

**Directorate of Information and Communication****Press release****AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION URGES AFRICA TO SUPPORT CANDIDATES ENDORSED FOR POSITIONS WITHIN THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM AND TO VOTE AS ONE BLOC TO INCREASE ITS CHANCES OF WINNING**

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia 20 April 2017- The African Union Commission Deputy Chairperson H.E Mr Kwesi Quartey has urged Africa to practically demonstrate its unity by putting its support behind the candidates endorsed for positions within the international system. He called on Africa to vote as one united bloc to increase its chances of winning.

Mr. Quartey was speaking in Addis Ababa on the 19th of April at a dinner hosted by the Embassy of the Republic of Zimbabwe in honour of the AU endorsed candidate for the post of Secretary General of the United Nations World Tourism Organisation, Dr Walter Mzembi. He added “we must win this for the first time”.

Dr Mzembi was in the Ethiopian capital to attend the 59th meeting of the UNWTO’s Commission for Africa, of which he was chair.

Speaking on behalf of the AU Commission Chairperson H.E Moussa Faki Mahamat, Mr Quartey congratulated Dr Mzembi for the unanimous endorsement he received from the heads of state and government of the then 54 member states of the AU. He also stated that the African Union acknowledged tourism as an effective vehicle for sustainable development, key in the building of deeper understanding between peoples and cultures and for the reinforcement of the quest for greater global harmony and peace.

The outgoing Secretary General of the UNWTO Mr Taleb Rifai also spoke at the dinner. “You have already won”, he said, with reference to the work Dr Mzembi has done to uplift the image of his own country and for putting African tourism at the fore. He added that Dr Mzembi had successfully co-organized “one of the best attended” general assemblies of the UNWTO in 2013, when Zimbabwe co-hosted the organisation’s 20th session with Zambia.

Meanwhile, Ethiopian Minister of Tourism and Culture Honourable Hirut Woldemariam wished the candidate all the best in the elections to be held from 11 to 12 May this year in Madrid, Spain. If Dr Mzembi wins, he will become the first African to lead the UN body. Previous secretaries general have been from France, Australia, and Mexico. The outgoing Secretary General, Mr. Rifai is from Jordan.

In his own address, Dr Mzembi reiterated the call for unity among African countries in the vote, noting that Africa’s concept of candidature committees at sub regional and cross continental levels, through which he was endorsed, had “secured an African, Dr Gilbert Fassoun Hougbo, former prime minister of Togo, the key post of Director General of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).”

Africa has two other candidates who have been endorsed by the Assembly of the AU for different posts, i.e. Dr. Mousshira Khatab of Egypt and Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus of Ethiopia who are contesting for the top posts at the UN Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the World Health Organisation (WHO) respectively.

The Secretary General of the UNWTO is voted for by an electoral college of 33 member states. It is the council that comes up with a single candidate to recommend to the body's general assembly.

The Addis Ababa dinner was attended by African Ministers in charge of tourism, who were attending the 59th meeting of the UNWTO's Commission for Africa. African and other ambassadors based in Addis Ababa and other members of the diplomatic corps also attended the event.

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