

Check against Delivery

Remarks

By

H.E. Mr. Hailemariam Dessalegn

**Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of
Ethiopia and Chairperson of the African Union**

At

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State and Government of the African Union**

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***Excellencies Heads of State and Government,
Excellency Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, Chairperson of
the African Union Commission,
Distinguished delegates,
Inviting Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,***

I am delighted to welcome you once again to the headquarters of our Union for the 22nd ordinary session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government. I would like to recognize H.E. Mr. Laurent Salvador Lamothe, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Haiti for being here with us as a Guest of Honour representing his President H.E. Mr. Michel Martelly. I wish to, on behalf of all of you, welcome the Prime Minister to our Summit.

We are holding our Summit under the theme "Agriculture and Food Security" marking the 10th anniversary of CAADP - one of our flagship projects aimed at achieving agricultural transformation in Africa. This is the time to celebrate the progress made over the past decade in implementing the goals

and objectives set by CAADP and renew our commitment to do more in the coming years and decades. In this regard, I am indeed very pleased to note that more and more countries are allocating 10% of their national budget to the agricultural sector. The transformation of agriculture holds the key to the success of our collective efforts to realize our vision.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It was indeed a great honour and privilege for me to have presided over the work of our Union for the last one year. I would like to thank you all most profoundly for the opportunity that you have given me and my country to serve in this high office. I am particularly indebted to each and every one of you for all the support and cooperation that you have rendered to me over the last one year, which has indeed been invaluable in the discharge of my heavy responsibilities.

You would recall that when I took over the chairmanship last January, I had briefly outlined my priorities in advancing the objectives of our Union. Today, I am pleased to note that we have covered a lot of ground in implementing those priorities and move our continental agenda forward.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Top on the priorities of my Chairmanship over the last one year was, of course, the Golden Jubilee celebration of the OAU/AU. It is a happy coincidence that Ethiopia assumed the rotating chairmanship of the Union at this historic moment, which has a special significance for my country as a proud host of our continental organization for the last 50 years. Therefore, we have worked closely together with the Commission, member States and all other relevant stakeholders to mark this historic milestone by undertaking a collective reflection of our past, present and future under the overarching theme of "***Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance***".

In the 50th Anniversary solemn declaration that we have adopted in our 21st ordinary session, we pledged to act together with our peoples and the African Diaspora to realize our vision of Pan Africanism and the African Renaissance. We should, therefore, remain true to our commitment as we strive to achieve a better future for our peoples.

***Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,***

We have been celebrating the Golden Jubilee of our continental organization at a time when multilateral negotiations have started in earnest to formulate a global development framework for the post 2015 era. As we participate in this process, it is imperative for us to ensure that the progress made thus far in achieving the Millennium Development Goals is sustained and that Africa's development priorities are fully taken on board in the post-2015 Development Agenda as well as in the formulation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

All this is with the view to speaking with one voice on the basis of an African Common Position on an issue which is currently perhaps the most important process with respect to defining the nature of international development cooperation for the next decades. In this context, you would recall that I had proposed the establishment of a committee of African Heads of State and Government to lead the efforts in canvassing support for Africa's development priorities in the context of the post-2015 development agenda.

I am pleased to note that the Committee has indeed been discharging its responsibilities. The committee under the able chairmanship of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has been working to finalize the common African position which will be submitted to this Assembly for its consideration and adoption. Let me take this opportunity to express my appreciation to President Sirleaf for her leadership in this effort. Of course, since the negotiation on the formulation of Sustainable Development Goals is going to commence in March 2014, it is

absolutely critical that we make the necessary advance at this Summit so that we have our common position before March.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The past one year has also witnessed enhanced cooperation and partnership between Africa and its strategic partners. In this regard, the 3rd Africa-South America Summit, the 5th Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD V), the 3rd Afro-Arab Summit and the 12th Annual AGOA Forum have been held successfully. These partnership forums served as an excellent platform to advance our development agenda and further strengthen our partnerships with a view to ensuring mutual benefit and win-win cooperation.

In the context of promoting Africa's collective voice and enhance its visibility on the international stage, we have participated at the United Nations Climate Change Conference

in Warsaw (COP-19) and delivered Africa's key messages with regard to the ongoing global climate change negotiations. We have also participated at the G-8 and G-20 Summits held in Northern Ireland and St. Petersburg, respectively, and advanced our continental development agenda. It is in this spirit that we look forward to the upcoming Africa-EU Summit due to be held in April this year.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The issue of peace and security has been our major preoccupation during the past one year. While I am encouraged to note the progress that we have made in resolving some of the conflict situations in our continent, I am nevertheless deeply concerned by the emergence of new conflicts which, if not addressed urgently, will have a potential to seriously threaten our collective peace and security and undermine the gains that we have made in recent years.

I am referring here to the unfolding situation in South Sudan and Central African Republic. We need to find urgent solution to rescue these two sisterly countries from falling into the abyss. Failure to do so will have serious implications for peace and security in the region and indeed the whole continent. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to help these two fragile African States in restoring peace and stability and addressing their internal challenges.

With regard to the situation in South Sudan, both protagonists should know that the problem cannot be resolved through the barrel of the gun. Therefore, they should be fully committed to seat at the negotiating table without any preconditions so as to find a political settlement to the crisis. We all know that this new African State has made tremendous sacrifices to gain its independence and the South Sudanese political actors should rise to the occasion and avoid the country from falling into the precipice.

It is imperative that the peace process initiated by IGAD and supported by the African Union, the United Nations and all other international partners succeeds and the parties demonstrate the necessary political leadership and compromise to achieve peace and durable reconciliation. Let me underscore here that the rest of the international community should continue to put its weight behind the regional effort to find a peaceful solution to the situation in South Sudan. I cannot emphasize enough the need for unity of purpose among all of us and the international community at large in sending the same message to all the south Sudanese stakeholders so as to achieve the desired result.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The situation in Central African Republic remains a matter of concern particularly the senseless violence that has taken a heavy toll on the civilian population. Hence, it was

crucial to take urgent action to avert the further escalation of the peace and security situation in that country.

We are all aware of the daunting challenges ahead of the African-led Peace Support Mission in Central African Republic (MISCA) in terms of assisting Central African Republic in restoring peace and security and ensuring a successful transition towards a constitutional order in that country. The international community should remain fully committed to support the Central African Republic in its difficult task of stabilizing itself and organizing elections to ensure a successful political transition.

I wish to commend the African Union Commission for organizing a Donor's Conference on 1 February 2014, in collaboration with the United Nations to mobilize the necessary financial support to MISCA. I wish to call upon member States to demonstrate African solidarity and contribute to the efforts aimed at stabilizing Central African Republic.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Several African States have conducted legislative and presidential elections last year. Those elections have certainly helped some member States to come out of their political crisis and others to consolidate their democratic governance. I welcome the restoration of constitutional order in Mali. ECOWAS, the African Union, the United Nations and other partners should continue to support Mali in consolidating the gains made thus far and enabling the country address its multifaceted challenges.

I also wish to commend the people of Madagascar for conducting a successful presidential election, which is critical in ending the country's political crisis. In the same vein, we look forward to the holding of elections in Guinea Bissau in March 2014, which will facilitate the restoration of constitutional order in that country. I would like to express my appreciation to ECOWAS and other international partners for

their sustained efforts in supporting Guinea Bissau to come out of its political crisis.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

With regard to the work of our Commission, we have adopted the Strategic Plan for the years 2014-2017 that took into account the lessons learnt from the achievements and challenges of the previous strategic plan and adequately reflected the views of member States and all other relevant stakeholders. We need to mobilize all the necessary efforts of member States, the Commission and other organs of our Union to ensure the implementation of the eight priorities identified in the strategic plan so as to make a difference in the lives of our peoples.

As part of the Golden Jubilee celebration, the Commission together with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and the African Development Bank has been in the

process of elaborating the framework for Agenda 2063 through a consultative process involving all sections of the African society. Our Ministers have also deliberated on the draft framework document during their retreat a few days ago. At this Summit, we will have the opportunity to examine the draft and make our own inputs and contributions. I believe the Framework will guide our efforts over the coming years and decades as we strive to achieve the socio-economic transformation of our continent.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I believe we need to build on the progress that we have achieved in the past year and exert more efforts to address some of the emerging challenges confronting our continent. Let me congratulate my successor, H.E. Mr. Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania and pledge my full support as he continues to work on these issues and advance the objectives of our Union. I would like to express

my very best wishes to him in the successful discharge of his heavy responsibilities.

Finally, I wish to once again express my heartfelt thanks to Your Excellencies, the Heads of State and Government of the African Union. I am also very grateful to Chairperson Zuma and her team for facilitating my work over the past one year. Furthermore, I wish to express my appreciation to all those who, in one way or another, have contributed to the successful discharge of my responsibilities.

I conclude my remarks by wishing a happy and prosperous 2014, as we strive to achieve our collective vision - a peaceful, integrated and prosperous Africa.

I thank you