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**Statement of the Chairperson of the AU Commission,
HE Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma at the
Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict
London, June 12, 2014**

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am honoured to add my voice at this Global Summit to end Sexual Violence in Conflict. We congratulate the founders - Minister Hague and Ms. Angelina Jolie - for the launch of the “*International protocol to help strengthen prosecutions for rape in conflicts*”; and for putting the spotlight on an issue that affects humanity everywhere. I recognize my sister, Zainab Bangura who continues to work tirelessly on this issue.

It seems that we are bombarded by news about horrific acts of violence against women and girls: teenaged girls gang-raped and hanged; girls and women kidnapped from their schools and communities; women and girls raped, trafficked and forced into sexual slavery especially during conflicts. And, although women and girls are most often the victims during conflicts, we also find increasingly boys and young men being victims of sexual violence.

The number of victims is indeed staggering. Behind the numbers are individuals with lives lost, dreams deferred, traumatised family members and childhoods interrupted.

Gender-based violence during conflicts and war is the extreme version of what we experience in society during peacetime. The report by the UN Economic Commission on Africa (UNECA) on violence against women, thus concluded:

Violence against women is perhaps the most widespread and socially tolerated of human rights violations, cutting across borders, race, class, ethnicity and religion.

Women’s subordinate status to men..., coupled with a general acceptance of interpersonal violence as a means of resolving conflict, renders them disproportionately vulnerable to violence from all levels of society.”

Ladies and Gentlemen

This gathering is the expression of our collective resolve to end sexual violence in conflict, and more generally end violence against women and girls in society. The magnitude of the conference is a testament that together we shall work and raise our voices to end sexual violence as a tool of war.

We are mindful that it is a struggle that must be fought on many fronts: changing the position of women in society; socialising boys and men to respect themselves and to respect women and changing the cultures and training of security and military institutions and personnel. We must ensure zero tolerance for perpetrators of rape and sexual violence during war and peace, so that it becomes part of the DNA of police and military forces and of our and societies. We must expand and provide services to women and other survivors to cope with the trauma of sexual violence.

The African Union takes action on all these areas under the slogan Prevent, Protect, Participate. We have assigned Officers in the various Peace Support Operations to ensure that women's voices are heard and amplified, and women participate in conflict resolution and peace building efforts. For the first time, we appointed an AU Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security. (I am sure most of you here know Mme Bineta Diop, whom we have entrusted with this responsibility.)

Moreover, we are working on a code of conduct and zero tolerance policy that outlines the AU's position against sexual violence, exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers and military personnel. This code is shared with all troop-contributing countries and integrated into all related training. The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) already has a policy on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and other countries are working on this and other national strategies.

Together with the UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, we work to combat impunity, promote accountability,

facilitate the provision of multi-sectoral services and to alleviate the stigma and trauma of survivors. In the coming days, we will deploy an African experts group in Central African Republic to support survivors of sexual violence and to help with the investigations.

To prevent sexual violence in conflicts, we must send a strong message that impunity will not prevail. At the same time, we must continue to campaign during peacetime: to contest and confront harmful cultures and traditions; to educate boys and men, as well as women, who tend to be the custodians of culture in their societies.

Without men saying no more, we will not end this cycle. We need men to commit to fight with us, to commit to not look the other way when atrocities are being committed, and to commit to educate boys and other men.

The media too have a critical role to play, to stop reinforcing sexual stereotypes and the objectification of women.

In conclusion, the African Union, and I personally commit to work with all of you here to end sexual violence during conflict.

Let's all commit to end this atrocity. And let today be the beginning of the end of sexual violence during conflict.

Thank You!