

Press Release N°38/22nd AU SUMMIT**African Heads of State and Government pledge for The African World Heritage Fund (AWHF)**

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 31 January 2014: The Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma has co-hosted an African World Heritage Fund/African Union event with Mr. Sibusiso Xaba, Chairperson of the Board of the African World Heritage Foundation. The event was co-hosted on the sidelines of the 22nd Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union, at the headquarters of the African Union.

The Chairperson of the Commission recalled that The African World Heritage Foundation was founded by the AU, based on decisions taken at the First African Union Conference of Ministers of Culture in Nairobi in 2005 and endorsed by the African Union Heads of State and Government Summit, held in Khartoum in 2006.

Dr. Zuma expressed her concern that there is a great and urgent need to safeguard cultural heritage during conflict and to manage the alarming threats from mining and development activities across the continent. She highlighted that there is dire need for the fund to support risk management training programmes and provide more funding for conservation efforts.

"We may grow our economies and solve our social problems, but our cultural growth is our soul, Africa should not neglect her soul" said Dr. Zuma in concluding her address.

The objectives of the fund according to Mr. Sibusiso Xaba, Chairperson of AWHF, are to make the world heritage list credible, representative and balanced; ensure sustainable management and conservation of world heritage sites in Africa; and ensure the livelihood of the local communities living within and around world heritage sites is improved through sustainable economic activities. "The last five years perhaps can be regarded as the formative years for the fund and I would like to thank the African Union member states for their unrelenting support to the fund for ensuring that we have established solid foundations for the conservation and management of our cultural and natural heritage places" added Mr. Xaba.

Mr. Getachew Engida, Deputy Director-General of UNESCO on behalf of Mrs. Irina Bokova, the UNESCO Director General said that the African World Heritage Fund helps make the most of Africa's heritage at all levels through capacity building for site managers, heritage professionals, and local communities, as well as through disaster risk

preparedness courses and the conversation and rehabilitation of sites in danger. He also highlighted that the fund has nurtured a new generation of heritage professionals in Africa.

On the challenges, Mr. Engida shed light on urban sprawl and tourism, poaching and unsustainable resource extraction, causing serious harm to natural sites and their wildlife, flora and fauna. In asserting his statement he added: “It is alarming that 17 African sites are inscribed on the list of world heritage in danger. This means that Africa hosts nearly half of all endangered sites – no other region has such a high percentage.”

Patron of the AWHF and representative of the private sector, Mr. Phuthuma Nhleko said: “Africa’s Renaissance is simply not possible without the confluence of a fully integrated political, commercial and cultural tripartite vision. The rise of one without the other is not sustainable.” He called upon the entire African private sector to help create the third leg of the trilogy he described.



Other speakers at the event, included: Mr Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, President of Republic of Mauritania and Chairperson of the African Union, Mr Hifikepunye Pohamba, President of the Republic of Namibia who pledged support of USD. 50,000 this year, Mr Uhuru Muigai Kenyatta, President of the Republic of Kenya who pledged support of USD.1,500,000, Mr Jacob Zuma, President of the Republic of South Africa- South Africa covers the annual operational cost of the Fund and pledged support of additional USD. 1,000,000.

In addition, statements were delivered on behalf of Mr Idris Debby, President of the Republic of Chad, whose Minister of Culture pledged support of USD. USD.100,000; Mr Anerood Jugnauth, President of the Republic of Mauritius; Mr Abdelaziz Bouteflika, President of People’s Democratic Republic of Algeria whose delegation pledged to contribute USD.100,000 yearly; send specialists to the headquarters of the fund, host the board meeting and train Africans on the field at University level.

In his closing remark Dr. Mustapha S. Kaloko, Commissioner for Social Affairs strongly urged all member states to swiftly ratify the Charter on African Cultural Renaissance which until now has, according to Commissioner Kaloko, received only 6 ratifications.

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For further information contact

Directorate of Information and Communication | African Union Commission | E-mail: dinfo@africa-union.org | Web Site www.au.int | Addis Ababa | Ethiopia

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