



Statement of Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma
Chairperson of the African Union Commission
On the occasion of the
Handover Ceremony of the 50th Anniversary Torches to the Member States

Your Excellency, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia
 and Chairperson of the Executive Council;

Your Excellencies, Ministers from Member states and visiting Ministers

Commissioners of the AUC

Executive Secretary of the ECA

Heads of all the AU and UN Organs

Members of the Permanent Representatives Committee

Partners and citizens here gathered

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen

Members of the press,

At the onset, allow me to welcome you all to Addis Ababa. This city is of historical significance since it hosted the first major milestone in our journey towards total emancipation. The convening of thirty-two independent states in the Conference of Independents African States in May 1963, remains perhaps one of the most important statements undertaken by Africans towards self determination and prosperity.

Almost fifty years on from that watershed moment, we are favoured with the opportunity to reflect on the road travelled by Africans towards securing unity, prosperity and peace. The bouquet of events and milestones, at the Union, REC, Member State and Non State Levels, which have been developed will assist us to reflect on critical actions required to secure continental unity, shared prosperity, and lasting peace.

We ought to ultimately “*harness the natural and human resources of our continent to the total advancement of our peoples in all spheres of human endeavour*”, as envisaged by the OAU Charter of 1963.

These reflections are opportune because the year 2013 has been declared the Year of Pan Africanism and the African Renaissance. It is our view that this year has the potential of being a watershed year, since never before in our history has so much been in our favour. Never before have we had so much potential and growth. Never before, has the continent been favoured with such a young, vibrant and relatively more educated population. It is these comparative advantages that must be turned into meaningful opportunities towards a shared prosperity and lasting peace.

Through the symbolic lighting of these torches, which we send to all our member states today, we hope that the flame of hope shall shine through the continent. We have therefore encouraged our member states to consider popularising the AU and the torches in their nations. The torches symbolise our desire to reverse the current story line of despair into the real narrative of opportunity and potential. These torches are also a symbol of our collective will to brighten Africa’s future. These torches are a symbol of our achievements with regard to development, democracy and governance. These torches are a symbol of our pride to belong to Africa.

The commemoration of the fifty years of the OAU also coincides with the tenth year of the existence of the African Union (AU), which we constituted so as to promote “*an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in global arena*”.

Given the historic nature of this event, the 50th Anniversary Commemoration will therefore facilitate and celebrate African narratives of past, present and future. We hope to enthuse and energize the African population and use their constructive energy to accelerate a forward-looking agenda of Pan-Africanism and Renaissance in the 21st century.

To effectively develop this forward-looking agenda we will engage all sectors of our societies here and in the diaspora. We have adopted thematic focus areas in our year-long programme, to provide a platform for focused programmatic discussion. These themes recognise the areas in which we have recorded progress. These themes also facilitate for the recognizing of the challenges we face. The themes, which are currently being projected on the screens in this hall include: Regional Integration, Education and Human Resources, as well as Health and Women.

The impact of the main events (from 19 to 27 May) and the yearlong activities will be assessed against the extent to which we are able to promote and define Pan African Values. These values will underpin the African Agenda over the next five decades. For that reason, I hope that all delegations will bring these messages back home so that, in unison, with each African from within and outside the continent, we memorably celebrate the golden jubilee of the OAU-AU.

Finally, before I invite, H. E. Teodros Adhanom, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia and Chairperson of the Executive Council to light the torch of the Golden Jubilee on behalf of the Council, I would like to recall the words of one of the greatest sons of the soil Chinua Achebe (who sadly recently passed on):

“Nobody can teach me who I am. You can describe parts of me, but who I am and what I need is something I have to find out myself”.

Consequently, the current realities and futures of Africa can only and must be developed by Africans for Africans. In so doing we must emphasise solidarity, unity, shared prosperity and lasting peace.

Together, let's arise for One Africa in peace and prosperity.

Ensemble, mobilisons-nous pour une Afrique unie dans la paix et la prospérité

Juntos mobilizemo-nos para uma África unida na paz e prosperidade

Linan had, maahan min ajili Ifrikriya mutahida yassu duha assalamu waliz dihar

I thank you.