

Remarks

By

H.E. Ato Hailemariam Dessalegn

**Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of
Ethiopia**

At

**The handing-Over Ceremony of Members of the
Commission of the African Union**

15 October 2012

Addis Ababa

Excellency Dr. Boni Yayi, President of the Republic of Benin and
Chairperson of the African Union,

Excellency Dr. Jean Ping, Outgoing Chairperson of the African
Union Commission,

Excellency Dr. Dlamini Zuma, Incoming Chairperson of the African
Union Commission,

Excellency Mr. Erastus Mwencha, Deputy Chairperson of the
Commission,

Excellencies Ambassadors,

Excellencies Commissioners,

Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, I am addressing you for the first time as the Prime
Minister of Ethiopia - a responsibility bestowed upon me after the
untimely passing away of our great leader. Let me take this
opportunity to express my heartfelt gratitude to you and your
respective governments for the solidarity during our difficult time. I
wish also to thank you for the congratulatory messages on my
appointment.

I am pleased to attend this official handing-over ceremony
between the outgoing and incoming members of the Commission.
While I am glad to welcome Dr. Zuma and her new team, it is also
my duty to bid farewell to the outgoing members of the Commission.

I wish to seize this occasion to express my profound appreciation to my good friend and brother H.E. Dr. Jean Ping, the outgoing Chairperson of the Commission, for all the excellent work that he has done over the last four years. He has indeed exerted tireless efforts to achieve the fundamental objectives of our Union and promote the cause of Africa on the international stage.

We highly appreciate his indefatigable work to strengthen the Commission with a view to enhancing its efficiency and effectiveness to better serve the interest of our people. During his term of office, the number of peacekeeping troops deployed in Somalia, Sudan and elsewhere under the auspices of the African Union have significantly increased. On the other hand, Chairperson Ping has also played an important role not only in expanding and consolidating Africa's strategic partnership with the outside world but also in strengthening the AU's position in terms of coordinating Africa's engagement with different partners.

I am very happy to have closely worked with Dr. Ping in my former capacity as the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister and I would like to thank him for all his cooperation and friendship. I also wish to commend the outgoing Commissioners for their significant contributions in the service of Africa. As the outgoing Chairperson and Commissioners take leave of office, I would like to extend my very best wishes to them in their future endeavors and I assure them of our continued cooperation and friendship.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is also my pleasure to warmly congratulate my dear sister H.E. Dr. Dlamini Zuma, the incoming Chairperson of the Commission for her brilliant election as the first woman ever to assume the high post of Chairperson of the Commission. We all recall Dr. Zuma's distinguished contribution in the transformation of the OAU to AU in her capacity as Minister for Foreign Affairs of South Africa. Let me also take this opportunity to assure Dr. Zuma that Ethiopia, as the Headquarters of the Commission, will remain steadfast in fulfilling its commitment and will not fail to extend all the necessary support to her in the successful discharge of her heavy responsibilities.

I have no doubt that Dr. Zuma will indeed continue to build on the excellent work that has been done by her predecessor towards the realization of the cardinal principles and objectives of our Union. Her in-depth knowledge of the Commission and the issues at hand as well as her well-known leadership quality assures us that she will ably steer the process of transforming our Commission so that it can be an effective authority to be reckoned with on matters concerning Africa.

As I am sure Dr. Zuma knows well, the task ahead could be arduous and there could be some hurdles along the way, but as her success will also be ours, we will be by her side to facilitate and advance the achievements of our strategies and programmes. I want

to assure her, once again, of my government's unreserved support and cooperation.

I would also like to congratulate Mr. Mwencha, the Deputy Chairperson and the Commissioners for their election and I wish them all every success in the effective discharge of their mandate.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The new members of the Commission are assuming charge of their duties at a time when we are celebrating the 10th anniversary of the African Union. We are also on the eve of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the OAU. As we reflect on our journey over the past decades, our task should be to assess our achievements and shortcomings as well as strategize for an Africa where our people are fully extricated from poverty and where peace and security reigns in all our countries.

In this connection, we could be satisfied with the achievements that have been made thus far by our Union in terms of addressing the multifaceted challenges confronting our continent. In particular, I wish to note the significant decline in the number of conflicts plaguing our continent, with the exception of a few hotspots here and there. This has no doubt created a favorable environment for Africa to focus its energy on eradicating poverty and unleashing its potential for economic growth and development.

In this regard, the implementation of NEPAD and its flagship projects such as CAADP and PIDA is, to say the least, of paramount importance.

Africa is no more the marginalized continent of the 1980s and 1990s. Over the last decade or so, it has come out from stagnation and is registering robust economic growth. In spite of the global economic crisis of the last couple of years, African economies have also shown remarkable resilience. As a result, the continent has emerged as a new growth pole rekindling a new sense of hope and enthusiasm for the realization of Africa's renaissance.

We certainly need to sustain this momentum that has been created over the last decade. In this regard, the newly elected members of the Commission have a huge responsibility in pushing forward Africa's transformation agenda.

I conclude my remarks by assuring the incoming members of the Commission that we will host them with the traditional Ethiopian hospitality. We will do everything possible to facilitate their work and they can count on our full support and cooperation. I would also like to wish the outgoing members of the Commission *Bon Voyage* as they return back to their respective countries and embark on a new life. Thank you again for the service you have rendered to Africa. You are always welcome to Addis Ababa, your second home.

I thank you