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**OPENING SPEECH OF THE DIRECTOR OF WOMEN, GENDER AND  
DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORATE OF THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION**

**AT**

**THE 5<sup>th</sup> ORDINARY MEETING OF AU EXPERTS OF GENDER AND  
WOMEN'S AFFAIRS**

**HELD AT**

**THE AU COMMISSION**

**IN**

**ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA**

**ON**

**8 May 2013**

**Dear Experts Ladies and Gentlemen,**

On behalf of H.E. Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and on my own behalf wish to extend a warm welcome to all Addis Ababa, the Headquarters of both the African Union and the Economic Commission for Africa and popularly known as the African Capital. At the outset, please allow me, on behalf of the African Union Commission, and indeed on my own behalf, to welcome you all to the African Union Commission. We are honored to have you, Experts, in our midst and I wish to thank you sincerely for having responded to our invitation despite the short notice.

As you are aware, ideally, ordinary meetings of AU Gender and Women's Affairs are normally held in October/November in line with the AU calendar. However, due to the importance of capturing your contribution to the theme of the AU 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration of Pan Africanism and African Renaissance H.E The Chairperson

Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma decided to schedule this meeting for May, ahead of the policy meetings leading up to the Assembly of AU Heads of State and Government planned from 18 to 27 May 2013. I believe, Experts, that you understand the importance of moving the Ministers Meeting forward to May.

As you are aware, the AU has taken global leadership in advancing Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment since the transformation of the Organization of African Unity to the African Union. One of the top priorities of the current Commission is the integration of women and gender perspective into all policies, programmes and activities of the AU. My colleague, Director of Strategic Planning is here and will be making a presentation on this, but allow me to say that Gender is now one of the 8 priorities of the Commission has been mainstreamed across the other priorities and also

is housed in Pillar no 2 of the 2014 – 2017 Strategic Plan and is also mainstreamed in other pillars.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

As you are aware, the theme for 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of AU is Pan Africanism and African Renaissance while Pan Africanism has been debated on since the founding of the OAU African Renaissance took centre stage during the transformation of OAU to AU. It is about the transformation and reinvention of the African Continent by Africans themselves that is the pre-occupation of them. The African Renaissance seeks to examine Africa's present position and the efforts made by the peoples in the continent to change what are not working in many African countries, so that African could control their own destiny. Africa is beset by numerous challenges, and the African Renaissance is seen by many Pan-Africanists as a possible panacea for these challenges. It has been seen as a call for the people of Africa to work towards the resurgence of Africa economically, sociologically and politically.

Conditions are not sufficient to many on the continent, and this continue to jeopardize the opportunity by Africans to grasp the full concept of the African Renaissance. Key among these is the fact that the African Renaissance process was not inclusive of women, despite the fact that they constitute 52% which gives them numerical majority on the African Continent. There is need for cultural renaissance that can take place.

In looking at the position of women in Africa and their development, it is important to ensure that the voices of women are heard in this discuss. The African Renaissance has come to epitomize the democratization of the African continent; therefore, the voices of women and their role cannot be ignored. There is a need to ensure that the continuous marginalization of women is addressed. As long as women are not fully incorporated into the development strategies of their countries as active participants, their countries will be operating at half capacity.

Indeed, Pan-Africanist fought for the liberation of Africa and delivered African people

from slavery, colonialism and neo-colonialism. It also seeks the political, economic and social unity of the African continent. Pan-Africanism embraces the intellectual, political and economic cooperation that should lead to the political unity of Africa, and demands that the riches of Africa be used for the benefit, development and enjoyment of the African people. This expert meeting therefore will be receiving presentations from other speakers on the theme of the AU Golden Jubilees, the AU wide strategic plan 2014-2017 and AU agenda 2063 in addition to its core business which I wish to turn to now.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

You will observe that this meeting is the first in a series of important preparatory meetings, including the Women Stakeholders Conference on Pan Africanism and African Renaissance which will be held in 12-13 May, followed the Ministerial Committee of 10 and the 5<sup>th</sup> Meeting of AU Ministers of Gender and Women's Affairs which will be the climax of these meetings.

Experts will be required to make recommendations for your consideration regarding the Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance to Ministers as AU 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary theme. This particular item is extremely important and that is why it is recurring on your own agenda as an item on its own. Your input would go a long way in influencing and shaping the vision of the AU wide strategic plan and the Union's 2063 development agenda.

As you are aware, 11 July 2013 will mark the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the coming into existence of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa. Even as we commemorate this landmark, we need to reflect on how we can move from advocacy for ratification by countries that are yet to do so, to implementation by countries that have ratified the Protocol.

Another important item is the strategies that will be needed to enhance the capacity of women's machineries, which are you key Ministers and ensure that the machineries are visible and properly resourced. The issue of gender budgeting has been on the table in our Member States for so long; and we believe that it is high time that we ensured that this matter is taken seriously by all line ministries in our countries.

It is our hope that the proposal to establish an Annual High Level Panel on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment will meet your Ministers approval. The establishment of this High Level Panel, similar to the High Level Panel on Peace and Security, will create space for women scholars, researchers, academia, and gender experts to discuss emerging issues.

We are also aware that you will be considering and recommending projects for the 2012 African Women's Decade Theme of "Agriculture and Food Security" for approval. It is therefore my hope that discussion will also touch on the establishment, by each Member State, of the African Women's Decade National Coordinating Committee.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is important in this respect that we consolidate and develop the institutions that guarantee the integration of women and gender issues. Our ability to do so, however, would depend on how seriously we consider women and gender issues and in what spirit.

It is therefore my expectation that this meeting will make contribution to the theme of the Summit and explore the place of gender within the discourse of the African Renaissance and make recommendations on how women can make meaningful contributions to creating an African Renaissance.

I therefore once again welcome you to the African Union Commission and thank you for your expected active participation.

It is therefore my pleasure to declare this 5<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Expert of AU Gender and Women Affairs open.

**I thank you**