

AFRICAN UNION

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## PRESS STATEMENT

### CELEBRATION OF NELSON MANDELA INTERNATIONAL DAY: 18 JULY

On the occasion of the Nelson Mandela International Day observed on 18 July, the African Union wishes to join the rest of the world in congratulating Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela on his 93<sup>rd</sup> birthday. Africa is certainly proud to be home to the icon which Madiba (as Mandela is fondly known) has become.

As we celebrate the joyous occasion of Madiba's birthday, we ought to be reminded of his extraordinary life from which we can draw a lot of inspiration. His selfless sacrifice, humility and dedication to the struggle for freedom and commitment to human rights are what separate him from the rest of mankind. He was humiliated and almost stripped of his dignity for his strong belief in freedom and human rights. Despite all his sufferings, Madiba has emerged a towering icon, preaching a message of reconciliation and equal rights for all. Madiba has not only been a torch bearer in the quest for Africa's freedom he has also proudly stood for justice and freedom across the globe.

In celebrating Madiba's birthday, it is befitting for the African Union to reflect on the values for which he has fought throughout his life, as this would inform the discourse on the shared values journey which the Union has embarked upon. The Union should therefore draw inspiration from Madiba's own commanding voice in deepening an understanding of the values of democracy, governance and human rights, which have essentially been identified as shared values which could facilitate Africa's integration and development.

Time has discredited heroes as easily as it has forgotten some; but Madiba has secured an enduring place in the heart and history of our beloved Continent. This international day is in recognition of his great place in the heart of humanity.

Happy birthday Madiba and May you have many more!!!