, the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, for the hospitality they have offered me since 2008 and for their unwavering support and cooperation. Your Excellency the Prime Minister, please accept my heartfelt gratitude.
4. I would like to use this opportunity to thank my colleagues, the Deputy-Chairperson and the Commissioners, the collaborators in my cabinet as well as the other members of the Commission for the commitment and devotion to duty which enabled us to deal with challenges and work together towards the attainment of the continental objectives during the last four years. I wish each one of you good luck in your respective functions.

Mr Chairman,

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

5. When I officially assumed duty as the Chairperson of the African Union Commission at the end of April 2008, I outlined, among others, the main outline of the activities that the new team of the Commission would embark upon in order to achieve the vision of a prosperous Africa free from want and fear. At issue was addressing the problems associated with the trilogy of development, peace and democracy and speeding up the continental integration process. We also needed to continue the consolidation of the ongoing reconstruction of the African Union so that we could have an organization that would be in a position to contribute to the re-positioning of

Africa within the framework of the nascent new international order which provides opportunities that Africa has to seize or risk being condemned to remain on the fringes of development and thereby miss the train of globalization. It also involved reinforcing the hope of a brighter future for the sons and daughters of the continent, at least in their daily lives, a hope which was sown during the launching of the African Union in Durban ten years ago.

6. I sincerely believe that we have spared no effort, during the past four years, in tackling these activities. Indeed, despite the imposition of the globalization which tended to marginalize Africa, not to mention the conjunction of major crisis, we are satisfied with the real and tangible progress and the trail which do not need to be repeated. The laudatory appraisal drawn up by H. E the Prime Minister of Ethiopia during Saturday evening's Reception at the National Palace is comforting and stimulating as we continue our long march towards development, unity and integration. But we also have to admit that the path has been long and strewn with obstacles.

7. It is incumbent upon you to assess the actions undertaken, the successes, shortcomings and high points in those challenging moments. But one thing is certain: in the management of the affairs of the continent, the Commission never gave up. Above all, it always undertook to promote African unity everywhere as it is a sine qua non for the achievements of Africa's common development efforts. In unity, our success is more than a probability, divided, failure is a certainty. Haven't we realized on several occasions that when circumstances demand, Africa has been able to show its capability and ability to collectively defend its interest and express its concerns with one voice..

Mr Chairman,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

8. Ten years after the birth of the African Union, and with less than a year to the jubilee of our Continental Organization, it is an Africa far from the colonial and post-colonial experiences as we enter the second decade of the 21st century with aplomb and determination. An Africa of 54 independent States, all desirous of realizing the vision of our founding fathers for a free, united, prosperous and integrated continent! An Africa which has not only become a major player in the global dynamics in recent years and whose voice is increasingly being heard, but an Africa that is clearly conscious of the opportunities that will be available to it as a result of the changing international economic order, especially the arrival of emerging countries and consequently the enhancement of its negotiating power on the global market! An Africa boosted by its immense natural resources, the new maritime el-dorado, endowed with immense resources and considered by many as the reservoir of global economic growth! An Africa that would be able to feed itself in a generation! An Africa which is also endowed with a continental organization that has been increasingly asserting itself on the international stage and has given the continent positive visibility! An Africa whose sons and daughters are determined to seize every available opportunity in order to accelerate the process of African reconstruction and make it an emerging continent of the 21st century! Yes, in 2050 Nigeria will, for example, be classified 13th in the world, in terms of GDP ahead of Italy, Spain, Canada and other developed countries.

9. Today, I give way to a great woman, an eminent colleague who has been prepared for this heavy but stimulating task by virtue of the high positions she has occupied and the impressive background of which she can boast. I have no doubt that the affairs of the Commission are in good hands. I will not hide the fact that the past four years have been intense and rich, from the personal and professional standpoint. I wish that Dr DlaminiZuma

experiences the same exalting moments that I experienced during my tenure and which I bear in mind as I leave amidst the feeling of having accomplished my mission in pursuit of the demands of the continent and in fulfilment of the confidence reposed in me. The task ahead will not be easy but I have no doubt that the support and understanding that you showed towards me will be extended to Mrs Zuma.

10. At a time when the new and promising Africa has decided to write a new chapter in its history by placing a woman at the helm of the Organization, I would like to cordially address the distinguished Lady who is to take over from me: « *Dr Nkosazana Clarice Dlamini-Zuma, I strongly believe that you are going to carry high our banner and I am confident in handing over the baton to you in this collective exalting long distance relay for Africa's emergence, splendour, victory and wellbeing of its People. The two of us had sincerely wished to undertake it together as a common endeavour because we belong to the same team running the same marathon. Accept my sincere wishes for success and May God bless You and bless Africa*»!
11. Thank you for your kind attention.