

**Excellency Maky Sall, President of the Republic of Senegal,
Excellencies heads of state and government,
Excellency Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, Chairperson of the AU
Commission,
Excellency Dr. Ibrahim Mayaki, Chief Executive Officer of
NEPAD
Ladies and gentlemen**

First and foremost, on behalf of the African Union, the Government and People of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, I would like to welcome you all to Addis Ababa and extend my best wishes for a productive 30th session of the NEPAD Heads of State and Government Orientation Committee. I would also like to express my heartfelt gratitude to President Maky Sall for his leadership and commitment. It is also my hope and expectation that in this session we will be able to raise a number of issues of far-reaching importance to our continent in the context of the priority areas of NEPAD and take stock of the challenges we have and continue to face in our collective efforts to carry through the implementation of our continent-level programmes.

**Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen**

NEPAD has undoubtedly transformed the global debate about Africa by putting front and center the notion of the need for the continent to forge mutually beneficial partnership with the developed and emerging nations. It was due in large part to the

principled position of the NEPAD leadership of the last decade or so that Africa was able to articulate its common stance on issues of governance and development and pursue a path of global partnership that primarily focuses on finding ways and means of making the best out of the continent's factor endowments and other opportunities in a strict departure from engagements that had otherwise consigned Africa a net recipient of foreign aid without any meaningful say whatsoever on its priorities. The journey of the last decade has indeed been particularly rewarding for Africa though, obviously, a lot remains to be done in this regard.

That is of course why we should continue to further enhance Africa's collective endeavor to find ways and means to address the seemingly perennial economic, social and political challenges that our continent faces and do so in a manner that will ensure the promotion of the interest of our peoples. Among the many issues that we will address this morning, the question of how to make good on our commitment to enhance infrastructural integration throughout Africa will undoubtedly be of utmost priority.

It is important that we look into the progress made on the NEPAD initiatives such as the Presidential Infrastructure Initiatives (PICI). This session will also provide us with the opportunity to hear the 2013 activity based report and look into the 2014-2017 Strategic Plan of the NEPAD Agency. I would like to take this opportunity to thank on behalf of myself and of the AU Dr. Ibrahim Mayaki, CEO of the NEPAD Agency, for his excellent leadership and exemplary commitment.

**Excellencies heads of state and government,
Ladies and gentlemen**

Another Important issue to be addressed is an assessment of the impact and future of Africa's partnership engagements with our traditional partners as well as emerging ones. In doing so, it is important that we are mindful of the need to remain focused on making the best out of our partnerships and the promotion of the interest of our continent as an absolute priority. It is therefore imperative that we improve on past weaknesses while building on our achievements. In this regard, the need to bring on board newly emerging players whose partnership would go a long way in further solidifying the gains that NEPAD has made possible for the continent cannot be overemphasized.

While appraising and taking stock of the progress thus far made, we should also focus on unblocking policy, legislative and regulatory challenges that are standing in the way of enhancing investment in infrastructure. Attention also needs to be paid to the issue of mobilizing domestic financial resources in our quest to realize the ambitious infrastructure development goals that we have set ourselves. We will hear from distinguished personalities on how best to address these and other challenges. It is my hope and expectation that we will conclude this session more invigorated, more enlightened and with a measure of clarity about our objectives.

As I conclude, I would like to once again thank all those who have done their best to keep NEPAD ever more focused on its priorities. It is my hope and wish that we have productive deliberations.

I thank you.