

**Press Release N°392/2016****African Union Commission Chairperson Extends  
Condolences to the people of Cuba as Africa  
mourns the passing of Fidel Castro**

**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia – 26 November 2016:** The Chairperson of the African Union Commission (AUC), H.E. Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma expressed deep sadness and extended her condolences to the Castro family, the people of Cuba and the progressive forces of the world upon having received the news of the passing of former Cuban President Fidel Castro.

*“President Castro was a liberation icon, a true revolutionary and internationalist, who assisted in the liberation and socio economic development of Africa and the developing world”,* said Her Excellency, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma.

Fidel Castro set an example, investing in his people, particularly in health care and education, but also in broader social policy, regardless of race, gender or social status. This was reflected in Cuban foreign policy, and the solidarity over the years with many African countries. He was consistent in the fight for the principle of equality amongst nations, reflected in the leading role he played in the Non Aligned Movement.

Castro supported national liberation and anti-colonial struggles, and after independence the development of national health systems in Africa. Cuba deployed tens of thousands of doctors and other medical professionals all over Africa, and trained thousands of medical students from Africa. During the Ebola crisis in parts of West Africa, the Cuban contingent of health workers was the second largest, after the AU ASEOWA volunteer health corps, to assist the affected countries in defeating the pandemic.

Africa, on the other hand has stood steadfast in its solidarity with Cuba, with numerous resolutions by the Organisation of African Unity and the African Union, supporting the end of the economic blockade of Cuba. During the visit of the AU Commission Chairperson to Cuba in September 2015, she met with Raul Castro and in her meetings with the leadership of Cuba reiterated the historic relationship of friendship between Africa and the island state.

The news of the passing of President Castro reached Her Excellency on Friday evening. Africa mourns the loss of this liberation icon and the AU offers its heartfelt condolences and solidarity with the people of Cuba.

[End statement]