

OPENING STATEMENT OF  
MR. ERASTUS MWENCHA, DEPUTY  
CHAIRPERSON, AFRICAN UNION  
AT THE RETREAT ON STRENGTHENING  
COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE  
AUC-ECA-AfDB AND THE REGIONAL  
ECONOMIC COMMUNITIES

08 December 2014  
Johannesberg, South Africa

**Excellency, the Deputy Executive Secretary of UNECA**

**Excellency, the Vice-President of the African Development Bank**

**Distinguished Participants,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The beginning of the new millennium opened up a good opportunity for Africa to launch a big new initiative for development. As Africa celebrated its 50th anniversary since the founding of the OAU in 1963, Africa's political leadership acknowledged past achievements and challenges and rededicated itself to the Pan African vision of "an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena." The 2013 Summit tasked the African Union Commission (AUC), supported by the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Planning and Coordinating Agency (NPCA), the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), to prepare such a continental agenda through a people-driven process. It embarked on a consultative process to develop a vision for the next 50 years – the outcome was Agenda 2063 launched on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of the OAU.

Agenda 2063, a plan for Africa's structural transformation, was agreed upon as a long term roadmap with milestones and strategies to achieve this vision in the shortest possible time. The converging voices of Africans of different backgrounds have expressed vividly what they desire for themselves and the continent in the future. This has culminated in defining the seven common set of aspirations: i) A Prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development; ii) An Integrated Continent, Politically United, based on the ideals of Pan Africanism and the Vision of Africa's Renaissance; iii) An Africa of Good Governance, Respect for Human Rights, Justice and the Rule of Law; iv) A Peaceful and Secure Africa; v) An Africa with a strong Cultural Identity, Common Heritage, Values and Ethics; vi) An Africa whose development is people-driven, especially relying on the potential offered by its women and youth; and vii) Africa as a Strong, Resilient and Influential Global Player and Partner. These seven aspirations show strong convergence with the AU Vision, and are in line

with the eight priorities of the OAU/AU 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Solemn Declaration. In addition, they collectively demonstrate a strong continuity of thinking between the Founders' and the present generation of Africans, albeit in a different context.

Distinguished Participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In similar vein, the post 2015 development agenda evolved as a critical milestone towards the realization of Agenda 2063, and provides a good opportunity for Africa to complete the unfinished business of the MDGs. The post-2015 universal agenda looks like being bolder and more transformational than what preceded it. There is also broad agreement that it should be a universal agenda – applying to all countries - developed and developing.

At the global level, the findings from the universal consultations informed the deliberations of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which was appointed by the UN General Assembly. The seventeen goals and 169 targets which it has proposed do reflect much of what people have said they want in the new agenda, including some of the most transformative elements.

As a prelude to the adoption of the global SDGs, Africa developed its post-2015 development agenda commonly known as an African Position (CAP) based on the premise that the realization of the vision of Agenda 2063 requires transformation in critical Pan African priority areas. The CAP emanates from the decision of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Union of July 2012 (Assembly/AU/Dec.423 (XIX), which mandates the African Union Commission, in close consultation with Members States and Regional Economic Communities, to identify Africa's priorities for the post-2015 Development Agenda. This document represents the aspirations of the African people and their contribution to the global debate on the formulation of the Post-2015 Development Agenda. The CAP identifies substantive issues of importance to Africa and arrives at a consensus on Africa's key priorities, concerns and strategies to be reflected in the outcomes of the post-2015 negotiation process. This was achieved by taking into account the wealth of information collected

and collated from national and regional stakeholders (the executive and legislative arms of governments, private sector, civil society organizations, youth associations, women groups, trade unions, and academia) African multilateral institutions and selected pertinent UN organizations and agencies. The Cap is based on six pillars that are critical to African aspirations: i) Structural economic transformation and inclusive growth; ii) science, technology and innovation; iii) people-centered development; iv) environmental sustainability, natural resources management and disaster risk management; v) peace and security; and vi) finance and partnerships.

Distinguished Participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Towards the realization of the overall development agenda, aspirations of the Agenda 2063 and the expressed post-2015 African position, regional integration has been seen as a key element of the development strategy of African countries in the post-independence period. The importance attached to regional integration as an instrument for the promotion of socio-economic development is reflected in the large number of integration schemes on the continent. Regional integration in Africa is crucial for the attainment of competitiveness and effective integration of the continent into the global trading system and for addressing some of the developmental challenges.

The blue print for Africa's economic integration was laid by the Abuja Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community (AEC). In spite of the importance attached to it in Africa's development strategy; progress towards the achievement of the AEC has been unsatisfactory. Many of the milestones set for the establishment are yet to be achieved. Adopted in 1991 by the OAU Heads of State and Government, the Treaty provides for the economic integration of Africa, over a period of 34 years and in six stages of variable duration. Pursuant to this decision, eight of the existing fourteen regional integration groupings in Africa have been recognized by the African Union (AU) as the building blocks of Pan-African continental integration. All African countries belong to at least one regional integration grouping, while half of the countries have multiple membership of two or more integration schemes. We all are aware that these institutions are faced with weaknesses relating to sovereignty issues,

inadequacy of resources and capacities; and lack of empowerment - just to mention a few.

Distinguished Participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It was in response to the directives of the Heads of State decision of that the Joint Secretariat comprising of the Chief Executives of OAU, ECA, and AfDB was established in 1989 by the three organizations. This was further strengthened by signing an MOU among the 3 JSIs leading to the establishment of the Joint Secretariat Support Office (JSSO), to serve as the operational mechanism and for the Joint Secretariat.

Since the signing of the MOU in 2010, JSSO under the guidance of the Steering Committee has been an active partner in contributing to and supporting the various initiatives of the JSIs in strengthening their collaboration. JSSO has also been working with the RECs, albeit at a lesser degree. Notwithstanding its important role, JSSO's efforts have been met with some challenges that hamper its contribution.

Your unstinted support and valuable input, dear delegates, is therefore important as the effectiveness and efficiency of this Office is critical for the success of the joint efforts of the AU-ECA-AfDB and the RECs in the promotion of Africa's economic integration and development.

I thank you for your kind attention.