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ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA P. O. Box 3243 TELEPHONE: 011-551 7700
FAX: 011-551 7844, WEBSITE: WWW.AFRICA-UNION.ORG

Welcome remarks of the Chairperson of the African Union
Commission, Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma to the 28th Ordinary
Session of the Permanent Representative Committee

Malabo, 20-22 June 2014

Your Excellency, Ambassador of Zimbabwe and Acting Chairperson of the Permanent Representatives Committee;

Your Excellencies Members of the Permanent Representatives Committee;

The Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission,
Mr Erastus Mwencha;

Leaders of AU Organs

Representatives of the Regional Economic Communities

Commissioners of the African Union Commission;

Distinguished Officials from Capitals

Distinguished Invited Guests

It is a pleasure to address the Permanent Representatives Committee (PRC) given your important role in Summit preparations and in complementing the day-to-day work of the African Union Commission.

Allow me to sincerely thank the people and Government of Equatorial Guinea for their legendary hospitality and for putting at our disposal these excellent conference facilities.

Your Excellencies

The meeting of the PRC takes place in the context a working sessions of the Summit, looking at progress on decisions that should consolidate the work of the Union and take the continent forward.

At the same time, we are near-conclusion with the political statement and technical documents on our vision for the next fifty years. The work on Agenda 2063, as our discussions at the joint PRC-AU Commission retreat showed, must move beyond aspirations, towards identifying those concrete

areas where we must see action and faster movement forward in the next decade, so that we start building the Africa that we want today.

The theme of this Summit and its focus on Agriculture and Food security is but one such area. The theme debate must see us recommit to the overarching CAADP targets of raising investment and productivity in agriculture. We must also put in place the concrete actions we must take as countries, regions and the continent to stimulate agribusiness value chains, identifying which specific agricultural products this should be, and where. It requires renewed focus on irrigation and seed development; women's access to land, inputs and markets; and the infrastructure to store products and move them to markets, inside and outside the continent.

Many of the Ministerial reports serving before the PRC focus on other practical issues necessary to move Agenda 2063 forward, such as that of the Ministers of Education, and of the Ministers of Science and Technology and others.

The evidence is overwhelming that developing countries who managed to lift their populations out of poverty and build shared prosperity, are those who heavily invested in education, skills development and science and technology; as well as building their infrastructure. It is thus timely that Summit is requested to consider our vision and the concrete tasks to achieve this especially in Science and Technology.

Excellencies,

We are five years away from our target date for silencing the guns. This requires focused attention to resolving the conflicts that remain, consolidating peace and preventing and stopping the outbreak of other conflicts. At the same time, as we have seen in Mali and Somalia and escalating in Nigeria and Kenya, we face the growing threat of terrorism, extremism and attacks on innocent civilians. Our hearts go out to the victims and families of such attacks, and we must continue to pledge solidarity and work with the governments of the affected countries to stem the tide.

Terrorism and transnational crime, including arms, drugs and human trafficking know no borders, and we are all affected. The AU must also continue to address the issue of sexual violence in conflicts, as we push for protection of civilians, participation of women in peace processes and for prevention.

It bears repeating that the surest route to lasting peace and permanently silencing the guns is to build inclusive, equitable and tolerant societies. We must be steadfast about creating conditions for peace, through the building blocks of development and shared prosperity.

Excellencies,

It is for all these reasons that the continual improvement of the institutional architecture of our Union remains important, a matter that occupied our deliberations during the Hawassa PRC-AUC Retreat in April this year.

The Commission itself, as we informed you at the January Summit, is been paying attention to institutional matters, and is in the process of concluding the organizational review of the structure of the Commission. We also introduced measures to make our travel policy more cost-effective, and ensured that all administrative structures required in the Rules and Procedures - including the long-moribund Administrative Tribunal - are functional.

The Commission is improving the turnaround time of its recruitment processes, applying the country quotas to ensure fair distribution, and taking concrete steps to move closer to gender parity in its employment practices.

Over the last week, we presented the 2015 Budget of the Commission, with welcome engagements on the capacity of the Commission to spend, as well as the optimal relationship between its operational and programmatic budget.

As we move with Africa's integration agenda, the mandates given to the AU by Member States have also been growing. It is, therefore, inevitable that the AU budget has continued to increase over the years.

Your Excellencies;

We are also progressing with the review of Strategic partnerships of the Union, and should be ready to present to next year's summit. At the same time, there are valuable lessons from the Africa-EU Summit held at the beginning of March this year, that when we are clear about what Africa wants and we coordinate our efforts, we can ensure that we have outcomes which do not undermine our continental agendas. In the coming months, some of us have also been invited to the Africa-US Summit, and we should follow the same approach.

We can already see the benefits of our Common African Position on the post-2015 Development Agenda, providing us with a platform to engage other regions, build South-South solidarity, most recently during the Non-Aligned Movement Ministerial meeting in Algiers and the just held ACP-EU meetings in Nairobi.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

You will recall that the Executive Council, when they met at a Retreat in Bahir Dar, Ethiopia, in January this year established a Ministerial Sub-Committee to follow up on implementation of their decisions, as well as Agenda 2063.

The Ministerial Sub-Committee met earlier this month, with the participation of Chief Executive Officers of Regional Economic Communities (RECs), and our strategic partners, the AfDB and UNECA and made valuable inputs on a variety of issues at the core of Africa's integration agenda. As we deliberate on Agenda 2063 at this session, I trust that those inputs will be taken into consideration.

In conclusion, I know that your Excellencies have been working continuously since May to finalise the reports of the various PRC sub-Committees. This preparatory work and deliberations here at Malabo will go a long way in facilitating the work of the Executive Council and of the Assembly.

I wish to assure you that the Commission will do its best to facilitate your work, and ensuring that the outcomes of your deliberations, and those of the policy organs, are implemented. In this regard, we hope to continue to receive your maximum support and cooperation.

In conclusion, I apologise for the hick-ups in logistics, and assure you that we are working with the host country on these matters.

I wish you fruitful deliberations and thank you for your attention.

Merci beaucoup!
Muito obrigado!
Muchas gracias!
Shukran jazilan!
Asante sana!