

**Speech by His Excellency Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz,
President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania and
Chairperson of the African Union**

at

**the 22th ordinary session of the Assembly of Heads of
State and Government of the African Union**

Addis Ababa, January 30-31, 2014

Your Excellency Park Geun-Hye, President of the Republic of Korea, Guest of Honor,

Your Excellencies and Brothers Heads of State and Government of the African countries,

Your Excellency Haile Mariam Dessalegn, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia,

Your Excellency Mahmoud Abass, President of the State of Palestine, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Organization for Liberation of Palestine,

Your Excellencies Heads of Delegations,

Your Excellencies First Ladies,

Your Excellency Ban Ki-Moon, Secretary General of the United Nations,

Your Excellency Nabil al-Arabi, Secretary General of the Arab League,

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

Your Excellencies Ministers,

Your Excellencies Ambassadors, Heads of Diplomatic and Consular Missions and Representatives Of international organizations,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my distinct pleasure to convey to you my heartfelt congratulations and best wishes on the occasion of the New Year 2014 and to hope that our dear continent enjoys peace, progress and prosperity.

It is also dear to my heart to pay tribute to the memory of the illustrious son of Africa, the advocate of freedom and the great Wise Man of the continent, late Nelson Mandela, Former President of South Africa, who has left us last year.

I would also like to welcome Her Excellency Park Geun-Hye, Peresident of the Republic of Korea, whose presence among us today confirms the political will

of the African and Asian leaders to strengthen the existing ties of friendship and cooperation between the peoples of Africa and Asia.

I too wish to extend my thanks and gratitude to His Excellency Ban Ki-Moon, Secretary General of the United Nations, for his tireless efforts to preserve peace and security in Africa and promote development.

I welcome the presence among us of his Excellency Mahmoud Abass, president of the State of Palestine, and Chairman of the Executive Committee of the organization for the Liberation of Palestine, Which illustrates the support of the African Union to the fair cause of the Palestinian people.

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to greet and congratulate, on your behalf, our Brothers Heads of State who were recently elected Presidents in their respective countries:

His Excellency Mr. Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, President of the Republic Of Mali

HIS Excellency Hey Rajaonarimampianina, President of the Republic of Madagascar

His Excellency Hassan Sheikh Mahmoud, President of the Republic of Somalia,

I would like to express our full support and solidarity with their brotherly countries.

Allow me also to express my congratulations to the people and Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo for the peace agreement signed recently and to the Tunisian people for the political agreement that will entail, I am convinced, the adoption of a constitution guaranteeing political stability. I also wish to welcome the Ndjamená Summit conclusions which allowed launching the process of transition in the brotherly Central African Republic, which shall help restore peace and security.

Your Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to express, on your behalf, our sincere thanks and deep appreciation to His Excellency Haile Mariam Dessalegn, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia for the remarkable work accomplished during his tenure as Chairperson of the African Union. He has contributed brilliantly to strengthen the role of Africa on both continental and international levels. It is also my pleasure to express to His Excellency, and through him, to the brotherly people and Government of Ethiopia our thanks and gratitude for the warm welcome and generous hospitality extended to us since our arrival in this beautiful capital, Addis-Ababa.

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I take this opportunity to express to my brothers and colleagues, Head of State and Government, my utmost appreciation for their tireless efforts so that our continent takes its rightful place. I welcome the honorable record made by the team of the African Union Commission, under the leadership of Her Excellency Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, who worked with courage and dedication to improve the performance of this great institution. I would like to express to her my esteem and total support.

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to convey my sincere thanks and deep gratitude to their Excellencies and Brothers African Heads of State who did me the honor of being the Chairperson of the African Union. This is for me a mark of confidence which I truly appreciate. I also wish to address my Brothers, North African Heads of State, to express my deep gratitude and appreciation for their support.

I decided to accept the honor of presiding over the destiny of our continental organization, in order to achieve together during this term, the noble objectives to which our peoples aspire, including the strengthening of the role and place of Africa in the world, the preservation of its unity in the context of its rich diversity, the consolidation of democracy, freedom, peace, security, stability and good governance for a better life. This will allow us to move forward with confidence on the path initiated by the great African leaders who have carried the torch of our continent and held it high for the successive future generations. Among these leaders was late President Moktar Ould Daddah, former Head of State of Mauritania, one of the founders of the Organization of African Unity and its Chairperson in 1971. To all of these distinguished precursors, I extend our deepest gratitude and sincere feelings of respect.

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The creation of the Organization of African Unity on May 25th , 1963, at the time of the joyful accession to independence of the countries concerned, had raised tremendous expectations of unity, freedom, democracy and sustainable development among the African peoples. The creation of the African Union in 1999 was the expression of the African leaders' commitment to revitalize the role of our organization with a view to respond to the new continental and global challenges, in particular the issues of security, economic and social development.

Despite the great efforts made at the level of each country to meet the current challenges and given the nature of some trans-boundary threats, it is important today to develop continental approaches allowing uniting our efforts and those of our international partners. This requires that our continent takes its rightful place on the international scene, particularly in the Security Council of the UN.

I would like to propose to hold a major international conference, under the auspices of the African Union, devoted to migration and its impact on African economies and societies as well as the countries of destination, to draw up a shared vision on this phenomenon and to minimize its tragic dimension.

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Preserving the environment and ensuring that food security no longer represent only a legitimate aspiration for our countries, but constitute compelling objectives due to the recurrent food crises and negative impacts of climate change. To achieve these goals, our countries should combine their efforts in order to increase cultivated areas and improve productivity through the modernization of rural infrastructure, the promotion of agricultural research and popularization of the most efficient farming techniques. This is the context of our present Summit theme: "The Year of agriculture and food security".

The immense potentials of the African continent, particularly in the areas of energy and agriculture, are capable of changing radically the live of the inhabitants in our continent, through cooperation between the riparian countries of the rivers and lakes and the joint management of water resources. In this context, the Organization for the Development of the Senegal River (OMVS) is regarded as an exemplary model because of its many hydroelectric and agricultural achievements that have helped making decisive steps on the path to food self-sufficiency in West African countries.

Our countries should also pay more attention to the livestock sector for its important role in food security, the development of the rural economy and the fight against poverty.

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In Order to accelerate the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in the area of health, we must continue to fight against the epidemic and endemic diseases, deal efficiently with the pandemic of ADS and reinforce progress in the field of mother and child health.

I wish here to express the availability of Mauritania to host the Secretariat of the "Campaign for Accelerated Reduction of Maternal Mortality in Africa", commonly known by its acronym "CARMMA".

You Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The attention given to the African youth is a strategic bet, because this youth account for about two-thirds of the continent's population. Their creative energies must be channeled to be a powerful leverage for peace security and sustainable development; this youth should also be supervised in their authentic African values through proper training that facilitates their integration in the employment market and entrepreneurship. Failure to account for the aspiration of the African youth has the potential to create despair which can, in turn, transform our youth into an easy prey for criminal networks and negative exploitation at the expense of the cohesion of our societies and their stability.

Our countries are expected to implement population policies which allow us to better benefit from demographic features.

You Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to reiterate my sincere thanks and deep gratitude to their Excellencies, Heads of State and Government and our distinguished guests and to wish every success to the work of this Summit with a view to achieving the objectives that the African peoples aspire to;

Long live the African Union!

Long live Africa, free and prosperous!

I thank you.