

AFRICAN UNION

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**STATEMENT OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION,
MOUSSA FAKI MAHAMAT, ON THE OCCASION OF THE NELSON MANDELA
CENTENARY CELEBRATION, 18 JULY 2018**

Today, the world commemorates the centenary of Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, fondly known as Madiba, born in Mvezo, Eastern Cape, on 18 July 1918. On this momentous occasion, I extend my personal greetings and those of the African Union to the Government and people of South Africa and to all peace-loving people around the world.

Madiba lived a life of great courage and humility devoted to the ideals of freedom, justice, equality, tolerance and reconciliation. He championed the freedom and liberation of South Africa and the rest of the continent, for which he sacrificed his freedom and dedicated his life. He was a guiding light, and remains an inspiration to us all, as we endeavor to carry on with his legacy of service to humanity.

In recognition of his lifetime, which serves as an example for his contemporaries and for future generations, the United Nations General Assembly, in December 2017, declared Mandela's birthdate, 18 July, as the Nelson Mandela International Day.

It called on all citizens of the world to emulate, and be inspired by, Mandela's devotion to humanity, as well as human rights, peace, reconciliation, gender equality, rights of children and other vulnerable groups, the fight against poverty and the promotion of social justice.

The Centenary celebrations will include activities such as the convening of a Peace Summit on the margins of the 73rd session of the United Nations General Assembly on 17 September 2018, under the theme "Strengthening the role of the United Nations in the promotion and maintenance of international peace: Building on Mandela's Legacy". A Declaration will be issued as an outcome of the Peace Summit.

On its part, at its 2013 Summit, the African Union declared 2014-2024 as 'Nelson Mandela Decade for Reconciliation in Africa'. Member States were encouraged to promote truth and reconciliation as means of advancing democracy and participatory governance, and securing peace, stability and development in Africa. Earlier this year, the Assembly of Heads of State and Government also adopted a Declaration to observe 2018 as the Nelson Mandela Centenary.

During the just-concluded African Union Summit in Nouakchott, the leaders reaffirmed their full support for the holding of the envisaged Peace Summit. They urged all Member States to support and observe the Centenary and recommit themselves to the ideals and values espoused by Nelson Mandela.

Nelson Mandela would have been 100 years old today.

As we celebrate his legacy as one of the greatest men who ever lived and remember the ideals he lived for, I encourage us all, leaders and citizens alike, to rededicate ourselves to follow in his footsteps. In so doing, we will equally leave our footprints in the sands of time.

Madiba taught us the values of sacrifice for the freedom of our people, and encouraged compassion for all, because 'overcoming poverty is an act of justice'.

Today is an opportunity for all Africans to remember and reflect on the indelible marks Madiba has left on Africa and the world: his unifying leadership, personal integrity, compassion and humility, as well as the indomitable spirit that sustained him throughout his life dedicated to struggle for the freedom and liberation of fellow South Africans against the apartheid regime.

Madiba rejected all cult of personality. Instead, he emphasized his personal weaknesses and struggles as integral to authentic personhood.

These values are worth reflecting and acting on.

As Africa moves towards reinforcing its unity and integration, it is necessary, now more than ever before, to live by Madiba's commitment to reconciliation and forgiveness, as well as to strive more resolutely towards peace, justice and equal opportunity for all, in particular for women and the youth.

In Madiba's own words: 'We can change the world and make it a better place. It is in your hands to make a difference'.

As we celebrate Madiba's Centenary, I strongly urge and implore all leaders around the world to be guided by Madiba's dream for a non-racial, peaceful world, where all people have equal opportunity to build a common future.

Despite our adversity and differences of race, color, religion and creed, we can collectively make the world a better place, if we choose to do so.

Let's choose to do so.

Amandla

Thank you.