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Newly Elected Chair of the African Union, President Robert Mugabe interacts with officials and staff of the AU Commission

Addis Ababa, 2 February 2015- As it is the tradition, the newly elected Chair of the African Union (AU) visited the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, today 2nd February 2015 to familiarize himself with the management and the staff of the AU Commission. The AU Chairperson had a working session with the leadership of the Commission including the Chairperson of the AU Commission, Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, the Deputy Chairperson Mr. Erastus Mwencha,

the commissioners and the directors before proceeding in the Plenary Hall of the AU Conference Center where he addressed the staff of the AU Commission.

 "You are part of us. And I say a very important part of us." said the newly elected African Union Chairperson, Mr. Robert Mugabe, who is also the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe . According to the new AU Chair, the AUC must be the driving engine for the African Union and the continent. "Let us see programs and projects emanating from the Commission be fully implemented thanks to your commitment and fighting spirit with the view to ensure that mother Africa is developed", underscored President Mugabe. This Commission, he said, must work harder than before to guarantee that the programs the continental organization attain its goals of an integrated, united and prosperous Africa at

peace with itself. President Mugabe expressed appreciation for the work so far undertaken by the AUC staff under the chairmanship of Dr. Dlamini-Zuma. "You are the hands and feet of the Commission", noted the President while calling on the staff to work harder so as to give more impetus to the African Union. "AU must demonstrate that it is more united than before, a self-sufficient continent where illiteracy, ignorance, poverty, hunger are alleviated." he emphasized.

"Basically, Africa is for Africans. Governments should make sure that African resources benefit the African people in the first place... To make this happen, Africa should have technicians and scientists who can add value to the rich African natural resources", stated the new AU Chairperson, before concluding his statement with the slogan: **"forward ever, backward never".**

In her introductory remarks, the AUC Chairperson, H.E Dr. Nkozasana Dlamini Zuma, presented the new AU Chairperson as "the custodian of what Zimbabwe is……. and a big defender of women rights." She also said that "he is coming at the right time", given that AU dedicated this year to women empowerment. AUC Chairperson stated that the very important decision adopted by the just ended 24th AU Summit will be implemented under the leadership of the new AU Chair, including the alternative sources of financing the AU amongst others.

The president of the staff association, Mr. Salah Hammad, expressed on behalf of all the AUC staff the honor of having a "hero and revolutionary" like President Robert Mugabe to chair the African Union. "A Pan-Africanist who is known as one of the most prominent figures of the African liberation movement", he added. "The Commission is counting on the political support of the new AU Chairperson to implement critical projects of the Commission".

The visit of the new AU Chairperson to the AU Commission was crowned with a family photo of President Mugabe and the AUC leadership. (follow the full speech of Presiddent Mugabe on AU social media Platforms)

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