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**Statement by H.E. Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma,**

**Chairperson of the AU Commission,**

**at the**

**Tenth AU-RECs-ECA-AfDB Coordination Committee Meeting**

**23 January 2013, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

**Your Excellencies, Chief Executives of Regional Economic Communities,**

**Your Excellency, Executive Secretary of UNECA,**

**Your Excellency President of the African Development Bank,**

**Your Excellencies Commissioners,**

**Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is an honour and privilege to welcome you to Addis Ababa - and this being my first time to attend this important meeting - I wish to thank you for the work in support of our collaboration.

This forum provides an opportunity to examine the progress so far achieved, discuss the key challenges facing the integration of our continent and share some thoughts on moving the process forward.

**Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen**

Since we are about our core agenda of integration and development as continental institutions. We must address the central question of the Abuja Treaty: how *“to increase African self-reliance and promote an endogenous and self-sustained development.”* This is very true even today, to develop an endogenous and self-sustained development, because we have seen how many models of growth globally has come apart, so it is important that we find our own models of development.

We must help give direction as to how to move more swiftly to ensure that Africa becomes prosperous, integrated, peaceful and indeed a global growth-pole over the next few decades. This means that we cannot anymore be satisfied with small, incremental improvements, but we have to think and act bolder.

**Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

This is an opportune moment, as we celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the OAU/AU. This is an opportune moment to look at our achievements, to learn from the past, what we we could have done better. As the three organisations we have complementary mandates and therefore define our common agenda for the next

fifty years. The RECs as building blocks for integration and development are critical in this process.

Given the scale and scope of global changes, it is therefore important that Africa reenergizes our momentum for integration and development, guided by its leadership in order to claim its renaissance in a very competitive, insecure and unequal world that we see today.

**Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

In this context, I am pleased to inform you that on 11 and 12 January this year, I had the honour and privilege of holding extensive discussions, with Dr. Carlos Lopes, Executive Secretary, UNECA, and Dr. Donald Kaberuka, President of the AfDB on a range of topical issues.

Among other things, we reiterated the need to coordinate our activities in setting the agenda to support Africa's socio-economic transformation as we commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the OAU/AU in May this year. We affirmed the spirit of Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance, which inspired the political revolution of the continent in the last 50 years, and is now critical for realization of Africa's socio-economic transformation.

We also reflected on the key challenges, opportunities and priorities facing Africa going forward, drawing on the past 50 years. We noted that Africa's economic growth and development challenges require the need to focus on equity, inclusiveness, the preservation of natural capital and creation of decent jobs, especially for the youth and women. To support the vision of Africa's leaders to transform the continent over the next 50 years, we re-affirmed the commitment by the three (3) Pan-African institutions to collaborate closely with RECs and other partners to foster the agenda of an integrated and prosperous continent with a view to realize Africa's renaissance.

**Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Let me at this juncture, set out and suggest the context or framework, within which we need to approach our important relationship, as we gather here today.

In my view, the framework has two important elements. One should be a frank acknowledgment of the many challenges we continue to face in fostering our integration agendas, and those that may arise, moving forward. Second, is the

obvious need for a stronger commitment to manage these challenges in a straight-forward and constructive way, with the eye for the longer-term.

We also need to continue to deal with, as a matter of priority, issues related to global public goods including climate change, peace and security as well pressing challenges regarding youth and women unemployment. The way forward is to keep urging the leaders of our Member States on the need to accelerate the implementation of agreed decisions and actions.

Outside the provisions of our Protocol requesting us to formally meet twice a year, I think that the emergencies generated by our changing environment force upon us the need to often meet to agree and have common positions on specific agendas before meeting the external world and our partners. I would like also take this opportunity to invite you to fully participate in the elaboration of o the next AU Strategic Plan which is ongoing preparation.

### **Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am aware that a number of RECs represented here at this meeting have made substantial progress in a range of areas, but a great deal of work remains to be done. Among others, shortcomings in the removal of unnecessary barriers for movement of goods, services and labour, have root of the challenges. As a matter of priority, we need to tackle these surmountable challenges head-on, to realize of our dream for a united and deeply integrated continent.

May I recall that the central pillar of Africa's integration process should be anchored on her people. Ordinary citizens should enjoy the benefits associated with regional integration, and in this connection, free movement of our citizens should be made a reality. Therefore, a central challenge of our everyday work should be to set favourable conditions that allow the skills and capabilities of our labour force, especially, the youth and women, to be fully exploited.

### **Excellences, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,**

On a more optimistic note I must emphasize that, among other positive developments, the establishment and continued strengthening of the COMESA-EAC-SADC Tripartite Free Trade Area should give us a large of confidence, on what can be achieved, when we agree to synergize our limited resources and rich experiences. In this vein, I would like to take this opportunity to encourage other RECs represented here, to learn and emulate the COMESA-EAC-SADC Tripartite FTA initiative that I just alluded to.

In conclusion, I wish to once again to applaud you for the tireless effort you continue to extend to the AU Commission, and the important relationship all of us have developed and nurtured over the years, in support of our integration agenda.

I have no doubt that there are many opportunities that can be seized which will enable us to reap the benefits of continental integration and sustainable economic prosperity for our people.

I encourage the members of the media present to interact and get information from the RECs.

I thank you for your kind attention.