

AFRICAN UNION

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**Statement by Her Excellency Dr. Nkosazana
Dlamini Zuma, Chairperson of the African Union
Commission, to the Twenty-fourth Ordinary
Session of the Executive Council**

Addis Ababa, 27th January, 2014.

Your Excellency, Dr Tedros Adhanom, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and Chairperson of the Executive Council;

Honourable Ministers, Members of the Executive Council;

Your Excellency, Dr. Carlos Lopez, UN Economic Commission for Africa;

Your Excellency, Dr. Kaberuka, President of the African Development Bank;

The Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Mr Erastus Mwencha;

The Commissioners of the African Union Commission;

Your Excellencies Ambassadors, Members of the Permanent Representatives Committee;

Your Excellencies, Executive Secretaries of the Regional Economic Communities;

Your Excellencies, leadership of AU Organs,

Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps and Representatives of International Organisations and all our Partners;

Distinguished Invited Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are honoured, once again, to welcome you to this 24th ordinary session of the Executive Council, which will take stock of work done and deliberate on issues important to our Continent. Let me also take this opportunity to wish all Ethiopians, a happy St Gabriel's day.

This is the first Executive Council that takes place in the first year of the second fifty years of our Union, and will lay the foundation for 2063.

I also want to welcome back the Malagasy delegation, who after a long suspension is rejoining our family.

Having just concluded our Anniversary year, held under the theme *Pan Africanism and African Renaissance*, we are looking towards the future, a future we are building today.

Our collective reflections during 2013 on the experiences and lessons from the broad Pan African movement, pointed towards the importance of clarity of purpose and unity in action to achieve our common goals.

As that eminent Pan Africanist, who sadly left us last year, Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela used to say: *'it is impossible, until it is done.'* I am sure we can do the impossible.

During 2013 we not only looked back, but we also looked towards the future and what must be done to realize our vision of "an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena".

We did this through our consultations on Agenda 2063, and posing the questions to Africans from all walks of life and formations: *What Africa do we want? How do we build this Africa? And lastly, What role will we play towards the realization of this dream?*

Excellencies, we just emerged from the Bahir Dar retreat of the Executive Council, which we will report on during the course of this Ordinary session. Our Foreign Ministers during three days of spirited engagements also grappled with these questions – what is the Africa we want, and how do we build it?

The AU Commission and the various AU Organs and Committees, in reports to this Summit on our work during 2013, will no doubt respond to the question of how we contribute towards the building of the Africa we want.

The Executive Council at this session will elect new members to the Peace and Security Council of the African Union. It will also discuss the various items proposed by Member States.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, Fellow Africans

Looking ahead towards 2014, which is the first year of the next fifty years of our Union, there are a number of critical matters facing us, which must be done this year.

Firstly, we are presenting the Agenda 2063 Framework document to this Summit, to be followed by national consultations and feedback in each of our Member States. In addition, we should also complete the technical work on the framework, further consultations and widespread popularization of the Framework.

On behalf of the Commission, we thank everyone who during 2013 responded to the call of defining the Africa they want: from the Girl Guides to the All Africa Council of Churches, business persons, young people, women, trade unions, students, intellectuals, the list goes on.

There is still a big window of opportunity for further inputs, and we again call on all Africans and peoples of African descent in the Diaspora to contribute to this call of defining the Africa they want.

We must ensure that by the time the Summit in July adopts the Framework, it reflects views from all countries and sectors of our continent, and that Agenda 2063 indeed becomes our lodestar of action.

Excellencies,

2014 is “The Year of Agriculture and Food Security” and we shall also mark the 10th Anniversary of the adoption of the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP).

For Africa to ensure sustained and inclusive growth of 7% and higher, agriculture and agro-processing are critical, since it constitutes a large part of the GDP’s of our continent. The CAADP goals of increasing agricultural investment and productivity, of growing agro-business and value chains, of expanding infrastructure, skills and research for agriculture, are all part of what needs to be done for this year.

We must also take practical steps to ensure that Africa’s has a greater say on the pricing of our agricultural goods and products.

In particular, we will take special measures to ensure that women, who are the largest part of the agricultural work force and food producers, have access to training and capital, and are supported to form cooperatives, marketing structures and agribusinesses. Without this push, we will not succeed in this much needed African agrarian revolution.

The Commission will therefore during this year, in all the work that it does, focus on these matters, working with other continental bodies

such as the UNECA and the African Development Bank, with Regional Economic Communities, Member States, Civil society and others.

Excellencies

Africa during 2014 will continue to carve its rightful place in the world. In this regard, we have important partnership meetings coming up, many of whom have on their agendas matters critical to Africa's transformation.

Top of the agenda, of course, is the matter of trade and the economic relations between Africa and the rest of the world.

We are today more convinced than ever, that we shall not succeed in eradicating poverty, disease, conflict and hunger and provide a better life for the peoples of our continent, unless we have greater integration of our economies, unless we start beneficiating our minerals and industrialize, increase our agricultural production and process our products.

Our partnership with the world must therefore enhance, rather than undermine these priorities. During 2014, we must vow to remain united in our common approaches, and not allow individual countries to be isolated or intimidated into signing agreements that are against integration and against the interests of their peoples and their development.

The proposals on common African positions on the post-2015 development agenda, as well as the sustainable development goals and reports on the Bali round of trade negotiations and the Warsaw COP19 will also serve before this Summit. We are in a stronger position to harmonize our common positions and engage on these issues, because Agenda 2063 provides us with an overarching vision of where we want to go and what needs to be done.

The UN Secretary General during our visit to the Sahel region last year mentioned that during 2015, the critical negotiations on the post-2015 development goals and climate change needs to be concluded. We must as Africa vow that we will have a strong voice in these negotiations, and we must prepare and mobilise our citizenry and civil society to strengthen the African voice and positions.

We are further reminded that 2015 will be twenty years since the first historic Beijing Women's Conference, and it will also be the midway point for the African Decade of Women. African women had a very active presence during the 1985 Conference, and we certainly have come some way since then.

During 2014 we must however consolidate and accelerate these gains, so that the African goal of gender parity by 2020, and the building of a non-sexist Africa, becomes a reality and a key pillar of Agenda 2063.

Excellencies, Fellow Africans

During our 50th Anniversary summit in May last year, we made a pledge to our people, that we shall not bequeath to future generations the scourge of wars and conflicts, and that we will work tirelessly to silence all guns by 2020.

During 2013 we made notable progress in Somalia, Mali and Madagascar, whilst at the same time confronted the tragedy of Central African Republic and Southern Sudan. In all these instances, the African Union and the Regional Economic Communities, with the help of the international community, acted together to help these countries find peace, and to create a climate for lasting solutions to their conflicts.

We must continue to emphasize that if we want to silence all the guns by 2020, we must build inclusive and tolerant societies, manage our diversity, ensure forgiveness and reconciliation and respect for human rights. At the same time, we must act against impunity, hence the recommendation before this Summit to expand the powers of the African Court for People's and Human Rights.

The cost of conflicts and internal strife are too huge, in the devastation of human lives and sufferings and at the cost of our development. We must therefore continue to create climates for peace and stability, including effective, democratic and accountable governance and institutions, and by ensuring development and shared prosperity.

Honourable Ministers and Delegates

The priorities that we set for ourselves as a continent cannot be realized without strong institutions, without African resource mobilization, without unity of the continent and the mobilization and participation of its peoples.

The AU Commission early this year will act to take some of the difficult decisions to ensure that it improves its institutional effectiveness, and we look forward to your support in this regard. In a similar vein, the Bahir Dar Retreat urged us to take the necessary steps to identify and strengthen the other institutions key to African integration.

We will also this year focus on the issue of domestic resources mobilization, including initiatives we have decided on such as the ADB's Africa50 Fund for infrastructure, the AU Foundation and the African Remittances Institute.

In addition, at the end of March the meeting of Ministers of Finance, Economy and Planning will meet in Abuja, to consider how to take

forward the proposals on Alternate sources of Funding from the High Level Panel chaired by President Obasanjo as well as the joint AU/ECA report of the High-level Panel chaired by former President Mbeki on the Illicit outflows of capital and resources from the continent.

Excellencies, we must continue to build a People's Union, strengthen our communications and ensure that we inform and involve the African citizens and civil society in the programmes and positions of the Union.

In this regard, we are very proud to host at this Summit, the Inter-generational dialogue between our Heads of State and young people, and the African World Heritage Foundation.

We promised that we will have this dialogue with the youth at their request during the 50th anniversary last year, and we look forward to this as an annual event.

The African World Heritage Foundation is an important African initiative, to preserve and promote our history and cultural heritage for current and future generations, and fostering the spirit and values of Pan Africanism.

In conclusion, let me reiterate the importance of this meeting in guiding us on the various issues that confront our continent and in helping us plan ahead, prioritize and implement the policies of the Union. We look forward to your deliberations and wish you every success Executive Council meeting.

Asante Sana