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**STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE AU
COMMISSION H.E. DR. NKOSAZANA DLAMINI ZUMA**

**AT THE SEVENTH CONFERENCE OF AFRICAN MINISTERS
IN CHARGE OF INTEGRATION (COMAI VII)**

MINISTERIAL MEETING

17-18 July 2014

EZULWINI, KINGDOM OF SWAZILAND

Representative of His Majesty, His Excellency, the Right Honourable Dr. Barnabas Sibusiso Dlamini, the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Swaziland

Deputy Prime Minister Hon. Paul Dlamini

Honourable Ministers and Leaders of Delegations

Chief Executives of Regional Economic Communities,

Excellencies, Commissioner for Economic Affairs, Dr. Anthony Maruping and Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy, Dr. Elham Ibrahim

Leadership of both Houses of Parliament of the Kingdom Swaziland

Representatives from the UNECA, the ADB and the Nepad Agency

Ambassadors, High Commissioners and Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Officials from Capitals, the RECs and the AU Commission

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to be with you in this beautiful town of Ezulwini, Swaziland and to welcome you to the Seventh Conference of the African Ministers in Charge of Integration (COMAI VII).

We thank His Majesty's, his Government and the People of the Kingdom of Swaziland for the hospitality and excellent arrangements and facilities accorded to the Conference and delegations. It is always a great pleasure to come back to Swaziland, where I spent five of my youthful years at the Mbabane Public Hospital as a doctor. Two of my daughters were born here, so it feels like coming home.

Your Excellencies,

This 7th Conference of Ministers in Charge of Integration focuses on the theme of '***Regional integration through infrastructure development.***'

During the yearlong Golden Jubilee celebrations of OAU/AU last year, Africa looked at the past, the present and planned for the future. Through consultations with Africans from different walks of life, young and old, men and women, rural and urban, workers and professionals, business persons, academics and artists, we developed our vision for the future, which we call, ***Agenda 2063. The Africa we Want.***

They related their aspirations, that they want an Africa that is integrated and prosperous; peaceful, democratic and inspired by the values of Pan Africanism; an Africa that takes her rightful place in the world. Agenda 2063 is not only about aspirations, it is about bringing together into one framework our continental, regional and national plans. It also sets out milestones which we must achieve in the first five years, the first decade, by 2025, 2037, 2050 up to 2063.

The Malabo AU Summit agreed to allow more time for further consultations in Member states, the RECs, and inputs from broader society, to be submitted in writing by the end of October this year and by January we will adopt the framework and the first ten year plan.

It gives this important sector of Ministers in Charge of Integration a further opportunity to make an input into this framework, as has many other sectoral meetings of Ministers.

Excellencies,

Building on the lessons and experiences of the fifty years since the formation of the OAU, we know that the unity and integration of the continent and the development of its infrastructure remains key to constructing an Africa that is peaceful and prosperous.

At national levels, infrastructure such as energy, transport, ICT and infrastructure to expand access to basic services such as sanitation and water, health and educational facilities, are the important hardware for development and a better life for all our citizens. At regional and continental levels, through the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA) and the Infrastructure Master-plans of the RECs, we seek to

connect African capitals and commercial centres through road, rail and ICT, to power our economies and communities through energy projects, including renewable and fossil fuel energy, and to increase agricultural production through irrigation projects, building storage facilities, distribution infrastructure and markets.

Infrastructure are the hardware without which economic and social development, industrialization, agriculture and intra-Africa trade on the continent will remain very slow. We therefore have to address the constraints - such as project development and implementation capacity and skills, financing, and the cross-border coordination issues that hamper the implementation of PIDA priority projects.

The software are equally important, especially the need for investments in our people, as our most precious resources: in their education, access to basic services and health. Our development will be continue to be at half-pace if we also do not empower women to play an important part in the social, political and economic affairs of our societies.

In the same vein, we must make full use of the fact that we are a youthful continent. We therefore talk about an education and skills revolution, especially in science, technology, research and innovation, to ensure that we educate, train and empower millions of young people in high and medium level skills, to enable us to develop, build and maintain the infrastructure we need, to beneficiate our natural resources, to build agribusinesses and to industrialize.

To effect this education and skills revolution, we must act at national level, but we must also work together at regional and continental levels; by strengthening and harmonizing our university, technical and professional training, so that qualifications are recognized across the continent, to build centres of excellence and share critical skills.

Technology also allows us to leapfrog development, and with the advances in ICT, we are exploring e-learning with universities and industry, to enable us to massively increase access to further and higher education.

The other software issues are the integration actions on which we will receive reports today. We have amongst other things undertaken to launch the Continental Free Trade Area by 2017, a target that is now less than three years away; we have projects in some RECs to harmonise financial regulations and practices; in others we cooperate around border and customs issues and deal with non-tariff barriers that make the flow of goods, services and persons difficult.

We must however agree, that given the competitive advantages of the continent (especially our human and natural resources) and the need to claim our proper stake of global trade and production, the pace of African integration is very slow. Indeed we hope the discussions at this Conference, will give us ideas as to how concretely to accelerate integration.

The benefits and synergies of integration are no doubt well-known to us all, including larger markets. An economy of 50 million can easily be ignored, but an integrated economy of over two billion people, will be difficult to ignore. Integration therefore remains at the core of the Pan African vision and of the mission of the African Union.

Your Excellencies

It is for these reasons that Integration is seen as a critical enabler of Agenda 2063, and Agenda 2063 as a driver for continental integration.

The just-concluded AU Summit in Malabo noted the aspirations of our people that emerged from the consultations we held with different sectors, including the RECs and different Ministerial meetings. In addition, it noted that Agenda 2063 encapsulates our various continental, regional and national plans and frameworks into a coherent whole.

More importantly, it urged all of us, to ensure that we prioritise those actions that will in the coming decade move our countries, regions and Africa towards the critical tipping point, where transformation becomes real and irreversible.

In the Agenda 2063 popular version, a number of such priority actions are identified, including the critical issues of skills and infrastructure we spoke about earlier, but also the free movement of people and goods, including consideration of an African passport.

The call to action also talks about flagship projects such as the development of a Pan African integrated high speed rail network, that will not only link all our capitals and commercial centres, but also provide an important boost for research, development and technology transfer, skills development, manufacturing and to intra-Africa trade and tourism.

We will have a session later when we will discuss in further detail Agenda 2063 and our Post 2015 Common African Position. These contain Africa's vision and aspirations for itself. It goes without saying, that unless we take responsibility for ensuring that this vision is realized, no-one else will. This includes the issue of domestic resource mobilisation to finance African development.

One of the bitter lessons from the last fifty years is that we cannot continue to develop visions and frameworks, and then expect others to take responsibility for financing our development and institutions.

Long time ago, our founding fathers and mothers, said that we have to be self-reliant, and that donor money, no matter how important and appreciated, cannot be the mainstay of African development. That is still true today.

We have the opportunity to do things differently: to be confident that our peoples' aspirations and the dream of an Africa that is integrated, peaceful and prosperous is achievable, provided that we construct this future based on actions taken now. We all must play our part, as Member states, Regional Economic Communities and continental institutions

On that note, may I thank all of you for attending this important Conference and wish the 7th COMAI fruitful deliberations.

Thank you for your kind attention.