

Opening Remarks

By

H.E. Ambassador Kongit Sinigiorgis

**Permanent Representative of Ethiopia to the African
Union and UNECA and Chairperson of the Permanent
Representatives Committee**

At

**The 26th ordinary session of the Permanent
Representatives Committee**

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Addis Ababa

Excellency Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, Chairperson of the African Union Commission,

Excellency Mr. Erastus Mwencha, Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission,

Excellencies Permanent Representatives of member States,

Excellencies Commissioners,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to start by welcoming those delegations who joined us from the various capitals to attend our 26th ordinary session. Let me take this opportunity to express my warmest congratulations to all of you on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee celebration of the OAU/AU. This is indeed a defining moment for our continental organization as we reflect on how far we have come and chart our vision for the future.

This occasion is particularly significant for me personally as I am also celebrating more than half a century of my diplomatic service together with the Golden Jubilee of the OAU/AU. Therefore,

it gives me great pleasure and honour to preside over the work of this important organ of the African Union at the end of my diplomatic career and at the time when we are celebrating a historic milestone in the life of our continental organization. I must say, reaching this stage was no easy feat and it required a lot of hard work and personal sacrifice. But at the end of the day, I feel very honoured and privileged to have served my country and contribute, in a minute way, to the cause of Africa.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Exactly fifty years ago, when the Addis Ababa Conference was held in May 1963, I was a young diplomat tasked with the responsibility of distributing documents to the assembled Heads of State and Government and other delegations. I was, therefore, privileged to witness history in the making and I still vividly remember the great sense of joy and enthusiasm when the OAU Charter was finally signed by 32 African Heads of State and Government.

Of course, we all know that the last fifty years have been fraught with so many challenges but, through it all, we are very proud of our achievements. Fifty years ago, much of Africa was still under the yoke of colonialism and Apartheid. Today, it is gratifying to note that our continent has been liberated from all forms of subjugations. The major task ahead of us is, therefore, to achieve the socio-economic emancipation of our continent. I hope the current and future generations of Africans will rise up to the challenge and work very hard to realize the dreams of our Founding Fathers for a peaceful, prosperous and united Africa.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There are a number of critical issues that we need to finalize in the course of the next two days of our meeting. In relation to the Golden Jubilee celebration, we will consider the draft Proclamation, which will be adopted by the 21st ordinary session of the Assembly. In accordance with the decision of PRC at one of our previous meetings to constitute a small committee comprised of representatives from each region to work on the draft proclamation

together with the Commission, I am sure they will submit to us a new draft for our consideration.

As you would recall, the Strategic Plan of the African Union for the years 2014-2017 was adopted by the 14th extraordinary session of the Executive Council held on 8 April 2013. Since there were a number of comments and suggestions made by our Ministers during the extraordinary session, we will have the opportunity to review the latest version of the Strategic Plan before it is finalized and submitted for endorsement by the 21st ordinary session of the Assembly.

As you are well aware, the Commission has also submitted a detailed draft budget for the year 2014 based on the Strategic Plan of the African Union adopted by our Ministers. In this regard, the relevant Sub-Committees of the PRC have held a retreat in Mombassa and thoroughly deliberated on the draft budget. Therefore, we will consider the draft budget together with the report of the Sub-Committees and their recommendations for subsequent adoption by our Ministers.

As we have already considered the report of the Commission on the Post-2015 Development Agenda together with the African Common Position on the issue and the modalities for the establishment of a committee of Heads of State and Government, these are the major issues that we will discuss during the next two days.

With your usual cooperation, I hope we will be able to finalize our work as expeditiously as possible. I conclude my remarks by wishing all of us a fruitful deliberation.

I thank you