

AFRICAN UNION

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STATEMENT BY

HER EXCELLENCY DR. NKOSAZANA DLAMINI ZUMA

CHAIRPERSON OF THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION

AT THE OPENING SESSION OF THE 3RD AFRICA-ARAB SUMMIT

TO CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

KUWAIT CITY, STATE OF KUWAIT

TUESDAY, 19 NOVEMBER 2013

Your Highness, Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmed Al Jabar Al Sabah, the Emir of the State of Kuwait and Chairperson of the Third Africa-Arab Summit,

Your Excellency, Mr. Hailemariam Dessalegn, Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia, Chairperson of the African Union and Co-Chairperson of the Third Africa-Arab Summit,

Your Excellency, Mr. Nouri Abou Sahmen, President of the General National Congress of Libya and Co-Chairperson of the 2nd Africa-Arab Summit,

Your Excellency, Mr. Ali Bongo Ondimba, President of the Republic of Gabon and Co-Chairperson of the 2nd Africa-Arab Summit,

Your Majesties and Highnesses,

Your Excellencies Heads of State and Government,

Your Excellency, Dr. Nabil Al Araby, Secretary General of the League of Arab States,

Your Excellency, Mr. Jan Eliasson, Deputy Secretary General of the United Nations,

Your Excellencies, Heads and Representatives of the Gulf Cooperation Council, the Arab Parliament, the World Bank, the Islamic Cooperation Organization, the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa, the African Development Bank, and other collaborative Arab and African Financial and Technical Organizations,

Representatives of International and Regional Organizations,

Your Excellency, Mr. Mwencha, Deputy Chairperson of the AU Commission,

Your Excellencies Heads of Delegations,

Distinguished Delegates,

Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

Invited Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

Let me start by expressing our heartfelt gratitude to His Highness the Amir of the State of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Jabar Al-Sabah, and to the Government and friendly people of Kuwait for the hospitality and warm reception accorded to our delegations since arrival in this great country.

We thank His Highness for his personal concern and unflinching commitment to the objectives of Africa-Arab solidarity. We follow with great admiration the initiatives that His Highness continuously unveils to consolidate the long-standing relations between Africa and the Arab world. The hosting of this Summit is a clear manifestation of this commitment.

Our gratitude also to all Heads of State and Government and Heads of Delegations of African and Arab Countries, the Guest of Honors and Heads of International and Regional Organizations, who are present here today.

We express appreciation to the two co-Chairpersons of the 2nd Afro-Summit, His Excellency the President of Gabon and His Excellency the President of the General National Congress of Libya, for their stewardship of this partnership that brought us together today.

Your Majesties and Highnesses,

Your Excellencies Heads of State and Government,

It is now more than 36 years since the first Afro-Arab Summit was held in Cairo, Egypt, in March 1977. This summit solidified the centuries-long history between the two regions and its peoples,

and moved our relations, solidarity and cooperation into new directions.

We are meeting today, in the year that Africa is celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Organisation of African Unity, now the African Union, which remains a major proponent of the goal of Afro-Arab unity. This unity today takes place in a world that has changed dramatically since 1977, and with equally dramatic changes in our respective regions.

As Africa celebrates its Golden Jubilee, we are determined to bequeath to the next generations a continent that is integrated, peaceful and prosperous.

The available data positions Africa as a new growth pole, where returns on investments in virtually every sector - from infrastructure to ICT, and from retail, health to manufacturing - are higher than any other part of the world.

A number of mega trends are also in our favour. Africa's population is set to double in the next few decades, its middle class is growing exponentially, it is rapidly urbanising and it has a young population. We are the only continent whose working age population as proportion of the total population is set to grow rather than shrink.

Over half of our population are women, and we know that the empowerment of women brings about multiplying social, economic and political benefits not only to families and communities, but also to countries and regions.

Africa remains well-endowed with mineral, energy and other natural resources, such as maritime, land, water and forests.

We are determined to make the positive trajectory that we are currently on irreversible, to build an Africa that is prosperous and peaceful and that takes its rightful place in the world.

Amongst our Pan African priorities are therefore the scaling up of investment in a healthy and skilled population, in infrastructure: transport (road, rail, aviation and shipping), energy, ICT, water, sanitation and other economic and social infrastructure; diversification of our economies, beneficiation of our natural resources; and expanding agriculture and agro-processing.

We have in common our young populations, who if we invest in their skills, education, health care, and provide them with opportunities for economic and social participation; will be the drivers of our collective innovation, creativity and prosperity.

We can also learn from the countries of this region, who over a short space of time used its natural resources to modernize

economies, expand infrastructure, develop your people and build shared prosperity.

Your Majesties and Highnesses,

Your Excellencies Heads of State and Government,

As developing countries, Africa and the Arab region share a common past and future. Over the last decade, the two regions experienced progress, but at the same time we have experienced conflicts, aggression and terrorism, with terrible consequences on our people, especially women, children and the elderly.

In the face of these challenges, like in 1977, the two regions must continue to strengthen their cooperation and jointly tackle common concerns, using our different comparative advantages to build a partnership based on mutual respect and solidarity.

We must in this regard reaffirm our support for the latest negotiations between Palestine and Israel.

We are confident that the preparatory work done by our Officials and by the meetings of Ministers, encapsulated in the draft Declaration, lays a solid foundation for Africa-Arab cooperation around issues of peace, human security and migration; around trade, investment, infrastructure and agriculture; and more generally on political, social and cultural cooperation.

We must continue to build links amongst our respective regional organisations, our governments and states, our financial institutions, private sectors, civil society, cultural and educational institutions.

I would therefore like to assure Your Highnesses and Excellencies of Africa's commitment to spare no effort to implement the decisions of this Summit and further advance its

cooperation with Arab partners toward the realization of the aspirations of our peoples.

I thank you very much and wish the 3rd Africa-Arab Summit a resounding success.