



## PRESS RELEASE

### CELEBRATION OF AFRICA DAY- NEW YORK: 11<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL GALA CELEBRATED MILESTONES AND MANDELA 100

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**More than 500 guests celebrated Africa Day 2018 at the Manhattan Center Main  
Stage ballroom in New York.**

**New York, 25 May 2018** - The AU Permanent Observer Mission to the UN, the African Group of Ambassadors, and the African Ambassadors Spouses Group in partnership with the Universal Peace Federation hosted dignitaries, the African diaspora, and guests to a gala night in celebration of Africa Day 2018 at the Manhattan Center, New York on May 25, 2018.

Under the theme “Winning the Fight Against Corruption: A Sustainable Path to Africa’s Transformation,” the messages of determination and resilience did not conceal an evening full of festive cheer including a fabulous continent-wide selection of national culinary tastes, cultural performances, and a dance party to end the celebration.

Special focus was on the stage where eight leaders shared their views, highlighting the achievements and the challenges facing Africa:

H.E. Mrs. Valentine Rugwabiza, Permanent Representative of Rwanda and Representative of the Chair of the African Union H.E. President Paul Kagame, as mandated by his peers to lead the reform of the Union underlined that “because African leaders want an African Union that is fit for the ambition contained in Agenda 2063, and since, the reforms are being implemented; we are seeing the results. The future is promising. We have seen this year the single African Air transport market launched in January in Addis Ababa. This year again, in March, in Kigali, we’ve seen the African Continent Free Trade Area as well which was signed and launched by 44 countries and all our brothers and sister countries are joining. The momentum that is on the continent is unstoppable.”

H.E. Professor Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, Permanent Representative of Nigeria to the UN, and Representative of the Champion on the Theme of the year, The President of Nigeria, reminded the audience on the road the continent traveled: “Imagine where Africa was in 1963, and where we are today. Vibrant countries. Different, but united in several elements that are key. The A.U. has shown what is possible. Agenda 2063 shows that we have come a long way.” And he swiftly zeroed in to his core message: “but we have challenges. Thank you for making fighting corruption the theme of this gathering. There’s no way to achieve our ambition if we don’t tackle corruption. The President of Nigeria has shown clear resolve to fighting corruption. It is so important for partnerships towards helping us recover funds. African leaders know very well what corruption has meant that is why they enacted a convention within the AU and fought for 10 years to see to it that the convention

is enacted by all of them. Fighting corruption involves all of us. The citizens must be involved otherwise, we'll make no headway."

"We need nights like this to celebrate because for Africa the future is bright. The economy is growing, natural resources are abundant, integration is happening faster than ever before. We need nights like this because we have a lot to learn from Africa. Because of the strong cooperation between the Secretary General and the Chairperson of the African Union we have tangible frameworks in place. I hope to play my own modest part." said H.E. Mr. Miroslav Lajcak President of the 72<sup>nd</sup> Session of the General Assembly.

Echoing the President of the GA, H.E. Ms. Bience Gawanas, Under Secretary-General of the UN, Special Adviser on Africa and Representative of the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, told the audience: "The AU and the UN have signed joint frameworks on both Peace and security and on development, further demonstrating our commitment to working in partnership to address the wide-ranging challenges and opportunities confronting the continent. Secretary General Guterres, from the beginning of his tenure has made clear his endearing commitment to ensuring that the relationship between the UN and the AU is based on mutual respect, solidarity, complementarity and interdependence.

The keynote address was a message from The Chairperson of the African Union Commission, H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat delivered by H.E. Ambassador Fatima Kyari Mohammed, Permanent Representative of the Observer Mission of the African Union to the UN, reminding us that our forefathers "Moved by the ideal of Pan-Africanism, gathered in Addis Ababa, on 25 May 1963 and unanimously agreed to create the OAU to which they assigned three missions: (a) the liberation of African countries and peoples from colonial domination and racial discrimination, (b) the achievement of self-reliance and combating of underdevelopment, and (c) the advancement of African integration, unity and solidarity". She reiterated, "Central to the work ahead is the fight against corruption in all its forms... Corruption destroys the lives of ordinary people and undermines their trust in their leaders and public institutions... we must challenge all of us, leaders and Africans from all walks of life, to firmly deal with this scourge." She also reaffirmed that "African leaders have declared the 11<sup>th</sup> of July every year as the African Anti-Corruption Day, and the year 2018 as the Year for Combating Corruption, during their Summit in January of this year, they also adopted a Call to Action to fight against corruption and eradicate it."

Mme Yamile Luque Rocha, Spouse of the Permanent Representative of Cabo Verde to the UN and representative of the United Nations African Ambassadors Spouses Group – UNAASG delivered remarks on behalf of the group: "We the United Nations African Ambassadors Spouses Group are proud to partner 10 consecutive years with the African Union in celebrating Africa Day. As a group we stand side by side with our busy diplomatic spouses to promote and share knowledge of our diverse countries and represent the African woman in New York. Collectively, we commend the United Nations for advancing Gender equality throughout the globe".

A message from H.E. Lindiwe Nonceba Sisulu, Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of the Republic of South Africa, was delivered by H.E. Ambassador Jerry Matthews Matjila: "This year's Africa Day coincides with the centenary celebration of Nelson Mandela. The son of Africa. As we commemorate the 100 years of his life, we shall use his legacy of the fighter for freedom he was, for peace and for forgiveness that he bequeathed us, to pursue the future that we seek as Africans. It is indeed humbling that the GA will honor Nelson Mandela by convening the Nelson Mandela Peace Summit on the margin of the General Assembly in September 2018. Remembering Madiba's

legacy. I also wish to express how profoundly honored we are in South Africa of the African Union Summit in Addis Ababa that graced us with a non-permanent candidacy at the Security Council for the period of 2019-2020.”

Video of the program will be available shortly. Send a message to the above email address to request a link.

For more information contact:

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