

PRESS RELEASE N°04/ 24th AU SUMMIT

26th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council Opens with a call for Accelerated Empowerment of Women



Addis Ababa, 26 January 2015 – “We must really have an irreversible momentum towards the emancipation of women on the continent” said Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, Chairperson of the African Union Commission (AUC) while addressing the opening ceremony today of the 26th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council at the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, under the theme: “*Year of Women’s Empowerment and Development towards Africa’s Agenda 2063*”.



Dr. Dlamini Zuma warmly welcomed the new Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, H.E Valma Vall Mint Soueinea, who is also the Chairperson of the Executive Council. Another woman Minister to the “small but ever increasing group of women ministers of the AU” she noted with satisfaction.

This year 2015, the AUC Chairperson underlined, will make a difference in the lives of many African women, through practical initiatives in agriculture and agro-processing;

science, technology, innovation and education; business development and financial inclusion; health and reproductive rights, as well as the campaigns against gender-based violence, sexual violence in conflicts and child marriages. Dr. Dlamini Zuma called on the Member States to do more this year to increase the representation of women in government, in the judiciary and other public and private institutions, increasing the participation of women at the tables in peace negotiations. “I am quite sure that although this is a year of women, it is about our entire communities. That is why we look to you, our dear brothers to ensure that we work together to achieve objectives of the year”, she underscored.

The AUC Chairperson recalled that the AUC has just concluded the 2014 Year of Agriculture and Food Security, with a much better sense of what needs to be done: including improving women’s access to land; provision of rural infrastructure such as roads, irrigation; access to agricultural inputs, markets and finances for especially small holder farmers; modernization of agricultural tools and mitigation and adaptation to climate change. The issues on AU response to the Ebola crisis, alternative sources of financing, conflict management, AU peace keeping and youth employment among others featured in the statement. (See complete speech of the AUC Chairperson on the AU website: www.au.int).

On the other hand, the Chairperson of the Executive Council commended Africa for its capacity to speak in one voice. She called on the representatives of Member States to strengthen the cooperation with the AU Commission so as to enable Africa overcome all the socio-economic and political challenges of the time. “The joint efforts in the fight against Ebola have demonstrated African solidarity and it is important to continue in that way” she underlined. Minister Fatma Mint Vall Soueinae also commended the work done to elaborate the framework document for Agenda 2063 with the view to enhance Africa’s development. She called on the Member States to contribute in ensuring the full implementation of this agenda.

Dr. Carlos Lopes, UN Under Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) welcomed the choice of theme of the 24th AU Summit while acknowledging and paying tribute to the “female leaders who have been fighting for the continent’s recognition as a key player in the work arena. He stressed on the capacity of Africa to achieve its commitments for development under Agenda 2063. “Africa is still one of the fastest growing regions in the world and this development is totally opposite to the economic stagnation that can be observed in some developed countries,” Mr. Lopes said. He added that “Africa is at a turning point and the new African narrative is alive and now well, but it is still a little shaky, and we absolutely cannot allow any coughs or sniffles to turn into an epidemic.”

Composed of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of AU member States, The Executive Council is charged with the responsibility of preparing the work of the Assembly of Heads of States and Governments. The outcomes of this session will be presented during the 24th Ordinary Assembly of the Heads of State and Government of the African Union to take place on 30-31 January 2015, for adoption.

Journalists wishing to interview the leadership of the AU Commission during the Summit should submit their requests to Mrs Esther Azaa Tankou E-mail: YambouE@africa-union.org

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