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**STATEMENT BY**

**HER EXCELLENCY DR. NKOSAZANA DLAMINI ZUMA**

**CHAIRPERSON OF THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION**

**AT THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ELYSEE TREATY BETWEEN GERMANY AND FRANCE**

**ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA**

 **MONDAY, 11 MARCH 2013**

**EXCELLENCIES;**

**DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN**

It is a great honor for me to attend this occasion and to deliver a statement at the 50th Anniversary of the signing of the Elysee Treaty, also known as the treaty of friendship between Germany and France.

This treaty that was signed on January 22, 1963, by then German Chancellor Konard Adenauer and General Charles de Gaulle, was a watershed in the relations between Germany and France, and laid the cornerstone for rapprochement after World War II, as well as, the foundations for European unification. It marked the beginning of reconciliation of “old age enemies” and also the end of a period which cost the life of numerous German and French soldiers and civilians at the start of the nineteenth century that was characterized by warfare and territorial occupation.

Allow me, at this point, to salute the courage of those two leaders who, in the face of the rancorous relations between their two countries, initiated action aimed at normalizing their relations for the benefit of their people.

**Excellencies**

**Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen**

The normalization of relations between Europe’s biggest economies has much significance. First, it obliterated the past confrontation and acrimony that had dogged relations between them and helped to reconcile the two former foes. Second, it transformed their past history into a force for peace in the world in general and Europe in particular. Third, it laid the foundation for European unification. Last and not the least, it nourished contacts especially through culture, exchanges of young people and partnership in language practice.

 In very clear terms, the treaty symbolized the need for will power and commitment to a common course, and offers to all of us the opportunity for stocktaking, as well as, epitomizes the fact that conflict can be overcome.

We relish the history brought about by the two countries. For us in Africa, as we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the OAU/AU this year, there are lessons to deduce from the German-French reconciliation and cooperation, as we seek to build sustainable peace in Africa in the context of solidarity among our Member States. Like the Germans and the French, Africa needs to draw inspiration and come closely together, maintain exchanges amid diversity, anchored on the everyday life of their peoples. Although, we have initiated this step, the path ahead is tough and challenging.

We hope that both Germany and France will relate to us with the view to strengthening our own desire and efforts towards the unity of Africa.

We congratulate these two “giants” in the world system, for making peace happen between them and for fostering world peace as well. We wish them future success in the implementation of the treaty. We celebrate with them the milestone that has so far been achieved!

I would wish to thank the two Permanent Missions for honoring us by holding the celebration in our premises, which is a demonstration of the existing excellent relations between the AU and the two countries. We hope that the relations will continue to be nurtured and improved in the future.

I thank you all for your kind attention.

**African Union Commission**

**Addis Ababa**

**Ethiopia**

**11 March 2013**