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**OPENING STATEMENT OF AU COMMISSION CHAIRPERSON, HE DR.  
NKOSAZANA DLAMINI ZUMA TO THE 3<sup>RD</sup> AFRICAN FORUM DIALOGUE  
ON THE 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING OF THE OAU/AU**

Geneva, 16 October 2013

**HE Mr. Milenik Alemu GETAHUN, Ambassador of the Federal  
Democratic Republic of Ethiopia**

**Representative of the Director General of the UN Office in Geneva**

**Our host in Switzerland,**

**Our AU Ambassadors to the UN**

**My Sister Angelina Kodjo**

**HE Amb Jean Marie EHOZOU, AU Permanent Representative**

**Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen**

I am honoured to welcome you to this 3<sup>rd</sup> African Forum for Dialogue, which takes place under the theme of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Organisation of African Unity, now the African Union. The decisions

about the celebrations of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary were that, firstly, these will be year-long celebrations-from May 2013 to May 2014, and secondly, that we wanted all Africans, within the continent and in the Diaspora, to celebrate. Thirdly, that it would be a moment of reflection on our past, and more importantly, our future. I am happy to say that this event is a realization of all the decisions by the AU leadership and I would like to thank the organisers for this initiative, and the invitation.

### **Ladies and gentleman**

The theme of the 50<sup>th</sup> OAU celebrations is *Pan Africanism and the African Renaissance*. As you all know, historically, Pan Africanism has sought to unite Africans worldwide, based on the belief that unity and solidarity are central to economic, social and political advancement. Early proponents of Pan Africanism included W.E. Dubois. Later leaders in the Pan-Africanist movement included Jomo Kenyatta, Kwame Nkrumah and Patrice Lumumba, to name a few. The Organisation of Africa Unity (OAU), formed in 1963 became the most important Pan-Africanist Organisation on our continent. At the same time, there were great women who were also fighting for freedom. The Pan African Women's Organisation was formed in 1992, a year before the Organisation of African Unity. So women have always been an integral part of Africa's quest for freedom.

The **African Renaissance** is the concept that “ *African people and nations shall overcome the current challenges confronting the continent and achieve cultural, scientific, and economic renewal.*” As early as 1906, people like Pixely Seme were already beginning to articulate their vision of a renewed Africa. He said then:

*“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 daughters) employed in advancing the victories of peace...Yes, the regeneration of Africa belongs to this new and powerful period”.*

It must be noted that at the time of Pixely Seme’s writing in 1906, Africa Africa prided itself of a number of early civilisations, which were interrupted by slavery, colonialism and apartheid. These civilisations span across the continent, and include the pyramids of Egypt, **the Nubian civilisations of Sudan**, the Swahili, the Munhumutapa of

Zimbabwe, and the Mapungubwe civilisations of South Africa, just to name a few. Africans at that time therefore had good reason to dream of a bright future.

In choosing the theme *Pan Africanism and the African Renaissance*, African leaders were making a call to all Africans, within and outside the continent, to come together and unleash their energies and creativity resources for the renewal of this continent, and for the realization of the image of Africa foreseen by visionaries like Pixley Seme.

The establishment of the OAU was a big moment in the history of Pan Africanism, particularly as it sought to dismantle colonialism and apartheid. When Emperor Haile Selassie welcomed delegates to the founding Summit of the OAU in Addis Ababa on 25 May 1963, he expressed the purpose of the gathering thus:

*We have come together to assert our role in the direction of world affairs and to discharge our duty to the great continent whose two hundred and fifty million people we lead. Africa is today at mid-course, in transition from the Africa of yesterday to the Africa of tomorrow. Even as we stand here, we move from the past into the future. The task, on which we have embarked, **the making of***

**Africa, will not wait.** *We must act, to shape and mould the future and leave our imprint on events as they slip past into history<sup>1</sup>.*

Of course that is what was said then, but it is true of today. The “*making of Africa*” at that time was primarily to free the continent from the yoke of colonialism. Through solidarity and unity among Africans in the continent and the Diaspora, as well as friendly countries and individuals across the world, Africa became free from colonial rule when apartheid ended in Namibia, and South Africa in 1994. There are still exceptional countries like Western Sahara, as well as some islands. But on the whole, the task was completed.

The coming of political freedom presented the next logical challenges for the continent. This was amply articulated by then South African President, Nelson Mandela, when, addressing the OAU Summit in Cameroon in 1996. He said:

*“...the crowning glory of Africa`s freedom has brought out an even bolder relief her challenges to herself: what future she decrees for the progeny to whom she gives birth! Will they, like children elsewhere, play with gay abandon in the confidence of a secure future? Will they acquire the knowledge and skills to gain as well contribute to world wisdom and the wonder of new technology? Will they enjoy a fulsome meal and not live a tenuous*

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<sup>1</sup> <http://summits.au.int/en/21stsummit/speeches/address-delivered-his-imperial-majesty-haile-selassie-ist-emperor-ethiopia>

*existence balanced between life and death, wasting away in the mire of disease, ignorance and conflict?...For, in the final analysis, we assemble not merely as ourselves nor for ourselves; but as leaders expected by dint of continental mandate, to give leadership and reclaim to her, Africa`s deserved position in world affairs.*

*...No doubt Africa`s renaissance is at hand - and our challenge is to steer the continent through the tide of history ...we need to exert ourselves that much more and break out of the vicious cycle of dependence...*

*...The people of the continent are eager and willing to be among the very best in all areas of endeavour. They are right to pour scorn at any suggestion that they should be judged by lower standards as if they were sub-human. They deserve and are striving for a condition that can be adjudged a better life: In the conduct of politics, in the freedoms they enjoy, in the social conditions under which they live, in the environment which they inhabit.*

So these are our marching orders from our leaders on how to construct the continent.

Part of the answer to this challenge was addressed by the AU leadership when they decided, in 2002, on the transition of the OAU to the AU, with a greater focus on development, and guided by the vision of ***“An integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in global arena.”***

Since then, the AU leadership has been working tirelessly to create the conditions that would make Africa compete with the best in the world, and represent a dynamic force in the global arena. In this context, various efforts have been made at self-sufficiency, as well as providing leadership and ownership of the continent's development agenda.

These include the development of

- the New Partnership for Africa's Development in 2001 (also building on previous efforts such as the Lagos Plan of Action),
- the adoption of the African Union Constitutive Act in 2002, the
- the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) in 2003,
- the African Peace and Security Architecture
- the African Governance Architecture
- Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights On The Rights Of Women in Africa

These are just but few examples.

In addition, a number of sectoral frameworks programmes have also been developed in agriculture, infrastructure, environment ,energy, water, ICTs, science and technology, health, education, tourism.

Specific initiatives in priority areas are also under implementation.

These are the areas where we continue to call on our partners, particularly those of you based here in Geneva, to rally around and support us financial, technologically and in terms of additional human capacity.

Of course, in implementing these, we remain guided by the AU principles, which include the values that propelled the continent in its fight for political freedom. For example, based on its painful colonial and apartheid experience, the continent will continue to uphold the values and principles of racial equality and human dignity as critical ingredients without which humanity cannot progress. It will continue to work with like-minded partners to quash any signs of oppression or discrimination, including racial, gender and religion whenever and wherever they become evident.

### **Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen**

The Africa of today is rising from being a scar on the conscience of the world, as we were once called, to a continent that is home to six of the world's fastest growing economies, that is making steady progress in human development and that is developing a sense of its common destiny and priorities.

Africa is a continent that is rich in natural resources such as energy, minerals, forests and marine resources. With a land size of about 30 million sq. km, it can fit on its landmass China, India, the USA, Western



Europe and still have space for Japan and a few others. Africa is home to 60% of the world's unused arable land.

Africa is also the second largest continent in terms of population after Asia, at over a billion people and we will reach 2 billion by 2050. More than half of our population are women, and young people constitute over 70% of our total population. Africa is the only continent whose working age population as proportion of the total population is set to grow rather than shrink. By 2025, a quarter of the world's population under 25 years will be in Africa.

However, we also acknowledge that a lot still needs to be done to translate these natural endowments into concrete and shared wealth that will reach the largest numbers of our population. We need to create more opportunities for our young men and women, for them to be the foundation of the future of this continent. Agenda 2063 will not be realized if half of the young population is driven out of this continent by poverty. Of course we bow our heads to people who died in the Lampedusa tragedy, an incident which should serve as a wake up call to all of us, to ensure that we do more for our young people for them to find value in remaining in, and contribute to the future of this continent.

In this regard, at the AU, we have prioritized investing in human capital, through access to health, access to higher education and science and technology, research and innovation, and skills development. We are also targeting agriculture as a key driver for development and growth, increasing food security and nutrition and developing agro-businesses. In all this, we see women and the youth at the centre.

We have also put an emphasis on industrialization, beneficiation of our mineral resources, as well as developing our manufacturing, services and tourism sectors. These will spur growth and the development of a vibrant African private sector, and also create the much-needed jobs, and shared prosperity. Some of the plans and initiatives aimed at accelerating industrialisation include the Accelerated Industrial Development of Africa (AIDA), Boosting Intra-Africa Trade (BIAT) the establishment of the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) as well as the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA) and Agro-Industry Development Initiatives (3ADI) amongst others.

As we prepare for the 9<sup>th</sup> WTO Ministerial Conference in Bali, we need to ensure that Africa's interests are safeguarded, particularly in agriculture and food security. We must ensure that this process is used

to push for greater policy space for Africa to pursue national and regional policies that allow them to industrialize and develop their economies.

As much as Trade Facilitation in itself is a necessary action for boosting intra-African trade and increasing our competitiveness, the proposed text could create supplementary challenges to our weak technical, administrative and financial capacities.

It is therefore important to ensure that the negotiation outcomes strike the right balance in ensuring that African priorities are reflected without African countries incurring crippling costs to meet WTO trade facilitation obligations. Thus, it is important to ensure adequate financial and technical support for African countries to meet the binding obligation that may be agreed upon.

We also realize that the growth and development we want to see should ride on the back of a strong infrastructural base, particularly in energy, transport and ICT, as well as water and sanitation. This requires a significant increase in investment. Even though currently over 60% of the existing expenditure on infrastructure on the continent are funded through public funds from our governments and the rest from private

investments, more needs to be done to catch up with the huge backlog. Infrastructure is also critical for regional integration, as well as facilitating intra-Africa Trade.

I stated earlier that Africa is a very rich continent. Part of the measures of our success as a continent is the extent to which we are going to use our natural resources, to finance our own development. While we appreciate the efforts of our partners in giving us aid, we also know that no continent has ever prospered based on aid alone. Domestic resource mobilization is therefore critical to Africa reaching its aspirations, and it is within our capacity to attain self-funded development. It is also important not to forget our oceanic resources, and to how we need to optimally exploit them for the benefit of our people.

We are now looking into various domestic financial instruments such as tax revenues, pension funds, remittances, earnings from minerals and fuels, international reserves, stock exchanges and bond markets. In the same vein, we are working with the African Development Bank, whose Africa50 private equity fund for infrastructure is soon to be launched. The AU Foundation is also being established, and so is the African Remittances Institute.

Excellencies, We have consistently said that for us, peace and security are two sides of the same coin. But I will not say much on this, since this is covered in the afternoon session.

## **Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen**

Having outlined a number of AU priorities, and some of the challenges we are grappling with, it is important for me to highlight the fact that yes-African ownership and leadership is required, but we also recognize the critical role that our various partners play in walking with us on this journey we have embarked on. [It is therefore heartening to note the many international organisations<sup>2</sup> that are located in Geneva, are working with us in the various areas of our programmes.](#) It is in this context that as the AU, the principle of **multi-lateralism** is central to our approach to development, and so is **partnerships**. I am challenging

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**EXAMPLES** <sup>2</sup> The International Labour Organization (ILO); The International Organization for Migration (IOM); The International Telecommunication Union (ITU); The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU); The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR); The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); The Internet Governance Forum (IGF); The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA); The Lutheran World Federation (LWF); The World Health Organization (WHO); The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO); The World Meteorological Organization (WMO); The World Nature Organization (WNO); The World Student Christian Federation WSCF; The World Trade Organization (WTO); The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC); The International Organization for Standardization (ISO); The International Road Transport Union (IRU); The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM); The World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD); The World Council of Churches (WCC); The World Economic Forum (WEF); CARE International ; HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)

each of you, if you have not already done so, to look at AU Strategic Plan (2014-17), and engage with the relevant AU Commission Departments, and ensure that you align your support to Africa through the already identified priorities. For the long term, I urge you to remain engaged with the Agenda 2063 process.

When the World Bank posed a question in 2000 on whether Africa could indeed claim the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the answer was a “yes”-if only a number of significant challenges were addressed. However, as Africans, we have declared the 21<sup>st</sup> century as the African century.

I therefore call upon you to continue to work with us, and be true partners, to enable us to realize our objectives as I have already set out above. For example, we will be very interested to know, what each and every one of you is doing to deal with the 21st challenges of the African continent, whether it be health, education, infrastructure and resources allocation, patents, indigenous knowledge, climate change, labour issues or trade. Our expectation is that each of you will integrate Africa strategies and priorities and align them to your own, and also match these with the necessary resource allocation.

**Ladies and gentleman**

Since we have all agreed that this is a reflective moment, I hope that the panels in the coming session will help us to address the issues which Africans across the length and breadth of the continent are discussing: (a) the type of continent they want to live in over the next fifty years; (b) the strategies and milestones towards such a continent; and (c) the role and actions of different stakeholders in the realization of that Africa that we want.

I am inviting you all to work with us, to join us as we reflect and define the Africa we want 50 years from now, through the development of an Africa-wide strategic framework for the next fifty years, also called Agenda 2063.

I declare this Forum open, and look forward to the vibrant discussion that will take place.

**I THANK YOU**