

Check against Delivery

Closing Remarks

By

**H.E. Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus
Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal
Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and Chairperson
of the Executive Council of the African Union**

At

**The Conclusion of the Ministerial Retreat of the
African Union**

26 January 2014

Bahir Dar

Excellency Mr. Gedu Andargachew, President of the Amhara National Regional State,

Excellencies Ministers,

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

Excellencies Permanent Representatives and Commissioners,

Distinguished Participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am indeed very pleased that we have come to a successful conclusion of our Retreat. Over the past two days, we have had a very enriching and insightful debate on where we want Africa to be in the next fifty years under the theme "Defining Agenda 2063: Towards a Peaceful, Prosperous and Integrated Africa".

Let me thank each and every one of you for your valuable contributions, which has certainly stimulated our debate. I wish to express my profound appreciation to the Lead Speakers who have eloquently articulated the five sub-themes of our Retreat in a very interesting and thought provoking manner. I also wish to express my sincere thanks to the moderators whose role has been very critical in guiding our discussion.

Excellencies and Colleagues,

During the past two days, we have been bold enough to ask some of the tough questions and accept our challenges and shortcomings in moving our integration and development agenda forward. In this regard, we are grateful to Dr. Carlos Lopes for giving us an excellent diagnosis of the lessons from our past.

In this context, he underscored the need to address the 1% challenge to sustain our economic growth. Changing the composition of our GDP by promoting diversification and commodity based industrialization through the utilization of our natural resources, according to Dr. Lopes, is the key to sustaining the robust economic growth that we have achieved over the past decade.

But Dr. Lopes did not dwell on the past in his presentation, I believe for a good reason. He told us we should not look behind, we should look forward. He gave us a snapshot of the mega trends in Africa and the world at large that we need to reflect upon as we define our future. As to the past, the draft framework document has adequately dealt with it under the theme of Africa's Development Experience in the Past Fifty years: Achievements and Lessons.

Excellencies and Colleagues,

I am happy to note that we were crazy enough to dream about the Africa we want and define our agenda for the next 50 years. It was indeed exciting to listen to Nkosazana's imaginative e-mail from 2063, which captures the dreams and aspirations shared by all of us as Africans - a peaceful, integrated and prosperous Africa that we want to leave for the next generation. We thank our sister for taking us into the future and I am sure her imaginative email has inspired all us to rededicate our efforts to the realization of our Pan African dream.

Of course, many of us may not be there when our organization celebrates its centenary in 2063 but I believe we have the responsibility to lay a solid foundation for the realization of that dream. We should, therefore, demonstrate the strong leadership, political commitment and selfless sacrifice to make some of the tough decisions to ensure a better future for our peoples.

One clear idea that came out in the course of this Retreat is how much deficit we have in leadership, a factor critical for development and without which no transformation is possible and the achievement of the AU Vision on 2063 would only be a dream. At this historic Retreat, we have agreed that we have failed to take advantage of all the assets that

Africa has for development and that rent-seeking practices pose major impediments to the transformation of the conditions of the life of the African people.

At the risk of repeating myself, we all have as leaders a historic obligation to discharge our responsibilities to the people of Africa who have not been well served by the practice of African leadership so far which has, in many instances, failed to utilize the resources of Africa for changing the life condition of our people which continues to be worse than the life condition of people in any part of the world. This shall not be allowed to continue and the task ahead of us to realize the AU 2063 vision make it critical that Africa overcome all those shortcomings which only require marshaling the required political will to change them.

Leadership and institutions are key for transforming Africa and for ensuring whatever gains have been made will be sustainable. When we talk about leadership, though more of the focus is on political leadership, the notion is nonetheless to include leadership in all sectors of society particularly business and civil society groups of all kinds.

Excellencies and Colleagues,

We all know that realizing our Pan African dream is by no means easy and the next five decades will not be smooth sailing. There are a

number of internal and external challenges that militate against our prospect for peace and prosperity. Hence, there is a need to properly analyze them and devise the necessary strategy to address them. Our thanks and appreciations go to Kandeh Yumkella for his incisive presentation on this important sub-theme and some of the most important steps that we need to take to avert the potential threats and risks.

But Yumkella did not stop by talking about the potential threats and risks but he highlighted for us the opportunities abound that we need to take advantage of in order to ensure our future destiny. In this regard, there are some factors that are critical for us to unleash our potential. These include, among others, the need to inculcate a developmental mindset, enhance our institutional capabilities, mobilize our own resources and utilize new technology and innovation. We thank Minister Mariam Nour for taking us through those critical factors.

Most importantly, our dreams and aspirations will not be translated into a reality without making a paradigm shift in our political and economic governance. We should be able to ensure durable peace and stability in our continent by addressing Africa's governance challenges and create a conducive environment for bringing about

structural transformation. Once again, we benefited from the rich analysis of Dr. Lopes on this important theme.

Excellencies and Colleagues,

Throughout our discussion, there have been common threads which commanded the consensus of all of us.

- ***The need for a strong political leadership and commitment***
- ***The need for ownership of our own development agenda***
- ***The need to enhance our capacity in the implementation of our own decisions***
- ***The need to fund our own continental projects and programmes***
- ***The need to strengthen our own Pan-African Institutions***
- ***The need to build human capital formation***
- ***The need to redefine the role of the State***
- ***The need to tap into our own natural resources***
- ***The need to ensure agrarian reform***
- ***The need for Africa to industrialize***
- ***The need to accelerate regional integration***
- ***The need to silence the guns in Africa and address our peace and security challenges in a comprehensive and holistic manner***
- ***The need to have a coherent strategy in dealing with our partners***
- ***The need to have our own narrative to tell our own story***

- ***The need to speak with one voice on issues of common interest and concern such as climate change and trade facilitation***

In general, we have agreed that further analytical work is essential for a good grasp and understanding of the global environment especially with regard to mega trends, threats, risks and challenges with a view to enriching and finalizing the Draft Framework Document on Agenda 2063. But on the whole we have agreed that Bahir Dar should herald the beginning of a strong political commitment to implement our vision and meet the aspirations of our peoples.

Therefore, as Dr. Zuma rightly stated, let the journey begin in earnest. In this regard, we take note of her important proposal to establish a Ministerial Committee, which will work together with the African Union Commission, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the African Development Bank (AfDB) to finalize Agenda 2063. I hope this proposal will be submitted to the Executive Council for an appropriate decision at its upcoming session.

We also note her important suggestion for Africa to have its own platform where political and business leaders as well as all other concerned stakeholders regularly meet to brainstorm on our continent's development and integration agenda. I trust that this important idea will take concrete shape at the earliest possible time.

Excellencies and Colleagues,

Finally, I very much hope that you enjoyed your brief stay in Bahir Dar. I wish to, on behalf of all of us, once again express my gratitude to the people and government of the Amhara National Regional State for the generous hospitality that we have enjoyed and for the excellent facilities put at our disposal to facilitate our work. Let me also express my appreciation to the leadership of the African Union Commission, the office of the secretary-general, protocol and conference services, communication and information and all other support staff for their support and cooperation to ensure the success of this Retreat.

I wish you a safe journey back to Addis Ababa for the 24th ordinary session of the Executive Council of the African Union. Let the spirit of Bahir Dar continue to inspire us as we begin the journey towards the realization of our dream.

I thank you