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**Opening Remarks by Dr. Jinmi Adisa, the Director,  
Citizens and Diaspora Directorate of the African Union  
on Behalf of Dr. Mrs. Dlamini Zuma, the Chairperson  
of the African Union Commission**

**Presented to the Second Intercontinental CSO Forum,  
Brussels, Belgium, 23-25 October 2013**

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Dlamini Zuma, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission**

***Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps,***

***Representatives of the African Union and European  
Commission,***

***Honored and Distinguished Representatives of Civil Society  
from Africa and Europe,***

***Facilitators and Rapporteurs,***

***Participants from all walks of life,***

***Distinguished Guests,***

***Ladies and Gentlemen.***

On behalf of Her Excellency, Mrs. Dlamini Nkosazana Zuma, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, it gives me great pleasure to address this opening session of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Africa-EU Intercontinental CSO Forum. Her Excellency wished to address this meeting personally and had made arrangements to do so but was constrained by circumstances beyond her direct control. She has sent me belatedly as a poor replacement with a responsibility to underline her sincere regrets that she was unable to do so personally.

Having worked closely with her first as the Foreign Minister of the South Africa in the management of the AU Diaspora program, and more recently as my direct boss, I believe that conveying her sentiments may be the one major aspect of this task that I am uniquely privileged to convey.

In this regard, I wish to stress that Her Excellency attaches the greatest significance to the effective participation of civil society in the policy process and to your deliberation as a critical and vital element of the Africa-EU partnership. It is fortunate therefore, that she is not present to tell you this herself because given her innate modesty and humility of

carriage she would not be able to do so personally. My own summary that is based on close observation is that her gentle carriage belies her close conviction about the importance of civil society and her belief in the centrality of the average man or woman on the street in shaping wider destiny.

Her attachment to this cause owes as much to the provisions and principles of the Constitutive Act of the Union that she played a critical role in forging as the Foreign Minister of South Africa and member of the Executive Council of the African Union as well as her experience and career as a standard bearer of the anti-apartheid struggle forged in the brutal days of the brutal regime in South Africa. Her credentials were forged in blood and struggle and the respect and regard that her people and her peers have accorded her as a consequence stands as a testimony to her belief, devotion, commitment and people-centeredness. Till date she is one of the most popular icons of the anti-apartheid movement and one of the most popular political figures of the ANC in South Africa and the continent. She is a political figure that actually canvasses for and wins majority of votes in electoral processes. To appropriate the wisdom of Chinua Achebe in one of his later books, she is “a woman of the people”.

### ***Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,***

I offer these observations not to celebrate her as a person or curry her favor as my Chief Executive but to process her perspective and view of history that can serve as a guide in your subsequent deliberations. She perceives history as a process that is people-based. History begins with the activities of people and must remain continuously allied to them. It assumes historical dimensions because people record it. It gains status from the measurement of people and attains value because people derive appropriate lessons from it and adapt those lessons to forging appropriate paths towards a better future. That paradigm and that reality is one that she commends to this gathering as a framework for your consideration and which it is my assigned but pleasant duty to convey to you all. As you proceed with your deliberations therefore, she urges that you approach your task as students of history in a deliberate, calculated but positive fashion that would enable the outcomes to produce spin-off and spill-over effects.

## ***Distinguished Representatives of Civil Society in Africa and Europe,***

The Africa-EU Partnership process began about six years ago in the context of shared values and aspirations along with a determination to transform our common history of a shared colonial heritage into a platform for productive dialogue and a support mechanism for Africa's development. Expectations were high and there was an atmosphere of common optimism. More significantly, there was a shared perspective that the structural transformation that the partnership was designed to put in place would be people-centered and people-driven, rather than just a government-to-government agenda.

Accordingly, the partnership would create, enlarge and sustain adequate space for active public and in particular, civil society involvement and active engagement in close and productive interaction with the other community of stakeholders, including parliaments, the private sector etc. The partnership recognized the importance of state parties but also emphasized the correlative importance of civil society and the need to create, nourish, enlarge and sustain civil society space as a necessary condition for success. Civil society was assigned duties and responsibilities along with other stakeholders in defining the agenda as well as program of implementation and offered independent and coordinate spaces for interaction in this process Civil was also given an autonomous sphere for ensuring the effectiveness of its own participation in the process that you will need to examine critically.

## ***Ladies and Gentlemen,***

As we now move towards setting the agenda for the next partnership cycle in preparation for the Africa-Europe Summit of April 2014, the imperative is to take stock of how things have gone, what went right, what went wrong, what needs to be discarded and what needs to be taken on board, what course to maintain and what course to adjust. This itself is an indication that the consolidation of the partnership as well as civil society role within it remains work in progress. The task is to evaluate progress made against opportunities, costs, alternatives and possibilities.

In this context, our expectation is that the framework of your assessment will be holistic and informed by the need to chart an appropriate way forward and would combine the wider needs of the partnership with the particularistic demands of civil society so that the partnership will move towards both without moving away from itself.

We recognize complaints that civil society has not fared as well as it wishes in this process and accept that this is an area for development. There is clearly a need to highlight the constraints and propose measures that would help to override them. There are other stakeholders such as the private sector that are similarly concerned. The rightful desire to ensure a more robust civil society engagement within the partnership process must be paired with the wider demands of the partnership process.

There is a need to marry the political dialogue component favored by the European side with the African emphasis on the partnership as one that must show clear developmental dividends that are of discernible benefit to the African people. There is concern about refining the operational structures of the partnership in a “mean and lean” fashion that balances the operational demands of both continents, the requirement of cost-effectiveness and reconciles the need to use existing formal structures within the regions with accommodating the need for flexibility through the employment of innovative structures and mechanisms that can respond to a people-centered approach. There are issues associated with demand for a better funding strategy that reconciles and accommodates the needs of all stakeholders and divides responsibility proportionately. There is a need to develop a management model that effectively reconciles the need for the different constituencies among stakeholders to work in closer and more effective interaction with each other.

Even so the responsibility of civil society to highlight the requirements and needs for its own effective participation in the process is one that you must also give particular attention because you are best placed to assess them and no other party will do it better on your own behalf.

## ***Distinguished Representatives of Civil Society,***

The overall demand on your assembly and gathering here is to be a both a party in itself, a party for itself as well as a party for the greater community of all stakeholders widely defined as the people of the continents of Africa and Europe. The array of expertise and skills gathered here gives us confidence that you will do this in a constructive and most appropriate fashion.

The African Union Commission looks forward eagerly to receiving the reports of your deliberations and promises to support recommendations, proposals, measures and strategies that will strengthen the Africa-EU partnership in a manner that will enable and accelerate the pace of delivery on its promises to the African people.

On this note, I thank you all for gathering here to promote and sustain the common cause of the people of Africa and Europe and wish us all together success in our deliberations as we work towards strengthening the Africa-EU partnership in preparation for the Africa-Europe Summit of April 2014.