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PRESS RELEASE N°20/27th AU SUMMIT

African Union Passport Launched during Opening of 27th AU Summit in Kigali



Kigali, Rwanda - 17 July 2016 - The Twenty seventh (27th) Ordinary Session of the African Union Assembly of Heads of State and Government kicked off on 17 July 2016 at the Kigali Convention Centre (KCC), Rwanda, with a strong call for unity and love for the continent. The opening ceremony was marked by a symbolic act of Pan-Africanism with the launch of the African Union (AU) passport aimed at facilitating the free movement of people on the continent. H.E. Mr. Idriss Deby Itno, Chairperson of the AU and President of the Republic of Chad, and President Paul Kagame of the Republic of Rwanda received the first passports handed to them by the Chairperson of the AU Commission, H.E. Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma. "I feel deeply and proudly a true son of Africa after receiving this passport", said President Idriss Deby while stressing the importance of fast tracking integration on the continent to achieve socio-economic growth for the wellbeing of the African citizens.

Another highlight of the Assembly was the decision taken during the Ministerial retreat, which took place on the 16 July 2016, underscoring the need for the Continent to fully finance itself as well as its peace and security missions, among others.



H.E. Mr. Idriss Deby articulated his profound gratitude to the Government of Rwanda for hosting the Summit. “Our Union is facing emergency issues on a daily basis. These issues require instant and effective mechanisms to address them”, President Deby highlighted. He underlined that it is on that realization that the AU Summit will focus during the “African Year of Human Rights with a particular focus on the Rights of Women”. He said the Summit will deal with this pertinent issue and exchange views so as to provide durable solutions for the continent.

The AU Chairperson highlighted some of the key issues to be discussed during the Summit, including the alternative sources to finance the activities of the Union, the budget of the AU, peace and security on the continent and the election of the AUC leadership.

In her opening address, H.E. Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma expressed her appreciation to the Government and people of Rwanda for the efficient organisation of the Summit and their legendary hospitality. She commended President Paul Kagame for giving the good example by honoring the women and empowering them, placing women at the center of national development. “We used to hear people saying that behind any successful man, there is a woman. But in Rwanda we can now say women and men stand side by side to achieve success”.

The AUC Chairperson summarized the journey undertaken by the Commission over the last four years under her leadership, including the adoption of Agenda 2063, which was the outcome of the celebration, on 25 May 2013, of the 50th anniversary of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), now the AU. The objective was to put in place a framework towards achieving a continent that is integrated, peaceful and prosperous, driven by its own citizens and playing a dynamic role in the world.

Dr. Dlamini Zuma noted that the Africa we have today is full of hope, possibility and optimism, but is also a cause of anguish in some areas, where Africans are desperately yearning for peace and the space to rebuild their lives. “We are encouraged that after the recent problems in South Sudan, IGAD met yesterday, and we are sure that their decisions will give hope to the people and especially the civilians of South Sudan”, underlined the AUC Chairperson.

Dr. Dlamini Zuma announced that the Commission stands ready to hand over the baton with a feeling of hope for the continent and satisfaction for the missions achieved during

its mandate. “In our years of service to the AU Member States and to the Peoples of Africa, we built on the foundations of those that went before us, to build a Union of the People by engaging with the civil society and the citizens. We worked tirelessly to ensure that we leave institutions more effective than what we found. This work is not yet complete, and in our handover to the incoming Commission once elected, we shall highlight both the achievements and the challenges still remaining”, the AUC Chairperson noted. (See complete speech of the AUC Chairperson on the AU website www.au.int) .



Earlier, Dr. Dlamini Zuma received an award from Ms. Francine Muyumba Furaha, President of the Pan African Youth Union, for her role in promoting youth development on the continent, as well as empowering the youths to become future leaders. She also received an award from H.E. Mr. Mamoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine and guest at the Summit, for being instrumental in promoting peace on the African continent and supporting peace initiatives and struggles in the world. President Abbas also congratulated the Rwandan President for restoring peace and development in his country after the 1994 genocide.



H.E. Mr. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda, underscored the importance of unity, which he said is the first principle of the AU, a concept that anchors human diversity in the bedrock of universal values. According to President Kagame, when people gather on the basis of what unites them, there is a peaceful solution to every problem faced. “The unity of our continent, with an emphasis on

integration, among other things, should never be subject to preconditions or exceptions because lasting solutions always involve everyone”, said President Kagame. He further reiterated the discussions during the Ministerial retreat on financing the AU, saying that the process of financing the AU gives responsibility and ownership to the leaders. He

urged the Heads of State to take action without further delay in implementing the decisions of the Retreat.

President Kagame noted that the Summit will be an opportunity to identify the right priorities and outcomes, decide the best way to achieve these outcomes and be ready to implement its decisions as appropriate. “Africa is rising, but as a result of impersonal forces, over which we have no control, Africa is being raised actively by us, the people of this continent. Our job is simply to raise Africa even higher”, concluded the President.

The event at the Kigali Convention Center took place in the presence of the Heads of State of the African Union (AU), the African Union Commission (AUC) Chairperson, the Deputy Chairperson, the Palestine President, the AU Commissioners, Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Members of the Permanent Representative Committee (PRC), officials of the AUC, Heads of AU Organs, the Media and invited guests.

Journalists wishing to interview the leadership of the AU Commission during the Summit should submit their requests to Mrs Esther Azaa Tankou, Ag. Director of Information and Communication of the AUC, via E-mail: YambouE@africa-union.org / esthertankou@yahoo.com; Tel: +250 789923794

Hashtags

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For further information, please visit the 27th AU Summit page:

<http://au.int/en/summit/27>

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