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STATEMENT BY

**HER EXCELLENCY DR. NKOSAZANA DLAMINI ZUMA
CHAIRPERSON OF THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION**

**AT THE THIRD AFRICA-ARAB SUMMIT
MEETING OF THE JOINT COUNCIL OF MINISTERS
OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

KUWAIT CITY, STATE OF KUWAIT

SUNDAY, 17 NOVEMBER 2013

Your Highness Sheikh Sabah Al- Khalid Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Kuwait

Your Excellency, HE Mr. Ahmed Ould Teguedi, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania and First Vice Chairperson of the Executive Council of the African Union

Your Excellencies, Ministers of Foreign Affairs of African and Arab Countries and Heads of Delegations

Your Excellency, Dr. Nabil Al Araby, Secretary General of the League of Arab States

Deputy Chairperson Erastus Mwencha and AU Commissioners

Invited Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a great honor to address the Joint Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the African and Arab Countries, to prepare for the 3rd Africa-Arab Summit that will be held in this beautiful Capital of Kuwait, from 19 to 20 November 2013.

In particular, let me express our heartfelt gratitude to H.H. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khalid Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State Kuwait and through him to the Government

of Kuwait and to the Emir for all their efforts to make the 3rd Africa-Arab Summit a success.

This meeting of the Joint Council of Ministers and indeed the 3rd Africa-Arab Summit are the outcomes of a long preparation process by the Coordination Committee of the Africa-Arab Partnership and with the State of Kuwait, the African Union Commission and the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States and we extend our appreciation to all those involved.

This meeting will consider Recommendations from the Senior Officials meeting, which deals with issues that we believe will help shape the future direction of the Africa-Arab partnership. The items, among others, focus on important sectors such as Trade and Investments, Agriculture and Food security and Migration, as well Energy, Transport and ICT infrastructure and services .

Your Highness and Excellencies,

This 3rd Africa-Arab Summit under the theme, *Partners in Development and Investment*, takes place in changing regional and global contexts, and when there are challenges and yet great opportunities facing our regions.

Africa, on the one hand is experiencing a turning point. Over the last decade we have seen growing economies, reduction in the number of conflicts and improved governance.

We are also making progress on human development indicators. For example, life expectancy is up from 40 to 60 years, we've halved infant and maternal mortality; absolute poverty is on the decline, and there are more children in school, including girls, than at any time in our history.

At the same time, to sustain this momentum, Africa must transform its economies by diversifying, industrializing, beneficiating and more effective use its natural resources to ensure job creation, rising incomes and shared prosperity.

It needs to speed up infrastructure development – energy, transport, ICT and social infrastructure – in order to improve intra-African and global trade and sustain and expand economic growth. We must expand agricultural productivity and build agro-processing industries in order to feed ourselves and the world, moving from a net importer of food to a net exporter.

All these priority areas are closely linked to our continental integration efforts, and programmes to increase intra-Africa trade and tourism.

Above all, and as an absolute precondition, is investment in the peoples of the continent: in health, basic services, skills, and in social, political and economic inclusion. The African Union Commission therefore has been advocating for a skills revolution; making sure that boys and girls receive quality education; scaling up investment in higher and vocational education, and in science, technology, research and innovation.

Central to this skills revolution is investment in and the empowerment of Africa's young people and women. These two groups, which are the majority of our one billion population, are the drivers of Africa's efforts for prosperity, peace and innovation.

Thus, in the year that Africa is celebrating fifty years since the founding of the Organisation of African Unity, now the AU in 1963, we are looking ahead at the next fifty years, towards a future when Africa will be integrated, people-centred and prosperous, and at peace with itself.

Your Highness and Excellencies

In the past three years, the African Union and the League of Arab States have worked together to translate into action the Africa-Arab Partnership Strategy and the Joint Action Plan 2011-2016, adopted by the 2nd Africa-Arab Summit held in Sirte, Libya in October 2010.

In line with the above, and in the areas of peace and security, the two sides have taken some practical measures to create direct working relations between their peace and security Councils in order to avoid duplication of efforts and ensure complementarity in dealing with issues of common concern in Africa and the Arab World.

At another level, the Afro-Arab partnership has also seen efforts to move forward the trade, economic and financial agenda of the Strategy and the joint Action Plan. Although the progress was hindered by institutional and financial challenges, the two sides were able to make headways in these sectors.

In particular, the Agriculture, Economic and Business Summits held or to be held, are shaping concrete areas of investment and cooperation.

Encouraging steps were also taken to create a joint mechanism to deal with the challenges of Migration, and also to implement other socio-cultural projects which are aimed at enhancing people to people interactions.

I am also proud to report that the institutional relations between the Commission and the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States in the past three years have shown progress. In this regard, the two sides

worked hand in hand in implementing the joint activities and projects that are elaborated in the Sirte documents of 2010.

All these developments will be presented to the Summit for its consideration.

Your Highness

Your Excellencies

Our respective regions have different comparative advantages, as well as common challenges and opportunities, which can be built into a mutually beneficial partnership.

It is my hope that the 3rd Africa-Arab Summit will take practical measures to address all the above and provide guidance on the way forward.

And indeed Africa and Arab world have a great potential and as we work together in few years we can create better living conditions for our people in both regions.

I thank you.

Shukran.