



**AU COMMISSION CHAIRPERSON, DR. NKOSAZANA DLAMINI ZUMA
STATEMENT AT THE OPENING SESSION OF THE
4TH JOINT RETREAT BETWEEN
THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVES' COMMITTEE (PRC)
AND THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION (AUC),**

HAWASSA, ETHIOPIA, 14-15 APRIL 2014

Your Excellency Mr. Ato Dessie Dalkie, President of the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State;

Your Excellencies the entire leadership of the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State;

Your Excellency, the Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Mr Erastus Mwencha;

Fellow Commissioners of the African Union Commission;

Your Excellency Chairperson of the PRC and Excellencies, Ambassadors, Members of the Permanent Representatives Committee;

Your Excellency Dr Ibrahim Mayaki, CEO of NEPAD (and the Facilitator of our Retreat)

Senior Managers and staff of the AUC, Staff of Embassies, and invited guests

Ladies and gentlemen

I am most honored, to speak in Hawassa today, the Capital City of the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State, on the shores of Lake Hawassa. We thank the people of Hawassa and the Southern Nations for the hospitality extended to us, since we arrived in the city. We hope the time we will spend with you will be enriching and leave indelible memories to all of us.

I am particularly pleased that we are gathered here at His Excellency Prime Minister Haile Mariam Desalegn's home region, a region that has become a model of integration and unity in diversity.

Ethiopia is amongst the fastest growing economies on the African continent, including the largest producer of coffee, and with growing investments in infrastructure.

2014 is the African Year of Agriculture and Food Security. The advances made by this region and Ethiopia more generally in agriculture is critical to the agricultural revolution needed in the continent.

In addition, it is part of Africa's great potential for tourism, such as the

beauty of Lake Hawassa and surrounds. If we continue to develop our infrastructure, we can attract many more tourists than we do today. We must also invest and continue to preserve our cultural heritage, in all its richness and diversity, because this is part of our strength as a continent. We salute the region for its efforts in this regard.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

The very reason for the establishment of the Organisation of African Unity 50 years ago on 25 May 1963 in Addis Ababa Ethiopia, hosted by The Emperor Haile Selassie, was to liberate Africa from the dehumanizing yoke of slavery, dispossession, colonialism and apartheid. The vision, solidarity, commitment and bravery of those forebearers triumphed and because of them we are here today.

Our forebears also strived for continental unity based on the full political, social and economic integration and development of Africa. Although Africa has made strides towards the fulfillment of its integration, much more still remain to be done.

To achieve the vision of Agenda 2063 we have just launched, looking at the African Agenda for the next fifty years, we will have to work together spurred by the values of solidarity, self-reliance and united in our diversity.

Africa's strength lies in its diversity. Each country's unique history, culture, resources and needs contributes to the success of the continent's development and integration. Our interdependency and diversity means we need to invest in all our people, empower all the women, ensure that all girls and boys attend schools, and that we develop our young people.

It also require dependable infrastructure to build our economies. Integrated infrastructure development is one of the most important investments for economic transformation, the promotion of intra-african trade and for investment and integration.

We are therefore gathered here as the African Union Commission and the Permanent Representative Committee of Ambassadors accredited to the African Union to jointly take stock of how far the continent has progressed on its integration and development agenda. We will collectively identify strengths, and challenges, and consider ways to move the process forward as we stand on the

threshold of the next fifty years.

We are all bound by the abiding commitment to the Pan African Vision of building “an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena”.

Let it not be said that we lacked imagination, innovation and determination to make the potential of a United Africa a reality. I wish this retreat all success and we look forward to a pleasant stay in Hawassa.

I can assure you, Your Excellency, Mr. President that a lot of colleagues will come back for leisure at a different time.

Thank you.