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Opening Remarks

By

H.E. Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma
Chairperson of the African Union Commission
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

**On the Occasion of the Women in Parliaments (WIP) Annual
Summit 2015**

"NEW LEADERSHIP FOR GLOBAL CHALLENGES"

HE Mr Kassa Tekleberhan, Speaker of the House of Federation of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia

H.E Mr. Neven Mimica, EU Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development,

Hon. Silvana Koch-Mehrin, Founder of WIP and former Vice-President of the European Parliament

Excellency, former President of the Republic of Malawi, Mrs Joyce Banda

Dr. Carlos Lopes, Executive Secretary of UNECA

Hon. Bethel Naemeka Amadi, Member of Parliament and President of the Pan-African Parliament,

Honorable Members of Parliaments across the globe,

AU Commissioners

Excellencies, Members of the AU Permanent Representative Committee, Representatives of the Diplomatic Corps, International Organisations and Distinguished Delegates and Panelists,

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a great honour for me to welcome you to the Headquarters of the African Union, and to wish you a fruitful stay in the hospitable city of Addis Ababa.

The theme for the summit is interesting one, but at the same time a difficult one: *New leadership for Global challenges.*

Honourable Members

During the first Women in Parliament Global Summit in Brussels in 2013, we celebrated 120 years since New Zealand women won the right to vote, the first in the world. It made me wonder how long it took before the suffrage translated into the election of the first woman legislator. Well, in New Zealand, although women could vote since 1893, it was only in 1919 that they were allowed to stand for elections. The first New Zealand MP, Elizabeth McCombs was only elected to office in 1933.

The first female Members of Parliament were in fact from Finland, who extended the franchise to women in 1906, and elected the first two

women to office in the next year. This is a story that is repeated across the world.

Back to 2015, and this gathering of Women in Parliament, representing 9 923 women MPs from all corners of the world, shows that things changed very slowly over the last century.

Though we represent more than 50% of the global population, we are less than a quarter of its Members of Parliament. There is now general agreement that we need for starters a critical mass of at least 30% of women in Parliaments, to begin the shift towards gender parity.

Let us take stock of where we are in Africa on this particular matter of Women in Parliament.

Today, out of 55 African countries, we have fourteen countries with 30% and more female MPs: Rwanda (63.8), Namibia (47), Seychelles (43.8), Senegal (42.7), South Africa (41.5), Mozambique (39.6), Angola (36.8), Tanzania (36), Uganda (35), Algeria (31.6), Zimbabwe (31.5), Tunisia (31.3), Cameroon (31.1) and Burundi (30.5).

We are looking forward to the 2015 elections in Burkina Faso, Benin, Burundi, Egypt, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Sudan and Togo, who all have still not reached this critical mass of at least 30%, to finally do the right thing so that they too can cross this threshold.

Globally, women still make up less than a quarter of all Members of Parliament. The struggle for representation in government, in the judiciary, in fact in all spheres of the public and private sector is therefore far from over, and must continue.

Honourable Members

Africa this year celebrates the Year of Women's Empowerment and Development, and with the rest of the world 20 years since the historic Beijing conference. Our choice to focus on women 2015 is part of the ongoing struggle for gender equality on our continent.

At the beginning of 2015, the African Union Summit adopted its vision for the next fifty years, Our theme is leadership, but leadership needs to have a vision. Agenda 2063 is our vision for the Africa we want.

It is based primarily on investing in Africa's most precious resource, its people. It is for this reason we emphasize access to health for all, girls and boys education, and an African skills revolution that will see more of our young people and women focusing on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics and also on research and innovation. This is both to develop their talents so that they reach their full potential, but also for them to use their energy and innovation to drive Africa's development towards shared prosperity.

Agenda 2063 also emphasises the development of infrastructure (railways, road, aviation and maritime transport, energy, ICT, water and sanitation and other social infrastructure) as well as the need to transform African agriculture and agribusinesses, and to beneficiate and add value to our natural resources.

This means a deliberate plan to banish the handheld-hoe to the museum and modernizing and mechanizing agriculture. We have started a campaign to replace the hoe with tillers and tractors where appropriate in the next ten years. After 10 years we only want to see the hoe in agricultural museums.

Agenda 2063 is also about ensuring that we benefit from our vast oceanic spaces and the resources it hold, by developing our blue economy. As we gather, the first-ever Conference of African Women in Maritime is taking place this week in Luanda, Angola, where women in the sector will discuss how they will cooperate to make inroads into shipping and maritime transport, into fishing, offshore mining and other aspects of the Blue economy.

Agenda 2063 also prioritises democracy, human rights, gender equality, the empowerment of women and young people, management of diversity, as critical to good governance, the eradication of poverty, ending gender-

based violence and the building of tolerant, caring, stable inclusive and peaceful societies.

Honourable Members

We know that these aspirations outlined above will happen faster and will be more sustainable through the empowerment of women and girls.

This is why it is so important to ensure that in all our countries, we reach this critical mass of women in parliaments and governments. In addition, we must also share experiences as Members of Parliament on how we take the gender agenda forward in the work that we do.

During the African year of women, we prioritize financial inclusion and economic empowerment, working with our sister from the ADB Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi; access to modern technology, inputs, capital, land and markets to women in agriculture; and expanding opportunities to education and training to girls and women, in addition to our ongoing advocacy for women's right to representation and participation and in all areas of human endeavor.

We must ensure that these and other issues critical to women are at the centre of the post-2015 development agenda, and to the sustainable development goals.

Honourable Members,

I have spoken about some of the issues that concerns the African continent, but these are global concerns and issues, hence the relevance of the theme for this Summit, '*New Leadership for Global Challenges.*' These universal challenges, of increasing women's access to economic resources, their participation in public life, and of ensuring human security, peace and a sustainable environment are matters that concern women everywhere.

It is true that we need leadership that can deal with these challenges, decisively.

I believe that we need leadership that puts people at the centre of everything, that listens and understands the needs of the people; and that is compassionate and empathizes with its people.

We need leadership that serves as role models, that inspires young people, and the population in general, to want to reach greater heights.

We need leadership that knows how to manage diversity by respecting every race, gender, culture, religion and language, and who builds tolerance. It must be a leadership that embraces diversity as a strength, rather than a threat. If not, it encourages exclusion, and exclusion breeds extremism.

Our global leadership should understand Newton's third law of physics: that for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. Or the maxim, do unto others as you want them to do unto you.

We need leadership that understands that they are as good as their teams, and therefore encourages team work and empower those around them; that shine the light for others, but are ready to receive light from them as well.

The leadership we need must be honest, transparent and ready to acknowledge mistakes, understanding as one of our young poets said: that "every beautiful rock has its fault lines". Nobody is perfect, but working together we can complement each other.

We need leadership who are flexible, who can change when there is a need for change. Leaders who understands that you cannot do the same thing over and over, and expect different results, as Einstein said. We need leaders who as they grow the economy put people at the centre, not only profit.

Leaders who understand that they should bequeath this planet to future generations, and that it should still be pleasant and provide for them and other species.

Leaders who are ready to build a humane world where every human being is celebrated and valued, and therefore always working towards bequeathing future generations a better world than the one they found.

We need leaders of strong character, knowing that character is not build overnight or congenital, but is forged on the anvil of experience, self-discipline, dedication and integrity.

It is a global leadership for a more humane, just and caring world.

This global and national leadership we talk about, must include women as part of that leadership and of humanity. As women leaders, this should be the type of global leadership we want to be part of, and that we strive to build.

I wish this summit fruitful deliberations, and look forward once again to the vibrant discussions.

I thank you