Statement by H.E. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, Chairperson
African Union Commission

Working Lunch for Heads of State & Government on the

Campaign on Accelerated Maternal Mortality in Africa (CARMMA)

Africa Cares: No Woman Should Die While Giving Life

27 January 2013

- **Your Excellencies, Heads of State & Goverment,**

- **Excellency Secretary General of the United Nations**

- **Excellencies Heads and Representatives of UN Agencies,**

- **Honourable Ministers**

- **Members of the Diplomatic Corp,**

- **Distinguished Participants**

- **Ladies and Gentlemen**

As a woman and a mother, I am happy to address this gathering on reinforcing the campaign on accelerated reduction of maternal mortality in Africa (CARMMA).

My sincere appreciation to H.E. President Boni Yayi and the UNFPA for the support to the Commission to make this important luncheon possible.

Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (MNCH) remains a critical index of our development as a continent. We cannot record any sustainable and meaningful development, if the health of our women that constitute more than half of the population of the continent is not accorded the deserved priority. Though I must acknowledge that the health status of women and children in Africa, though has improved over the last few years, it remains a far cry from the targets that are set in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

When here in Addis Ababa in 2009, CARMMA was launched by the African Union Ministers of Health, it marked the commencement of a determined and sustained effort by the leadership of our Union to address the

unacceptably high maternal and child morbidity and mortality.

At the 15th Assembly of the Union, with the theme – "*Maternal, Newborn and Child Health*", the Heads of State and Government adopted a set of Actions, underscoring the need to make concerted effort to deliver on results. The Heads of State were unambiguous that the time for declarations and commitments was over and it was time for action!

It is gratifying to note that you, our leaders are taking action, as evidenced by the progress recorded so far. Till date, 37 Member states have launched CARMMA and undertaken targeted actions to deliver on commitments. CARMMA has become an example of a successful continental initiative with national ownership!

However while we celebrate our progress, we must also reassess our challenges and redouble our efforts in order to ensure that our collective aspirations as Africans become a reality. There can't be and shouldn't be any complacency.

In order to optimize results delivery, we need to adopt an integrated approach to reducing maternal, newborn and child mortality within the overall continuum of care. The impact of our combined efforts shall be much greater than the sum of our individual efforts.

Excellencies, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, permit me therefore to highlight some initial steps that need to be taken:

- The AUC and UNFPA should explore the possibility of establishing a joint secretariat to continue to coordinate our efforts on CARMMA in order to make the Campaign sustainable and to facilitate the delivery of results;

- An effective and sustainable financing mechanism for MNCH programmes needs to be evolved;

- An Accountability mechanism all levels, from service providers and care givers to policy makers and political leaders including Civil Society, ensuring that duty bearers are accountable for the responsibilities reposed in us and resources committed to our care;

- A strong social mobilization involving all segments of the society - men, religious and traditional leaders amongst others for the advancement of women health;

In Africa we celebrate motherhood, with child birth as a natural and normal process. Let's remember that maternal deaths is not random, it is preventable. An investment in the health of women is an investment in economic development.

Africa Cares; ***No Woman Should Die While Giving Life.***

Thank you.