

PRESS RELEASE N° 13 / 18th AU SUMMIT

INAUGURATION OF THE NEW AFRICAN UNION CONFERENCE CENTER

**Addis Ababa, 28th January 2012 –**

The 100 meter tall, 20 story African Union Conference Center (AUCC) incorporating a 2,500 capacity plenary hall, built by the Chinese government as a gift to Africa was inaugurated today 28th January 2012, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The AUCC was built at a cost of USD200 million

In his opening remarks, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission (AUC) expressed his

heartfelt gratitude to both the governments of Ethiopia and China. “Our dream came true and we are now overlooking a modern architectural jewel symbolising the historical relations between China and our continent” said Dr Jean Ping. Highlighting the efforts made by his predecessor Professor Alpha Oumar Konare, the Chairperson further added that the new conference centre will help promote the AUC’s presence and its competitiveness in the global arena, as well as improve its working capacity.

The modern and fully equipped facility sitting on over 100,000 m2 of land donated by the Ethiopian government represents a historical milestone for the AUC and Africa as it marks the fulfilment of decades old aspirations of African leaders and member states of the African Union.

The magnificent new head quarters of the continental organisation which has been at the center of the struggle for the African integration and development is a symbol of the rise of Africa, said the Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Mr. Meles Zenawi in his opening remarks. He noted that over the past decades and despite rampant hopelessness throughout the continent, China-Africa cooperation has gone from strength to strength. “The future prospects of our partnership are even brighter and it is therefore very appropriate for China to decide to build this hall”, said Mr Meles.



Mr. Jia Qinglin, Chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) on his part congratulated Africans on "this monumental achievement" and assured his governments' readiness to continue extending maximum support to Africa. He valued China's involvement in Africa to USD150 billion with more than 2,000 companies working throughout the continent with growing economic and cultural ties.

Mr. Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea and Chairperson of the African Union stated that the new conference centre, is a reflection of the new Africa, and that it endows Africans with the right tools to showcase their human and natural resources.

The inauguration of the tallest tower in Ethiopia concluded with the presentation of gifts to seven Chinese officials who played a key role in the construction of the centre followed by the handing over of the golden key of the conference center to the Chairperson of the Union who then handed it over the Chairperson of the AUC.

Following a group photograph and amidst cultural performances drawn from Member States of the AU, a Statue of Kwame Nkrumah was unveiled. There was also a brief ceremony to lay the foundation stone for the construction of an African Union Human Rights Memorial.

AMT / MF