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Press statement

THIRD AFRICA ARAB SUMMIT POINTS TO FIRST SUCCESSFUL STEPS ON ROAD TO DEVELOPMENT AND AGREES ON AMBITIOUS PLANS FOR FUTURE COOPERATION

Africa and the Arab region are strengthening their cooperation under their partnership agreement - and that is good news for their respective peoples.

The third Africa Arab summit, which brought together over 60 heads of state and government and delegations from Africa and the Arab region from the 19th to 20th November 2013 in the state of Kuwait, was the culmination of a three year period of implementing the 5 year (2011- 2106) that was agreed to at the last partnership summit in Sirte, Libya in 2010. It was an opportunity to set the tone for the future direction of the partnership, which fell into a lull after its formation in 1977 before its resuscitation in 2010 at the Sirte summit. That summit adopted a new partnership strategy and the joint plan of action.

Among the leaders attending the summit were the Chairperson of the African Union (AU) and Ethiopian Prime Minister Mr Hailemariam Desalegn, AU Commission (AUC) Chairperson Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, the summit host and Emir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Jaber Al Sabah, and the Secretary General of the Arab league Dr Nabil Al Araby. Various other partners such as the United Nations, Gulf Co-operation Council, World Bank, Arab Parliament, China, Iran, Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Islamic Co-operation Organisation also attended. The summit was held under the theme "Partners in Development and Investment".

The two regions reviewed progress made in the three years since, and deliberated on how to strengthen their cooperation in ways that would live up to the expectations of their citizens in terms of socio cultural and economic development based on the principles of equality, mutual interest and respect. They talked openly about their relative strengths and ways in which they could leverage each other's strengths to their mutual benefit.

There is a belief that the two regions can pursue even more meaningful economic and financial cooperation, combining the huge financial potential of the Arab region with the nearly untapped human and natural resources in Africa. After all, the two regions are bound by historical, geo political, economic, religious, cultural, and linguistic factors. 70 percent of Arabs are African and 9 out of the 22 members of the League of Arab States (LAS) are also members of the African Union. The two regions combined have over a billion people.

"The Almighty has blessed us with arable lands, skilled workforce, raw materials and wealth that can be invested to achieve food security, which has become a dire need in view of unstable global conditions", said Kuwaiti Amir Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Jaber Al Sabah, who was co-chairing the summit with AU Chairperson and Ethiopian Prime Minister Mr Hailemariam Desalegn.

Africa positioned itself as a continent ready for growth, and showcased its many attributes: "The available data positions Africa as a new growth pole, where returns on investment in virtually every sector... are higher than in any other part of the world. Africa remains well endowed with mineral, energy and other natural resources", said AUC Chairperson Dr Dlamini Zuma.

By increasing their interactions and holding regular summits (i.e. every three years), the two regions are systematically working through their challenges and refining plans of action that stand a realistic chance of bringing positive change and development. In preparation for their summits, they hold joint high level meetings at experts and ministerial level to discuss and agree around common identified themes. One of the last such meetings was that of ministers of agriculture held in Saudi Arabia in October. In the sidelines of the summit itself were two parallel meetings, i.e. an economic forum and an investment forum, which helped the two sides discuss about opportunities available in their respective regions.

The summit discussions were guided by the four thematic areas of cooperation agreed to in 2010 as part of the partnership's action plan. The pillars are political, peace and security; economic, trade and finance; agriculture and food security; and socio cultural cooperation. The Joint Plan of Action 2011-2016 encompasses a number of programs and projects to be implemented within the framework of the strategy. Financing of the action plan is a collective responsibility of all stakeholders, including African and Arab governments their regional and national institutions, their private and civil societies as well as bilateral and multilateral partners.

A joint activity report covering the period October 2010 to October 2013, was presented to the summit by the Chairperson of the AU Commission and the Secretary General of the League of Arab States. It pointed to some progress having been made in the

implementation of the Africa Arab partnership plan of action. The report indicated that in line with its mandate to strengthen economic financial and technical cooperation between Africa and the Arab region, the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (BADEA) approved a total of \$384 million in 2011 and 2012 to 24 African countries. The loans contain grant elements ranging from 29 to 49% and went mainly to road and bridge construction, water, health, education, and rural electrification. In addition, two MOUs signed with the AU Commission provided technical assistance and funded different studies.

Over the past three years, the two peace and security councils of the AU and the LAS collaborated extensively on crisis and conflict situations in Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan and the Arab Israeli conflict. Progress was reported on the establishment of joint AU-LAS Committees of Ambassadors, which would institutionalise regular consultations and coordination between the two regions to ensure harmonisation of policies, positions and actions at the international level. Specifically, it was reported that progress has been registered in this regard in Brussels. Other targeted cities are Addis Ababa, Cairo, Geneva, New York and Washington.

In terms of cultural cooperation, there are plans to host the seventh edition of the Africa Arab trade fair in Morocco in 2014. An organising committee is in place and has started having preparatory meetings. The second ministerial meeting of ministers of agriculture held in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt in October 2013 was also hailed as a positive development.

The joint report also highlighted discussions that have taken place between the two regions on migration. There are also plans to establish an Africa Arab Disaster Response Fund.

The leaders who attended the summit also deliberated on the challenges facing their two regions. Looming large among the concerns was terrorism, which the summit roundly condemned and resolved to continue to work together against. Other challenges included conflict and violence, youth unemployment, the food gap and food insecurity.

As one of the summit outcomes, the leaders adopted the Kuwaiti Declaration which sets out their future cooperation, taking into account successes and challenges to date. Notable points in the Declaration include an emphasis that the private sector and civil society should be involved in economic development efforts as well as in the planning and implementation of joint programmes and projects; that the two regions will continue to push for reform of the United Nations system to make it more regionally representative, balanced, effective, and fair; that they will encourage investment in African and Arab countries and that they will enhance cooperation in the field of energy. Africa and the Arab region also resolved to coordinate positions in multi-lateral trade negotiations to come up with acceptable packages for Least Developed Countries; to strengthen their cooperation in agriculture, rural

development and food security; and to support infrastructure development projects in the two regions. Other areas of joint endeavour include cultural exchanges, education and scientific research, health, gender equality, people to people relations and migration.

In order to ensure there is enough capacity on both sides to implement the tenets of the joint action plan, the two regions agreed to strengthen the capacities of the AU Commission and the LAS and to take actions and measures, including the activation of joint structures that are essential for the effective implementation of the joint Action Plan.

One major outcome of the summit that stood out above all else, was the announcement by the Amir of Kuwait of an offer by the Kuwaiti Fund of 1 billion dollars in soft loans to African countries over the next five years. He also announced the intention by Kuwait, to earmark an annual financial award of 1 million dollars focusing on development research in Africa.

Another revelation worth noting was that the 3rd Arab Development Summit held in Saudi Arabia in January this year resolved to raise by 50% the capital of the Arab financial institutions, including BADEA.

The next meeting of the Africa Arab partnership will be held in Africa in 2016 at a venue yet to be decided. It is a partnership that holds much potential to advance the development and socio cultural linkages between the two regions.

Note to Editors

The Africa Arab partnership is one of the partnerships that the AU Commission is coordinating on behalf of the African Union. Other partnerships at continental level include Africa USA; Africa China; Africa Europe; Africa India; Africa Turkey; Africa Japan (TICAD), Africa South America; Africa-US (AGOA; Africa-Korea. The African Union, through its Commission, also has partnerships or relationships with institutions and bodies similar to the African Union. These include: the League of Arab States (LAS); the Organization of American States (OAS); the Organization of Islamic Cooperation; the Commonwealth; and La Francophonie.

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