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OPENING REMARKS

BY

**H.E. DR. MUSTAPHA S. KALOKO
COMMISSIONER SOCIAL AFFAIRS**

**AT THE FIFTH SESSION OF THE AU CONFERENCE OF
MINISTERS OF SPORTS (CAMS5)**

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Protocol

I am highly honoured to address the 5th Session of the AU Conference of Ministers of Sports. On behalf of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, H.E. Dr Dlamini Nkosazana Zuma, I wish to express the sincere appreciation of the African Union Commission to the Government of the Republic of Cote d'Ivoire for hosting this 5th Session of the AU Conference of Ministers of Sports in this historic and hospitable city of Abidjan and for the generous hospitality extended to all delegations and participants.

Allow me to also express my appreciation to all the Hon. Ministers, Heads of Delegation, and Experts who are present here, for sparing time to attend this Fifth Session. Your presence at this conference is a testimony of commitment and your interest for Sport, as well as your determination to put the torch of African Sport on a high pedestal.

Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen

The theme for the Fifth Session of the AU Conference of Ministers of Sport is “***Harnessing the power of sport to contribute to the broader government development agenda***”. The session is taking place at a time when Africa is celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the OAU/AU with the theme “***Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance***”. The year-long celebration provides us with a unique opportunity to reflect, take stock of the key milestones of the past 50 years and project into the next 50 years of the kind of Africa we want for the coming generations. As Ministers of Sport and members of the Africa Sport Movement, we must reflect on the roles and the achievements of sports in the past 50 years. We must also reflect on how we can take sport to the greatest height on the continent while harnessing its power and multiplier effects to the development of the continent in the next 50 years i.e. in the context of the post 2015 Development Agenda and the African Union Agenda 2063.

In the last 50 years, Africa has used sport as a tool for decolonization and liberation of the continent, as well as a veritable weapon in the fight against apartheid. With sport we can raise up our heads and say Never! Never! Again to all forms of racial discrimination and intolerance. Of course, there other success stories that are too numerous to highlight here, as we are all aware of the exceptional performances and the exploits of African sport women and men at major international sports events. As we celebrate recorded successes, we must also recognize

our failures, particularly our inability to quickly adapt to changing times, so as to ensure the sustainability of our successes.

Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen

The last 20 years has witnessed the ever growing popularity of sports and its competitiveness in Africa, as well as, on the international scene. At the same time, the Supreme Council for Sport in Africa (SCSA) which is the major Forum available for a concerted action by Member States for the promotion and development of sport in Africa lacked the capacity to implement any sports development programmes or had any meaningful cooperation with continental and international sport organizations. In effect, Africa sport was not prepared to meet the challenges of the 21st century, particularly sport development and the use of sport as a tool for development on the continent.

This has begun to take its toll on the performance of African athletes at major international sport events. Since the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games, there has been a noticeable decline in the performance of African countries as reflected in the number of medals won at the Olympic Games including the London Olympics of 2012, and they have also continued to perform below expected standard at other international sports events. Although many factors could be advanced for the declining performance of African countries at the Olympic Games, allow me to make particular reference to two of them here:

- There are no systematic approaches to fostering and determining success and maximizing performance in sport. Common strategies are more hazard and predictions for success are speculative. These unsystematic approaches lead to wastage of resources and learned hopelessness among athletes and spectators in spite of abundant talent.
- Africa is the only continent where the Regional Games (All African Games) are not qualifier for the Olympic Games.

Honorable Ministers, I shall leave you with four questions to reflect upon in the course of this conference:

- Why should governments incur double expenditure to prepare their national teams for the African and Olympic Games qualifier tournaments?

- Why doesn't the All African Games in its current form attract top African athletes?
- Why doesn't the All African Games in its current form attract quality marketing, revenue, sponsorship in spite of Africa having the best talent in the world?
- Why is it that developed and rich countries in other continents are enticing young African Athletes to change their nationalities so that they could represent those countries at international sporting events?

Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen

African Renaissance implies restoring Africa's greatness. Before the disruptions of slavery, colonialism, and apartheid, Africa had great empires and was renowned in Astronomy, Medicine and other fields of human endeavour. As we project into the next 50 years, we as Africans, are determined to take ownership of our polity, establish well-functioning sport system on the continent that will be flexible enough to adapt to changes and new realities, as well as facilitating the implementation of Vision and Mission of the AU and to meet the sport challenges of the 21st century.

The contribution that sport can make to the socio-economic development and renaissance of the African continent is multi-faceted. Sport is increasingly being recognized as a tool for supporting development efforts throughout the world. Since sport plays an important role in society, governments and other development actors should not view it as a cost, but rather an investment. Sport is a low-cost investment with great impact on the future and provides a strategic intervention and opportunity to shape Africa's future.

Furthermore, sports can also be a tool to reduce the high youth unemployment and the abundant energy of the youth can be channeled through sports to positive uses. We can also use sports as a tool for social mobilization to get messages across to the people such as malaria control and eradication, HIV/AIDS prevention, violence against women, human trafficking and message of peace among others.

For almost 10 years the Ministers of Sport have been trying to re-position the management and organization of sport in Africa so that it can contribute to broader Continental and National agenda. It is in this context that you the Honorable Ministers of Sport at the 4th session of

your Conference in 2011 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, adopted a new Architecture for Sport in Africa as a continental strategy and framework aimed at ensuring synergy and better coordination and management of sport on the continent. The new Sport Architecture is also envisaged to promote coordination and harmonization between the different Sports stakeholders in Africa and International Sports Organizations including strategic partnership with Members of the African Sport Movement to promote sport for development in Africa. There is no doubt that the new Architecture has set the tone for the transformation and re-positioning of sport on the continent and makes it a tool for development and integration.

At the African Union Commission, we have commenced the implementation of the new Architecture for sports as directed by the AU Assembly and Executive Council. We have undertaken among other actions the following:

- A separate Sport Division in the Department of Social Affairs of the AUC has been established to address issues relating to sport policy on the continent.
- Re-organization of the 7 Sport Development Zones into 5 Sport Development Regions in line with AU Geographic Regions as contained in the new sport architecture;
- Build capacity of the AU Sport Development Regions and mobilize them to develop Strategic Plans, organize Regional Games and that participation in the Regional games be a pre-condition for participation in the African Games, including setting up of a Secretariat where there is none;
- Finalized the MOU with the ANOCA and AASC as directed by the AU Executive Council and ensure that African Games serve as qualifier for the Olympic Games.
- I am also aware that questions have been raised by many stakeholders regarding the institution that will take over the functions of the SCSA once dissolved. In this regard, I am glad to report that the Commission through the Permanent Representative Committee (PRC) has approved the establishment of a Specialized Technical Office under the AUC. The PRC has also approved the operational and programme budgets for the Technical Office to coordinate and handle technical and operational aspects of sport development and development for sport in Africa;

There are other key aspects of the Architecture that the Commission has not been able to implement. This is because the Commission can only go as far as the Member States represented by the Honorable Ministers want us. There are important decisive decisions and actions that need to be taken by this Conference and at the Special Session of the Assembly of the Supreme Council for Sport in Africa (SCSA) taking place tomorrow in order to kick start the transformation of sport in Africa. A situation whereby Honorable Ministers took vital decisions at the Conference of Ministers of Sport that were duly endorsed by the AU Assembly and the Executive Council and for the same Ministers to condone the frustration of these decisions at the Assembly of SCSA, cannot and does not, augur well for sport on the continent. I call on you Honorable Ministers to be decisive in the interest of Africa. The African Union Commission (AUC) Is waiting.

Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen

As we continue the year-long 50th Anniversary celebration of our organization, I want to appreciate the role sporting organizations have played particularly the Confederation of African Football (CAF) in the celebrations. CAF dedicated the entire 2013 AFCON to celebrate Africa at 50. My warm congratulations to Nigeria who emerged as champions of Africa. CAF also organized a special international friendly between Ethiopia and Sudan on 25th May 2013 – Africa Day. Congratulation to Ethiopia that won the match.

As we look forward to next 50 years, how do we envisage sports on the continent in 2063? How do we restore the glory that Africa once had in sport? Time for declarations is over. It is time for action. Africa's time is now!!!

I wish you successful deliberations.

