

AFRICAN UNION

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**Statement of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, HE Dr.
Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma to the Opening session of the “Believe in
Africa Day”**

Washington D.C., 3rd August 2014

Excellencies, Heads of State and Government;

My brother, Dr. Donald Kaberuka

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am honored to speak on behalf of the AU Commission on the occasion of the “*Believe in Africa Day*”, and to exchange views about the future of Africa.

Our appreciation to Africa 24 TV and Believe In Africa (BIA) Group for their wonderful commitment to Africa’s agenda.

Ladies and Gentlemen

I hope we all believe in Africa. Let me tell a part of Africa’s story.

Africa is a large continent, and the map doesn’t always tell the full story. We can fit on its landmass Western Europe, China, the USA, India and there will still be space for Japan and a few other islands. Our oceanic space is even larger: three times the size of our landmass.

The African rainforests along its equator are the second lung of earth, second to the Amazon. We are well-endowed with both variety and abundance of living things; and is home to a quarter of the worlds 4,700 mammal species.

We have 60% of the world’s uncultivated arable land, its forest resources cover 23% of our land area and we have beneath our soil we have plenty of mineral resources (75% of global platinum deposits, 50% of diamonds, 50% of chromium and 20% of gold and uranium). Nearly one third of African countries are oil and gas producers¹.

¹ *Frontier markets in Africa. Misperceptions in a Sea of Opportunities.* A note prepared by UNECA for the US-Africa Leaders Summit 2014, Washington DC, in collaboration with the AUC and the ADB. July 2014

Africa also represents the cradle of humankind. Today, population numbers over a billion, over 50% women, and just under 50% men. Over 60% of the African population is classified as young, and over the coming decades we will be the only region where the working age population is still growing. In 2012, sixteen African cities had a population of over three million, and this is likely to more than double to 34 cities by 2020.

We are a diverse people, with many languages, different religions and cultures but united in its diversity by history and heritage. We believe in Africa, because we freed ourselves from colonialism and apartheid, and have taken our place as full and independent members of the global community. It therefore can create a prosperous and peaceful continent.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

Africa has taken its destiny in its own hands, and by the beginning of the 1990s as apartheid finally ended in Namibia and South Africa, the post-Cold War generations of African leaders and activists vowed to bring peace and democracy to the continent, when they transformed the OAU into the African Union.

Thus with a few exceptions most Africans live in countries that are at peace, democratic and are better governed than twenty years ago.

Human development indicators are moving in the right direction: between 1990 and 2012 Africa reduced under 5 child mortality by 55.4%; infant mortality rate by 37%; maternal deaths by 41% and HIV prevalence is down to 4.7%.

We are also making progress on gender equality, slow as it may be, and raising awareness on sexual violence and harmful cultural practices. There are more children, including girls, in school than at anytime during our history, and over the last fifteen years, enrolment in African universities have tripled, growing at an average of 16% a year.

On the economic front, there are also encouraging signs: sustained growth at 5% for over a decade; investments both public

and private, as well as foreign direct investments are growing; intra-African trade, including in industrial goods, are growing especially in west, southern and eastern Africa. African investors nearly tripled their share of FDI projects over the last decade² and FDI from other parts of the world has grown, and has been diversifying beyond the traditional OECD countries.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

It is all of the above factors, and more, which despite our many challenges, makes us believe in Africa. It forms the basis of our fifty-year vision **Agenda 2063. The Africa we Want.**

As we look at what we do today and the next fifty years, we are determined to silence the guns in the continent; to eradicate poverty in one generation; to eradicate hunger, fragility and disease; to transform our economies, create jobs, build shared prosperity; to preserve our environment and deal with the challenges of climate change, and to foster tolerant, inclusive, just, non-sexist and democratic societies.

This is the basis of our fifty-year vision and plan, **Agenda 2063. The Africa we want**, and our Common African Position on the post-2015 development agenda.

It is on the basis of these common positions, that Africa seeks partnerships with the world, based on its priorities. We are happy to be here at the invitation of President Obama, to take forward this partnership with the USA. We want our partners to work with us on our priorities, which include:

- Investments in people, our precious resource and a skills revolution to train hundreds of thousands of young Africans in science, technology, research and innovation, and other disciplines and professions;
- Grow agricultural production and agro-processing to eradicate hunger and malnutrition and to become a net exporter of food, by modernizing or agriculture, use of

² *EY's Attractiveness Survey. Africa 2014 Executing Growth.* Ernst and Youth, 2014

indigenous knowledge, to empower especially women and small holderfarmers, improve access to land, technology, extension services, markets and capital.

- Developing infrastructure, especially energy, transport and ICT, and using modern technology to leapfrog development and extend universal access;
- Develop manufacturing, beneficiation of its natural resources and the services sector, grow intra-Africa and global trade so as to create jobs and build shared prosperity. We want foreign direct investments to contribute towards this objective of industrialization and job creation in Africa.
- Empower Africa's youth and women as key drivers for innovation and development.
- Improve developmental and accountable governance, and universal access to basic services such as health, sanitation and water, education, ICT and shelter.
- Integrate the continent through infrastructure, including transport and regional energy pools, as well as the Continental Free Trade Area, harmonization of policies, strong regional and continental institutions and free movement of people, goods and services

Central to African development, peace and prosperity is of course the participation of its women, especially in their economic empowerment. We know that investments in women have much broader impacts, leading to healthier and better educated children and more prosperous families and communities. The focus on women, is in addition to our traditional reliance on men, it is using not half, but our full potential.

Within all of the above, the African people are most important. Our common norms of democracy, human rights, respect for the rule of law are therefore important, in order to foster the participation of our people at all levels.

We know Africa is rich, but we want African people to be rich as well.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

These priorities are critical to the social and economic transformation of Africa, to the building of a continent that is integrated, people-centred, prosperous, that is at peace with itself and takes its rightful place in the world.

Such an Africa is not only in the interests of current and future generations of Africans, but it is in the interest of the whole of humanity. A prosperous and peaceful Africa will mean greater prosperity and peace for all regions of the world. A prosperous Africa means an increase in global prosperity, markets, innovation and trade.

As we therefore gather this week, at the invitation of President Obama, to strengthen the relationship between Africa and the United States of America, it will be based on our understanding of our shared goals of peace, inclusion and common prosperity, we can indeed strengthen bonds and greater cooperation.

We look forward to the engagements and wish the Conference successful deliberations.