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**Statement by H.E Erastus Mwencha
Deputy Chairperson of African Union Commission
on the Occasion of Africa-Turkey Women
Entrepreneurs Trade Bridge;
27 February– 1 March 2014, Istanbul, Turkey.**

President of Tuskon Rezanur Meral and TUSKON Board Members

Honorable Ministers

African Ambassadors and Consuls General

Distinguished African and Turkish Women Entrepreneurs,

Distinguished Business Leaders,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to address this important Forum of women entrepreneurs, on behalf of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma. Let me, at the outset, convey our gratitude to the Government, the People of Turkey and particular to TUSKON for hosting this event in this beautiful city of Istanbul. I share President Meral observation that this is the most dynamic and colorful event.

Africa and Turkey have developed a strategic partnership that creates a framework for cooperation at all levels. The First Turkey-Africa Summit was held here in Istanbul in 2008 while the Second Summit will be organized in Africa, in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea in November, this year. In the last ten years, trade between Turkey and Africa has grown from \$4billion to \$20 billion. It is within this framework that this important initiative of Women Entrepreneurs Trade Bridge is being convened, at the initiative of TUSKON. Today AUC and TUSKON will be signing of an MOU with the African Union Commission to entrench and carry forward this cooperation.

Distinguished leaders, This event is both timely and opportune as we in Africa have embarked on nurturing and developing our human resource - the most important resource of the continent.

Women have unfortunately been unfairly placed in our societies. In Africa women represent 52% of the 1.1 billion people, and contribute approximately 75% of the agricultural labour. In addition, they are responsible for 60 to 80% of the food production. Yet, they earn only 10%

of total incomes and own just 1% of the continent's assets including land. This marginalization is however changing and we believe that it must be reversed for Africa to attain sustainable development. Mobilizing women entrepreneurs and creating an enabling environment is one such way.

This is why, we gather here today to develop business opportunities, share experiences, promote women entrepreneurs' networks and forge partnerships between African and Turkish women . Women entrepreneurs are strongly involved in Agriculture, Agribusiness, Rural Development and Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs). Bringing them together in Forum of this nature provide them with a platform for exchange of experiences and good practices as well as a chance to identify new business opportunities. I have been informed and I am delighted that more than 300 women from almost 40 African countries made the journey to Istanbul

Female entrepreneurs are the building blocks for success in any economy as they bring a unique approach to business and have specific skills. In the recent past, Women entrepreneurs have been starting businesses at a higher rate than men and are creating more jobs. They are heavily engaged, motivated and extremely well suited for the emerging workplace. Women entrepreneurs should be celebrated in every society.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

You may be aware that Africa is becoming an increasingly attractive hub for foreign investors as a result of sound macro-economic policies, political and social reforms that the continent has been pursuing in the last decade, resulting in a much improved business environment conducive for foreign direct investment. Additionally Africa has put priority in developing critical social and physical infrastructure across the continent in order to reduce the cost of doing business. Further there is an increasing pool of well-educated , enterprising and growing middle class across the continent. Additionally, increasing primary

enrollment and retention of the girl child in school, her progressive movement to secondary and tertiary education (including University) is slowly starting to bear positive results as women join the labour market and move upwards to occupy key decision making positions. The African Union Commission is an example where women occupy 50% of management positions at the highest level. Indeed, Members of the Commission are 50% women and 50% men and as you are aware for the first time in the history of our continental Organization, a women is at the helm.

There is also a significant boost in the spending power of Africans. Africa's fast-emerging middle class is now comprised of over 300 million people, and overall GDP in 2013 was US \$1.8 trillion. And for the first time, the average Per capita GDP was 1000. As Africa continues to improve its investment climate, the biggest challenge and need at the moment is capital and technology. With Turkey recording GDP of US 1.43 trillion and having transformed its economy through industrialization and the use of modern technology, this meeting could not be held at a more opportune time.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

At this juncture, allow me to mention but a few sectors that are most promising for investment in Africa:

First, **Agriculture**; Africa is ripe for a green revolution. The continent is currently home to 60% of the world's total uncultivated, arable land. As the world's population increases rapidly (recently exceeding the 7 billion mark and 9 billion in 2050), global agricultural production must rise to feed these growing numbers. This creates business opportunity for the manufacture and marketing of products such as fertilizers, pesticides and seeds as well as a demand for food processing and ago-processing such as grain refining, value addition and packaging. Value opportunities exist in textile industry and commodities such as tea, coffee just to name a few. In fact Africa is now ready to be next hub of textile production.

The growing in agro-industry have been buttressed by improved business environment through implementation of the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP). Already, a growing number of private equity funds are springing up to finance agricultural production in Africa. The Turkish Investors can join the train.

second, **Tourism**; Several African countries have become world's favorite tourism destinations. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization, tourist arrivals into Africa in the year 2012 exceeded 49 million and are likely to pass the 50 million mark in 2014. Those are the kind of numbers you should be taking advantage of. There are opportunities in luxury safari lodges and a luxury retreats. But apart from luxury lodges and retreats, several other opportunities are available in Africa's tourism sector. For example, Africa has a substantial number of bodies of water that are still unexploited. Luxury boat cruises or tour operators along our vast coastline could be a great investment opportunity for Turkish investors and could advance and take advantage of the blue economy that Africa is yet to exploit .

Third, **Mining of Solid Minerals**; Several African countries have vast deposits of mineral resources that have been left largely unexploited because of a lack of technical know-how, as well as the financial incapacity to embark on capital-intensive mining projects. The continent also has a wide array of mineral resources which include iron ore, coal, bauxite, gold, tin, lead, oil and zinc which haven't been exploited. This creates an investment opportunity for our Turkish friends without compromising Africa's chance to benefit from value addition and wealth creation opportunities in both artisanal as well as industrial mining .

Fifth, **Infrastructure**; Investing in infrastructure is critical to Africa's growth. While there have been significant improvements in the development and quality of infrastructure across the continent, there is still a clear-cut deficit. Needless to say, this shortfall has its consequences, including bottlenecks in the smooth running of trade and export activities. While funding infrastructural development in Africa is not cheap, the continent requires about \$93 billion annually to cover

infrastructure needs. Of course, the financing capacity of individual country governments is limited; hence there are opportunities for private investors to partner with African public and private in the development of under-performing infrastructure—such as investing in reliable power supply, water resources, roads and railway systems among others.

Sixth, Fast Moving Consumer Good: With Africa's exploding middle class (over 300 million people) always looking to be serviced with new products, Africa's fast moving consumer goods sector looks promising. There is a huge and ever-growing opportunity for manufacturers and retailers of FMCGs like food, beverages, home care and personal care products. Turkish Investors who can quickly partner with African investors should step in and get a grip on the market as dominant players in the years to come.

Seventh, ICT; This is one of the fastest growing and most promising sector. There are well over 1 billion mobile phones in Africa and the use of computer is rapidly expanding. A whole range of business opportunities exist from e-commerce, international call centers, mobile services to assembly/and or manufacturing.

The list can go on.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Simply put, Africa's potential is enormous; it is a continent on the rise. Having mentioned but a few sectors that are ripe for investment, am confident that more success stories will be shared during this very important trade bridge which will encourage and inspire Turkish investors to channel their resources in value adding industries in partnership with Africa investors.

May I also encourage and challenge the African side to think of investing in Turkey. There are several products that can only be sourced in Africa and for which demand exists in Turkey. The Turkish economy although similar to that of Africa is much more advanced. With per capita GDP of

10,000,US Dollars. And with a free trade area agreement with the European Union, Turkey is indeed a gateway to the vast European market.

Business leaders. This is time for action. Time to walk the talk. Time to make business deals. Our success will be measured by concrete deals that lead to flow of trade and investment between Africa and Turkey and how this translates into improving living standards of our people on both sides.

I thank you, good luck and may God bless you.