

PRESS RELEASE NO .14/ 22nd AU SUMMITAU COMMISSION OUTLINES MAJOR PRIORITIES FOR 2014 AS AU EXECUTIVE COUNCIL STARTS ITS 24TH ORDINARY SESSION

Addis Ababa, 27 January 2014:

The African Union Commission will, during the on-going summit of the African Union in Addis Ababa, present the Agenda 2063 Framework document. At the same time the Commission is calling on all Africans and peoples of African descent in the Diaspora to continue contributing to the framework's call of defining

the Africa they want; this as national consultations and feedback are set to continue in each of the Union's Member States. The final framework will be adopted at the AU's summit in July of this year.



So said AU Commission Chairperson Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma as she laid out the Commission's key priorities for the year 2014, in an address she gave to the Union's Executive Council, composed mostly of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Union's 54 member states. The Council is meeting in its 24th ordinary session at the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa from 27th to 28th January. This is the first Executive Council to take

place in the first year of the second fifty years of the African Union (previously the Organisation of African Unity), which was formed in 1963.

In the same year of 2014, the Commission will pursue its annual theme of "The Year of Agriculture and Food Security" and shall also mark the 10th Anniversary of the adoption of the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP). CAADP has the goals of increasing agricultural investment and productivity, of growing agribusinesses and value chains, and of expanding infrastructure, skills and research for agriculture. The Commission views agriculture as a critical tool in not only achieving food security, but also for driving the continent's development and prosperity.

While developing agriculture, the AUC will take special measures to ensure that women, who are the largest part of the agricultural work force and food producers, have access to training and capital, and are supported to form cooperatives, marketing structures and agribusinesses. Without this push, the Commission believes that Africa will not succeed in the much needed African agrarian revolution. The Commission will seek too, to consolidate and accelerate the gains made in achieving gender parity by 2020, and the building of a non-sexist Africa, a key pillar of Agenda 2063.

During 2014, Africa will continue to carve its rightful place in the world, by engaging in matters critical to the continent's transformation with its partners, and top of the agenda, will be matters of trade and the economic relations between the continent and the rest of the world. Dr Dlamini Zuma made an ardent plea in this respect, for the continent to remain united in its common approaches and "not allow individual countries to be isolated or intimidated into signing agreements that are against integration and against the interests of their peoples and their development".

The Commission's top priority for peace and security in Africa will be to ensure that the guns fall silent by 2020:

"The cost of conflicts and internal strife are too huge. We must therefore continue to create climates for peace and stability, including effective, democratic and accountable governance and institutions, and by ensuring development and shared prosperity", said the AUC Chairperson.

Another top priority for the Commission in 2014 will be to strengthen its institutional effectiveness, raise domestic resources for its operations, build a people centered African Union, strengthen its communications and ensure that it informs and involves the African citizens and civil society in the programmes and positions of the Union.

Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa Dr Carlos Lopes, while applauding the successful stories on the continent, made the case for increased agricultural productivity.

"An increase in agricultural productivity, has, from the time of the European industrial revolution, contributed immensely to fast tracking the structural transformation of economies. The effect of the agricultural revolution on the economies of Brazil, India and China give an illustration of how the surplus from increased agricultural productivity can fuel industrial growth".

Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Ethiopian Minister for Foreign Affairs and Chairperson of the Executive Council of the African Union, said the situation in South Sudan and the Central African Republic is "very alarming" and "there is no justification for the continuation of the crises in both places even for a day". He congratulated the Government and the opposition in South Sudan for signing the agreements on the cessation of hostilities and the question of detainees.

The Minister also took time to welcome his new counterparts from different countries who were attending the Executive Council meeting for the first time. They were from Somalia, Mali, Comoros, Cape Verde, Gambia, Algeria, and Zambia. He also welcomed Mauritania which is re-joining the African Union after a period of suspension.

Apart from discussing the theme of the summit, the ministers have many other reports for consideration. These include: the Annual Report of the Commission for 2013; the Report of the Permanent Representatives' Committee (PRC); the Recommendations of the PRC

on the Report of the Commission on the Implementation of Previous Decisions of the Executive Council and the Assembly; the Progress Report of the Commission on the Africa 2063 Agenda; Report of the 8th Ordinary Session of the AU Conference of Ministers of Economy and Finance; the 9th Ordinary Session of the AU Conference of Ministers responsible for Animal Resources; the 9th Ordinary Session of the AU Labour and Social Affairs Commission (LSAC); the 6th Ordinary Session of AU Conference of Ministers in charge of Integration (COMAI VI); the 6th Ordinary Session of the AU Conference of Ministers of Health; the 20th Ordinary Session of the AU Conference of Ministers of Industry; the High Level Meeting on Renewed Partnership for a Unified Approach to end Hunger in Africa by 2025 under the CAADP Framework; the 5th Ordinary Session of the AU Conference of Ministers of Sport (CAMS-5); the Regional Conference on Population and Development and of the 9th Ordinary Session of the African Population Commission (APC); the 5th Special Session of the African Ministerial Conference on Environment (AMCEN); the 8th Ordinary Session of the AU Conference of Ministers of Trade; report of the Commission on the Implementation of the July 2008 Assembly Declaration Assembly/AU/Decl. 1 (XI) on the Sharm El Sheikh Commitments for Accelerating the Achievement of Water and Sanitation Goals in Africa; and the Implementation of the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA).

Reports coming from other organs of the African Union will also be considered. These include the Report on the Activities of the African Commission on Human and People's Rights; and the Report on the Activities of the African Court on Human and People's Rights.

Additionally, the ministers will elect 10 members of the Peace and Security Council for a 2-year term as well as elect the President and Vice President of the Pan-African University Council. These appointments will be confirmed by the Heads of State in their meeting later this week.

To conclude their meeting tomorrow, 28 January, the Ministers will consider the draft decisions and declarations of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government to be held from 30-31 January and propose the date and venue of their next meeting.

WZM/

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