

**OPENING SPEECH  
OF THE  
24<sup>TH</sup> ORDINARY SESSION  
OF THE  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE**

**BY**

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Deputy Chairperson  
of the  
African Union Commission**

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Your Excellency the Ambassador of the Republic of Benin, Chairperson of the PRC  
My Colleagues, the Commissioners of the African Union Commission,  
Your Excellencies, Permanent Representatives ,  
Representatives of the African Union organs present,  
Excellencies Ambassadors Accredited to the African Union and  
Members of the Diplomatic Corps  
Representatives of Regional Economic Communities  
Observers and invited guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. On this important occasion of the opening of the 24<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the Permanent Representatives Committee, it is a great honour and privilege for me to address you on behalf of the African Union Commission – and to bring to you greetings from the Chairperson of the Commission, H.E. Jean Ping and all the other staff of the African Union Commission. The Chairperson is unable to be with you this morning due to some important mission out of Addis Ababa.
2. I would like to associate myself with the warm words of welcome by HE the Chairperson of the PRC and reiterate my warmest regards to all those assembled here today, in preparation for the sessions of the Executive Council and Assembly of Heads of State and Government. May I also thank you for work that has already been accomplished in relation to the agenda and the role that you play in facilitating the work of the higher Organs of our Union.
3. As we converge here today, it is appropriate to recall the hard work we have together engaged in during the last six months and important strides we continue to make as a Union. Our individual and collective efforts is reflected in the strong recovery that a significant number of our economies continue to post following the worst economic and financial crises since the great Depression of the 1920s. Allow me, Chairperson, and Excellencies to briefly highlight some of the key achievements within the overall context of the 6 programmatic areas of our Strategic Plan.

4. First, Peace and Security. This year is symbolic, as it marks the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the AU Peace and Security Council Protocol, which endowed our Union with the required tools to address the challenges at hand. Ever since its creation, the African Union has been proactively working towards the resolution of existing crises and the prevention of conflicts, placing particular emphasis on the entrenchment of democracy, rule of law, governance and human rights.
5. We can take pride in the strides made in the past decade. The development of the necessary normative and institutional framework and the efforts deployed on the ground, at continental and regional levels, bear testimony to the achievements made.
6. However, we still have a long way to go to achieve our common goal of a continent free from the scourge of conflict and violence. The past six months have been particularly challenging. While progress has continued to be made in Somalia, both at the political and military fronts, worrying developments occurred elsewhere on the continent. Mention should be made here of the escalation in the tension between Sudan and South Sudan, which led, at some point, to military confrontation between the two countries, the coup d'état in Guinea Bissau and the multifaceted crisis in Mali and its larger implications for the Sahel region.
7. As we meet here today, we take comfort in the recent encouraging evolution in the negotiations between Sudan and South Sudan, which are facilitated by the AU High-Level Implementation Panel, the steps taken to address the crisis in Guinea Bissau and the ongoing efforts to consolidate the return to constitutional order in Mali, restore state authority in the northern part of the country and deal with the long-term and complex challenges facing the Sahel region.
8. We wish to acknowledge the support of the United Nations to our mission in Somalia as well as overall support for our initiatives in that country. We also wish to acknowledge the collaboration between ECOWAS and IGAD in managing the crises in the Sahel and in the Horn of Africa respectively.

9. It is imperative that we redouble our efforts to Make Peace Happen on our continent. Key in this respect is for economic growth and development to accompany the relative peace and security, democracy and governance to flourish and the commitment of Member States to provide the required financial resource in support of the continental peace and security agenda. This is a *sine qua non* condition for African leadership, and ownership of, the quest for peace, as well as for the sustainability of the hard-won gains made over the past decade.
10. Second, Development, Integration and Cooperation. Since the beginning of the year, we have continued to advance our economic and development agenda. As indicated earlier, African economies continue to be resilient in the aftermath of global economic slowdown. Consequently global interest in Africa remains high providing more opportunities for greater growth and development.
11. The focus this year is on boosting intra-Africa trade. The goal is to establish and fast track the continental free trade area by 2017. In the last six months additional work has been done to crystallize the roadmap, the action plan and architecture for the continental free trade area. As we prepare the foundation for the continental free trade area it is important to take into account the implications of the multilateral and regional trade arrangements notably the stalled WTO Doha Round and the Economic Partnership Agreements in our efforts
12. In the Human Resource sector, the Pan African University is now operationalized and launched in the first three institutes. Calls for student applications have been published as well as call for recruitment of staff in Cameroon, Nigeria and Kenya.
13. In agriculture, progress has been made in a number of Member States to boost agricultural productivity and trade in pursuit of Food and Nutrition Security as well as increased agricultural incomes on the continent. Up to 30 member States have endorsed a Common Vision and Strategy through the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Program (CAADP) Compacts. Over twenty three (23) of them have defined investment programs and scaled up on as well as donor financing to agriculture.

14. The Grow Africa Investment Forum held in Addis Ababa in May, 2012 was a success, where the African Union partnered with World Economic Forum to attract large scale private investors. As of now, seven (7) Member States are part of the pilot countries where global private sector companies are working with regional and national private sector to invest in specific agricultural value chains.
15. At the recent G8 Summit, in USA, world leaders, including some leaders from Africa under the leadership of the Chairperson on our Union, discussed efforts on refocusing on food and nutrition security as well as opportunities and benefits of private sector investment in African agriculture sector. It is now clear that attractiveness of Africa as an investment location is on the rise.
16. In parallel, the decision of the Heads of State and Government in January 2012 regarding the Program for Infrastructure Development (PIDA) in the four sectors of Transport, Energy, ICT and Trans-Boundary Waters, which is key to Africa's competitiveness, transformation and integration, will help support this process. We are discussing with a number of partners to establish a Project Preparation Facility for developing bankable projects and promotion of PIDA.
17. In the social sector, a report has been prepared for the consideration of the Assembly on trends and progress on maternal new born and child mortality. Aids Watch Africa as an accountability platform has been finalized. This will also cover malaria and TB. An architecture for vulnerable people and especially those with disability on the continent has also been finalized. We are also engaging with
18. With regard to partnerships a lot has been achieved in the last six months. We participated at the TICAD Ministerial meeting in Marrakesh for the first time as co-organizers. The session revised commitments under TICAD IV and laid parameters for TICAD V. We will also participate at the FOCAC ministerial meeting scheduled to be held next week after this Summit. On Korea a senior officials meeting was held in Addis Ababa,

involving the PRC Sub-committee on Multilateral Relations in preparation for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Africa-Korea Summit, scheduled for October in Seoul , Korea. Even though the 3<sup>rd</sup> Africa-South-America summit was postponed we are engaging with South America, to hold the meeting at the end of the year. Turkey has recently provided proposals for specific programmes and activities in six areas of co-operation which are immediately implementable. Finally,. we had a very successful summit on AGOA, regarding its extension and also embracing all the African countries.

19.**Third Shared Values.** 2011 was a very challenging year for the continent. The recent elections in Egypt and Libya show that some of the countries involved are moving towards rebuilding their nations.

20.This year 2012 is the Year of Shared Values. There is no doubt that democracy, good governance and the rule of law as well as the upholding of Human Rights has increasingly taken strong roots in Africa. In this regard we applaud the peaceful change of government following general elections in Senegal in May and in Lesotho in June..

21. Since 2011 drought, hunger and famine has been a major challenge in the Horn of Africa and the Sahel regions. The Commission has been engaged in the realization of the pledges and disbursement of support for these regions. We appeal to the states and donors that have yet to meet their pledges to do so. We wish to thank all the member states, stakeholders and donors that have walked this journey with in solidarity with us. We are now working on resilience and risk mitigation in order to forestall the impact of drought and famine recurrence.

22.**Finally, Institution and Capacity Building.** Much has been realized in 2012. We have made important strides in the realignment of the activities of the Union to the outcomes and the Strategic Plan. Focus has been on the completion of the process that started in 2011 of shifting the budgetary cycle and securing approval in June/July rather than in January. Crucial steps forward have been made in this regard and should this session of the PRC

23.so concur, it will mark the successful conclusion of the shift in calendar.

24. Touching on the proposed Budget for 2013, the Union's proposed total Budget is US\$ 278.23 million, reflecting a 1.5% increase on the 2012 estimates. The budget proposal is broken down into an operational budget of US\$ 117.5 million and a programme budget will be US\$ 160.73 million. With regard to financing, the member states are allocated a total of US\$ 122.87 million, while US\$ 155.36 will be mobilized from our partners. This modest budget, is in keeping with the transitional nature of the year 2013 for the African Union, during which period the successor Strategic Plan 2014-2017, will be developed and adopted.
25. As you note from the Budget proposals, more than 90% of the programme budget is financed by the AU development partners. We wish to express our appreciation for their support and goodwill. Excellencies, you will be receiving a report from Eminent Persons on alternative sources of financing. We see the outcomes of the work by this Committee as key to ensuring sustainability for the Programmes of the African Union as a whole.
26. The budgetary reform is part of the wider institutional and capacity reforms. As PRC you will receive reports from various Sub-Committees touching on transformation, mandate and structures of AU organs namely, the Commission, PAP, the Court, as well as NEPAD and APRM.
27. Finally, Your Excellencies, 2012 marks the final year of the current Strategic Plan. We have undertaken a review of its implementation during the last 6 months and will continue to deepen dialogue in this regard as a firm basis for the development of the successor plan. It is important to lay the groundwork, timelines and development for next Strategic Plan in the next 6 months. We seek your concurrence at this session for this effort, which will involve a broader approach to include the entire Union, and from which the Commission will extract its own medium term objectives and plan.
28. Your Excellencies, much has been done and more remains to be done. Ours is not a task that has an end. As we note successes, we have to build on the momentum in order to further progress in the direction of achieving our vision of "an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven and managed by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the

international area". And thus this is a defining moment and a successful outcome of the agenda including election of a new Commission is crucial.

Your Excellencies Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you for your kind attention.