



Date: 8 March 2012

**CELEBRATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2013
STATEMENT BY H.E. DR. NKOSAZANA C. DLAMINI ZUMA,
CHAIRPERSON OF THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION**

On behalf of the African Union Commission, I congratulate all the women of the world and of the Continent in particular for our day on the occasion of the commemoration of the International Women's Day, which extols the vital role women have played, and continue to play, in virtually all spheres of life, particularly in the enhancement of economic security for their families, communities and countries.

On this occasion, we take stock and review past progress, as well as, barriers that have continued to militate against women empowerment in Africa. It offers an opportunity to elevate women's emancipation and gender equality, as well as, pay tribute to women that have devoted their lives to the struggle for the cause of women, and are still mobilized for this noble cause.

The African Union (AU) remains resolute in promoting gender equality, women's rights and women's empowerment, in a rapidly globalizing and dynamic world. We are also taking great strides to redress gender imbalance, and promote women's rights.

We must all join hands to prosecute crimes against women. Now is the time to dedicate ourselves to the plight of women in conflict situations, where sexual violence has often become a tool of war aimed at humiliating the enemy by destroying their dignity. The welfare of all victims of sexual violence in conflict must be at the forefront of our activities. We all must unite to end violence against women, and canvass that all women and girls have a fundamental human right to live free of violence.

We need much greater commitment and action to empower women and girls in the process of eradicating hunger, poverty and promoting development. Furthermore, there is need to give special attention to increasing the participation of women in decision-making in all areas of life, as a means of improving the quality of decision-making and in getting people-centred decisions including in the protection of the environment and wild life for future generation. This is critical as President Samora Machel of Mozambique 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.

The struggle is daunting but not insurmountable! The end is close and we must not deviate from the ideals of promoting women's emancipation in a justice and equitable world!

Finally, let me wish you all a memorable International Women's Day and assure you of the Commission's preparedness to continue to partner with Women, allies and friends, in the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment.

Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma (Dr.)
Chairperson