

**AFRICAN UNION**  
الاتحاد الأفريقي



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Welcome Remarks by  
HE Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma  
Chairperson of the African Union Commission

**Opening session of the 20<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of  
the Assembly of Heads of State and Government  
of the African Union**

**Addis Ababa, January 27, 2013**

Your Excellency Boni Yayi, Chairperson of the African Union and President of the Republic of Benin;

Your Excellency Hailemariam Dessalegn, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, and our host;

Your Excellencies, Heads of State and Government of the Member States of the African Union;

Your Excellency Mahmoud Abbas, President of the Palestinian Authority;

Your Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-Moon, Secretary General of the United Nations;

Your Excellency Vuk Jeremić, President of the UN General Assembly;

Excellencies, Members of the Executive Council and other Ministers present;

Your Excellencies, Heads of AU Organs, and other International agencies

Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

Distinguished invited guests;

Excellencies, members of the Permanent Representatives Committee;

Heads of African Regional Economic Communities and African Union Specialised and Representative offices;

Ladies and Gentlemen

Allow me, on behalf of the Commission, to thank you sincerely for electing us to serve this premier organization of Africa. It is a responsibility, which we pledge to undertake with commitment and diligence.

Of course, let me also express my appreciation to the Prime Minister, Government and people of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, not only for the warm welcome when we assumed duty, but also for providing homely conditions for our stay, and for presenting us with the key to the City of Addis Ababa.

***Ma gratitude va aussi au Président de l'Union, Son Excellence Boni Yayi pour tout le soutien qu'il a apporté a la Commission depuis que nous avons pris fonction en octobre dernier.***

Let me also take this opportunity to thank the previous Commission led by His Excellency Dr. Jean Ping, for the foundation they have laid.

**Your Excellencies, Distinguished guests,**

*Today we look to the future calmly, confidently and courageously.*

These same words were said by the founders of our Union, almost fifty years ago, in this very City of Addis Ababa.

As we look back on the last fifty years, we acknowledge that our first priority was the attainment of the political independence and the eradication of Apartheid. In these causes, the continent rallied together, sacrificed, and pooled its resources and efforts in solidarity with anti-colonial and liberation movements. Under the leadership of the Organisation of African Unity, Africa united around these issues, was of one mind on what to do, and spoke with one voice.

This unity of purpose, sacrifice and solidarity by Africa, which complemented the efforts of liberation movements, led to the decolonization of the continent and the dismantling of Apartheid.

It is, therefore, befitting that the theme of this Summit and year is "*Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance*". Because the spirit of Pan-Africanism and the ideals of the African Renaissance delivered us to where we are today and must propel us towards an integrated, people-centred, prosperous Africa at peace with itself. It is this spirit and ideals that inspired the adoption of the Lagos Plan of Action in 1980, the Abuja Treaty in 1990 and NEPAD in 2001.

It is therefore appropriate to recall on this august occasion the words of one of the Pan Africanist and freedom fighter from South Africa, Pixley Ka Isaka Seme, who said:

*“The African already recognises his anomalous position and desires a change. The brighter day is rising upon Africa. Already I seem to see her chains dissolved; her desert plains red with harvest; her Abyssinia and her Zululand the seats of science and religion, reflecting the glory of the rising sun from the spires of their churches and universities, her Congo and her Gambia whitened with commerce; her crowded cities sending forth the hum of business; and all her sons (and I’m adding her daughters) employed in advancing the victories of peace...*

*Yes, the regeneration of Africa belongs to this new and powerful period’.*

We must remain inspired by those words, which were uttered in 1906. The conditions now, and the experiences of the past fifty years, make us believe that indeed that period of the regeneration of Africa belongs to this new and powerful period.

## **Your Excellencies**

What makes us so confident that Africa time has arrived and that we can achieve our dream within fifty years, or even less?

Six of the world's ten fastest growing economies are African, and the continent has been growing at an average of 5% per annum for over a decade, despite the global financial and economic crisis.

We have a growing, vibrant, resourceful and youthful population, who are being equipped with critical skills that would be necessary to drive Africa's transformation.

The ICT revolution has been embraced by Africans particularly the youth, which has spurred innovative approaches to information, micro-finance and the mobilisation of rural producers via the mobile telephone.

The expansion of Africa's middle class, currently estimated at 355 million, is bound to spur developments in a range of areas, including the growth of the private sector and the knowledge economy.

The continent is endowed with rich natural resources, including mineral and marine resources as well as vast arable land. These are critical components in the industrial and agricultural developmental processes that should drive economic growth, trade and social transformation.

We have also institutionalised good governance and accountability in many countries through the African Governance Architecture and with thirty-three (33) countries having participated in the African Peer Review Mechanism. We take this opportunity to congratulate the Panel of Eminent Persons and two newest signatories, the Republic of Chad and Tunisia. We also acknowledge the United Republic of Tanzania and the Republic of Zambia for having also recently subjected themselves to the rigorous process of the APRM.

We also take this opportunity to congratulate the countries who have just had their elections, Sierra Leone and Ghana.

Close to ninety percent of countries in Africa have enjoyed sustained peace and stability during the decade, and continue to do so. At the same time, the continent is continually strengthening its capacity to deal with conflicts.

We must therefore take bold steps and fight for the pride of place in the world, as a global growth pole. We must develop our narrative and challenge conventional thinking and paradigms. We must re-ignite the passion of our founders and our people in Pan Africanism, through unity, self-reliance, integration and solidarity.

### **Your Excellencies and Distinguished Guests**

Optimistic as we are, we are mindful of the enormous challenges that remain.

We cannot over-emphasise the need for peace and security. Without peace and security, no country or region can expect to achieve prosperity for all its citizens.

While we are proud of the progress made in expanding and consolidating peace and security on the continent, we also acknowledge that much still needs to be done to resolve ongoing, renewed and new conflict situations in a number of countries.



The Peace and Security Council will report to the Summit on African Union efforts to address these situations in Somalia, Guinea-Bissau, Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, Darfur, Comoros, Sudan/South Sudan, Madagascar, Western Sahara and more recently Mali and the Sahel. We must also continue to support those countries who are in post-conflict situations, to consolidate their reconstruction and peace-building efforts.

There is also a resurgence of the tendency of rebel groups attempting to oust democratically elected governments. The Union must remain firm on its stance of no unconstitutional change of government. We must enhance our capacity to defend democratically elected governments and their territorial integrity.

Thus there is a need to accelerate the operationalisation of the African Stand-by Force and whatever other mechanisms, to enable us to have quick response capacity to intervene when the need arises.

At this juncture, we must extend our heartfelt thanks to the international community in general, and the United Nations in particular, for the continued cooperation and support to African efforts to resolving conflicts on the continent.

Your Excellencies, while negotiating peace agreements is an urgent and vital task in resolving conflict, it is just the first step. Sustainable peace and stability can only be guaranteed by comprehensive post-conflict reconstruction and addressing the root causes of conflicts. We will therefore do more to align the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) with the African Governance Architecture (AGA).

We hope that the discussions by the Summit will give impetus, support and further guidance to on-going efforts of the African Union and Regional groups seeking lasting solutions to the conflicts.

Africa remains concerned at the long-standing Middle East question, in particular the issue of Palestine. We call for the granting of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, in accordance with United Nations Resolution 1514 (xv) of 1960, on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples.

We wish in this regard, to congratulate the Palestinian Authority and the people of Palestine on the recent resolution granting them the status of an Observer State at the UN.

**Your Excellencies,**

During this and the commemorative summit in May - as we renew our commitment to Pan Africanism and African Renaissance - we shall take time to address some of the other challenges on our transformation path. These not only include old and new threats to peace and security, but also slow progress with diversification of our economies and the need to rapidly increase inter-Africa trade and global market access.

We must also concretise our search for innovative and alternate resource mobilisation strategies, and in the spirit of Pan-Africanism urge those who are better endowed in any area or any resource, to show solidarity to others who may currently be less endowed.

It is a matter of concern to us that our continent, which contributes the least to the harmful carbon emissions that cause global warming into the atmosphere, is the continent most affected by climate change. We wish to call for equity and justice in mitigation, adaptation and governance (and in the funds) of climate change.

Although we have policy frameworks and strategies almost across all the areas critical to our development, we need to considerably strengthen our capacity to implement the decisions. We must therefore ensure that our institutions work effectively and efficiently, and are responsive and concentrate on implementation.

The Union and its organs must also effectively communicate with the African citizenry, different sectors of civil society and the Diaspora, so that we unite and mobilise the continent for its renaissance.

**Your Excellencies,  
Distinguished Guests**

I, like many other Africans, strongly and sincerely believe that Africa's dream is not only achievable, but can be done in a shorter time.

There are many examples of countries that have successfully transformed in less than fifty years from poor, third world countries to prosperous high-income countries. These countries now have standards of living that rival, or even surpass, those of the developed countries, amongst them are the Gulf States, Singapore, South Korea, Turkey, Malaysia and China.

The massive economic development that has propelled China to become the second largest economy in the world has been on a genesis since the 1970's. For instance, in 1978 China's gross domestic product (GDP) was just 147.3 billion US dollars. By 2009 China's GDP had risen to 4.9 trillion. By last year this figure had reached a phenomenal 7.298 trillion dollars.

In 1978, China's social and economic indicators were not so different from Africa. For instance, 63 per cent of China's population lived below the international poverty datum line. By 2007, that figure had fallen to 4 per cent.

So we are filled with optimism and enthusiasm that in the year that we celebrate our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the continent of hope and opportunity and is on the move. In a range of areas critical to our development, we have taken control of our destiny and have agreed what to do.

Through the sweat and toil, which tills our land daily, we intend to refuel the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Programme (CAADP). We shall utilise this programme to increase agricultural productivity and facilitate for agro-processing, working through the RECs and Member

states. Through this programme and associated actions we will guarantee our collective food and nutritional security, so that every child on the continent is fed and better nourished. Ultimately we will register our comparative advantage so that we become a net exporter of food products to the rest of the world.

This will contribute to the empowerment of Africa such that we reclaim our voice towards setting fair and just food prices. In so doing, we will ensure rising incomes for farmers whilst transforming the livelihoods of our populations, especially in rural areas.

To secure decent livelihoods and the free movement of people, goods and services, we must accelerate integration and connectivity. The progress on the implementation of the priority infrastructure projects of PIDA in the areas of transport, energy and ICT is therefore encouraging, with notable advances where domestic resources are being utilised.

Thus Deloitte and Touche noted the trend that "*African governments have historically financed a sizeable share of the continent's infrastructure development on the balance-sheet.*" Given the huge scale of our infrastructure backlog, a key component of the PIDA

programme, working with the NEPAD Agency and the RECs, is therefore resource mobilisation and diversification of funding models.

The transport corridors envisaged through this initiative will enable young people from Mogadishu to travel to Timbuktu, onwards to Gore Island and enable products to be transported from Cape to Cairo.

Broadband infrastructure will enable our people to connect with each other from the remotest parts of our countries and to access public and business services and opportunities.

Our young entrepreneurs, poets, writers and linguists will populate the African cyber space and shape its content, so as to share and promote our culture, languages, indigenous knowledge and development to enable Africa to compose its own narrative.

Education and skills development is at the heart of our regeneration efforts. The Pan African University and the general expansion of our higher education sector will equip our young people with critical abilities to drive innovation, sciences, entrepreneurship, research, social development and industrialization.

The Conference of Ministers of Interior and other Ministries responsible for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics are hoping that recommendations will be approved in order to address the scandal of the invisibility of millions of Africans whose birth and identities are not recorded anywhere, denying them access to rights and services.

The lack of statistics undermines national planning and service provision, and the lack of accurate and secure population registers undermines security and efforts to establish effective immigration systems that will allow free movement of people of all our countries.

We must thank all the continental Champions of the important programmatic areas of the Union, especially infrastructure, who through their dedication and advocacy help to raise awareness, communicate Africa's success stories and monitor implementation. Africa needs many more such Champions, from across the length and breadth of the continent and in more diverse areas.

### **Your Excellencies,**

Women constitute more than half of Africa's population. They give birth to the other half.



Women also make up seventy-five per cent of the agricultural workforce. They constitute the bulk of cross-border traders and still provide for the well-being and social reproduction of families, communities, the workforce and our societies.

The continent has taken many decisions towards the emancipation of women and gender parity, including the declaration of the Decade of Women. All that remains is implementation and we must increase implementation of these decisions. Let me quote President Samora Machel of Mozambique who said:

*The emancipation of women is not an act of charity, or the result of humanitarian or compassionate attitude. The liberation of women is a fundamental necessity of the revolution, the guarantee of its continuity and the precondition of its victory.*

We have taken steps, Excellencies to enhance coordination of the Regional Economic Communities, as critical building blocks of our

Union. The AU Commission will work closely and plan together with the RECs.

We also work closely with the UN Economic Commission for Africa, the African Development Bank and the NEPAD Agency to ensure better coordination of our efforts, building on our different and complementary roles as institutions, in order to advance the African Agenda.

The successful implementation of these continental programmes and efforts, Your Excellencies, will bring our people – young and old, men and women, urban and rural - from the periphery to the centre - as active participants in the renaissance of Africa and as captains of their destiny.

### **Distinguished Guests**

The continental programmes that we spoke about also greatly benefit from support partners from across the globe. Whilst Africa is taking charge of its own destiny, your cooperation and invaluable support is appreciated.

**Your Excellencies,  
Distinguished guests**

During this and the commemorative Summit in May – as we renew our commitment to Pan Africanism and African Renaissance - we should take time to discuss further what more needs to be done to accelerate Africa's vision of integration, prosperity and peace.

We need to ask whether the economic growth models we are pursuing are likely to lead to sustainable inclusive development for Africa and, if so, at what point? What conditions should we put in place to enable transformational and qualitative change? What are the different, yet complementary roles of the state, the private sector, civil society and the diaspora in our economies?

How do we facilitate the creation of indigenous capital and a viable, vibrant private sector that is not only capable of investing in big local industry, including infrastructure development, but also competing effectively and becoming global champions?

How can Africa harnesses its resources to ensure that it funds and therefore determines its development agenda? How can we strengthen our institutional and other capacities, to ensure implementation of our decisions and policies?

What is it that we have not done, or that we could do differently?

Your Excellencies, these and many other questions need to be asked and candidly answered - in the year of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary - if we are to realise our dream within the coming fifty years.

As we renew the spirit of Pan Africanism and ideals of African renaissance, I would like to quote one of Africa's writers, Ben Okri, from his book *Ways of Being Free*:

*They tell me that nature is the survival of the fittest. And yet look at how wondrous gold and yellow fishes prosper amongst silent stones of the ocean beds, while sharks continuously prowl the waters in their impossible dreams of oceanic domination and while whales become extinct...*

*...how many butterflies and iguanas thrive, while elephants turn into endangered species, and while even lions growl in their dwindling solitude.*

*There is no such thing as a powerless people. There are only those who have not seen and have not used their power and will. It would seem a miraculous feat, but it is possible for the undervalued to help create a beautiful new era in human history. New vision should come from those who suffer most and who love life the most.*

It is only by establishing a common destiny and outlook that we can overcome and prosper. In the words of Ben Okri, there is nothing like a powerless people.

Asante Sane

Je vous remercie de votre aimable attention.

Shukran

Mucho obrigado

I thank you