

AFRICAN UNION

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Statement of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission,
Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma to the 25th Ordinary Session of the
Executive Council

Malabo, 23-24 June 2014

Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, and Chairperson of the Executive Council; His Excellency Ahmed Ould Teguidi

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Equatorial Guinea, His Excellency, Mr. Agapito Mba Moku

Your Excellencies Members of the Executive Council;

The Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission,

Mr. Erastus Mwencha;

Dr. Carlos Lopes, Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Africa

Leaders of AU Organs

Representatives of the Regional Economic Communities

Commissioners of the African Union Commission;

Representatives of International Organisations

Vice President of the African Development Bank

Excellencies, Ministers, Leaders of Delegations and Ambassadors and Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Distinguished Officials from Capitals

Distinguished Invited Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

A warm welcome to this 25th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council of our Union.

Let me again sincerely thank the President, the Government and the people of Equatorial Guinea for their kind hospitality and for putting at our disposal the excellent conference facilities.

We warmly welcome the delegation of Egypt, our dear brothers and sisters, back home. We will hopefully soon also welcome back the delegation of Guinea Bissau.

Your Excellencies

We are holding this meeting and the Summit on the theme *Agriculture and Food Security*, at a time when our vision for the next fifty years, **Agenda 2063. The Africa we Want**, is taking shape.

Agriculture and Food Security, correctly so, is a critical priority for Africa. If we get this right, it has the potential - along with what we do with the Blue economy - not only to propel us towards our goal of eradicating poverty and hunger in one generation, but also to contribute towards the industrialization through agro-processing and the development of infrastructure.

At the same time, agriculture and agribusinesses are critical to the empowerment of people, especially women and youth, and in the Summit debate we must look at the practical actions necessary to achieve this, including modernizing and mechanizing agriculture.

We are already in Year One of the fifty years horizon of Agenda 2063. We are therefore paying particular attention to those priority areas that will propel our Agenda forward in the first decade.

Amongst the things our citizens called for during the consultations and which we ourselves prioritized in our four year Strategic Plan include: the revolution in education, skills, science, technology and innovation; and our young people are calling for harmonized curricula so they can study and work anywhere in the continent; the free movement of Africans; the Continental Free Trade Area; industrialization and economic development; and connecting all capitals and commercial centres through infrastructure, rail and roads, energy and ICT.

We look forward to the Extra-ordinary AU Summit on Employment that will be held in Ouagadougou in September this year.

Excellencies,

Without a strong Union and Regional Economic Communities as the building blocks, it will be more difficult to move our agenda forward effectively. Your Session must therefore of necessity deal with the institutional issues.

The Commission is presenting its 2015 Budget for approval in the context of the ongoing discussions on Alternative Sources of Funding of the AU. It is a matter that has been referred to the Ministers of Finance and Economic Planning, and we look forward to their progress report and recommendations. At the same time, the financing of the Union, the stemming of the illicit capital flows and domestic resource mobilization must continue to occupy the attention of the Executive Council.

The Summit will also consider amendments to protocols of critical AU organs, such as the Pan African Parliament (PAP), the African Court for Human and People's Rights and discuss the draft statutes of the African Monetary Fund. The proposals on the table seek to strengthen the contributions of these institutions to Africa's integration, and to build African capacity to deal with its issues.

During the Agenda 2063 consultations, we witnessed the enthusiasm of the civil society and citizens organisations to be part of the Pan African movement for change. We must therefore do more to ensure that the election of the new Executive of ECOSOC takes place soon, so that it can play its critical role as a voice of civil society in our Union.

As we reported in the January Summit, Excellencies, we are paying continuous attention to the effectiveness and efficiency of Commission. We introduced changes to make our travel policy more efficient, all administrative structures required in the Staff rules are operational, we are on course with the implementation of the international finance and accounting standards and with the review of the Financial Rules.

Our turnaround time on recruitment is improving, with special attention to the quotas of under-represented countries, and moving the AU staff profile closer to gender parity. We will also before the end of the year conclude the review of the Commission's organizational structure and take stock of the skills of Commission staff.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

There is a general sense that the continent is moving forward: our economies are growing, we are all focusing on infrastructure development; agriculture and food security; domestic resource mobilization; industrialization, investments and growth; education, skills, jobs, the health of our peoples and on regional economic integration.

As we shift gear towards implementation of Agenda 2063, we urge the Executive Council to remain engaged and hands-on, so as to ensure that we stay on course.

Since the beginning of 2014, we have had elections (at Presidential, Local or Parliamentary levels) in Algeria, Benin, Egypt, Guinea Bissau, Malawi, Mauritania and South Africa.

The normative framework of the AU Charter on Democracy Governance and Elections remains our guide, supported by the AU Elections observer missions, including long-term observers. They are deployed on the ground to work with Member states and the National Electoral institutions to ensure peaceful elections that reflect the will of the people.

We recognize that some challenges remain, but we are moving forward. For the rest of 2014, we must ensure that we continue to have peaceful and successful elections.

Despite the general positive trajectory, we remain deeply concerned about the situations in Central African Republic, and South Sudan; the massive

loss of life, the scourge of sexual violence, and the damage inflicted on the populations of these countries.

IGAD, the African Union, and the international community remain seized with these matters. We must continue to work tirelessly for the cease fire in South Sudan to hold and for the violence in CAR to stop.

We urge all parties to help create the conditions for peace, reconciliation and development; so that the people can bury and mourn their dead, can rebuild their lives, plough their fields and heal their communities.

We strongly condemn the acts of terrorism against Kenya and Nigeria, and the killing and kidnapping of innocent civilians. Unless we work with the governments to stem this tide, we are all vulnerable because terrorism, extremism and intolerance endanger Africa's march towards prosperity, peace and integration.

Excellencies, the negotiations on the post-2015 Development Agenda will start soon. The High Level Committee has done a lot of work since the January Summit to ensure that the Common African Position is finalized and popularized. We must also ensure that our Ambassadors in New York negotiate on the basis of this Common African Positions. We are also moving towards the important 2015 Climate change negotiations.

The critical matter of Africa's trade with the world, in the post-Bali context and at bilateral level with the EPAs and AGOA, remains high on the agenda, as we seek to build trade partnerships that will aid African industrialization and integration, its agricultural development and its drive for shared prosperity.

In March, we had the Africa-EU Summit, and we will be guided by your deliberations on preparations for the Africa-US and Africa-Turkey Summits in the coming months. It is important that we seize these opportunities to speak with one voice and advance the agenda of the continent. Africa

therefore continues to navigate its way in global matters, resolute about furthering its common interests.

Your Excellencies, you have a heavy workload ahead of you.

I wish you fruitful deliberations and thank you for your attention.

Merci beaucoup!

Muito obrigado!

Muchas gracias!

Shukran jazilan!

Asante sana!