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**STATEMENT OF HER EXCELLENCY DR. NKOSAZANA  
DLAMINI ZUMA, CHAIRPERSON OF THE AFRICAN UNION  
COMMISSION, TO THE OPENING OF THE SESSION OF  
THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE COMMITTEE OF THE  
AFRICAN UNION**

**(PRESENTED BY H.E. MR ERASTUS MWENCHA, DEPUTY  
CHAIRPERSON OF THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION)  
ADDIS ABABA, 23<sup>RD</sup> JANUARY 2015.**

**Your Excellency, Mr. YaluyaAbdlah, Chairperson of the  
Permanent Representatives Committee,**

**Your Excellencies Members of the Permanent  
Representatives Committee,**

**Your Excellencies Commissioners of the African Union,**

**Distinguished Invited Guests,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen:**

On behalf of the Chairperson, HE NkozasanaDlamini Zuma, it is a distinct honor for me to address you at the start of the 29<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the Permanent Representatives Committee. I salute you and wish you all a prosperous 2015 and successful

policy organs meetings. You have, as in the past, a crowded agenda that spans all areas of our Union endeavors.

Your role as the clearing house and preparatory body for the meetings of the policy organs of the African Union is not only important in itself, but is also vital to the success of the meetings of the higher policy organs. The more adequate your preparations are, working together with the Commission, the greater the success of the meetings of the Executive Council and those of the Assembly of African Union Heads of State and Government. The PRC and the Commission are, therefore, literally speaking, the foundation stones for the African Union. The more effectively we work together, the stronger the foundation.

Excellencies, in his Synthesis Report on the Post-2015 Development Agenda entitled, “ The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Environment”, the Secretary-General of the United Nations refers to the year 2015 as being at a “historic crossroads”. Destiny has brought us to this crossroad where we can no longer afford the time for missed opportunities nor the luxury of multiple choices. We must move only in one direction —and that is upwards! And we must do so with the resolute determination to succeed.

For a long time since our independence, Africa was inexorably sucked downwards into the vortex of poverty, disease, despair, ignorance and squalor. We became the Continent that others derisively referred to as “The Hopeless Continent”. However, in the last decade or so, the tide started to change as Africa has begun to rebrand itself and has transformed its image as the next frontier for development and prosperity.

This progress has been expressed in terms of the expanding realm of peace and stability, the growth and consolidation of democracy, good governance, human rights and respect for the rule of law, as well as economic growth averaging 5 percent per annum that the Continent has witnessed over the decade.

We should not, however, be lured into laxity and a false sense of comfort. We are still far from reaching the commanding heights, and powerful winds are still blowing in our faces. Our Continent is still blighted by conflicts; poverty is still widespread; disease and ignorance are still prevalent; and far too many of our youth remain unemployed. Industrial capacity of the continent is low partly due to limited intercontinental infrastructure, fragmented markets and inadequate skills. We continue to lose too many of our people who, out of despair, seek to cross dangerous seas in search of opportunity in Europe. Even for those who make it, many find themselves victims of abuse, drugs, prostitution, human trafficking and all manner of indignities visited upon them.

There is much to do and no time to waste. That is why this year, Africa must fight to ensure that its voice is heard, and its interests secured during the inter-governmental negotiations on the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the on going negotiations on climate change. That is why it is important to launch the African Agenda 2063 framework at this summit and proclaim to the whole world that Africa has come of age, and to to implement the aspirations of our people.

Consultations on the first Ten-Year Implementation Plan for Agenda 2063 will have been completed by June and the adoption of the Plan by the June/July summit will signal the beginning of Africa's march towards its destiny as an, "integrated, prosperous

and peaceful continent, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena”.

I repeat, Excellencies: There is no time to waste! We need to act now and take the difficult decisions that need to be taken to put Africa on Solid foundation towards self-propelled, sustainable and irreversible progress. While the rest of the world may count their future in terms of decades, Africa’s future is now! It is now that we must decide on how to finance our own development, using our own resources. We must move forward to implement our flagship projects including the CFTA, the Railway and the Yamasukrou Decision to ease air travel within Africa and save our fledgling aviation industry from collapsing.

In the future we see, there will be no external benefactors that will routinely come to our rescue during moments of our greatest need. In the future we see, a private sector willing and ready to sacrifice and do whatever it takes to sustain Africa’s development; to fight for Africa’s space in the competitive international economy. It will be a private sector that we shall grow ourselves.

**Your Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen;**

As you are aware, we are just concluding “The Year of Agriculture”, during which period important strides have been made in reaffirming our commitments, and internalizing lessons learned under the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development on what needs to be done, as we strive to revitalize and modernize this critical sector to Africa’s food and nutritional security and development. There is discernible growth

in investment in agriculture and expansion in output. The African Risk Capacity is now operational.

We are proclaiming this year as “The Year of Women Empowerment” because of the urgent need to address the issues relating to the status of women in Africa, and the critical role women can play in the survival and development of our Continent. In so doing, we hope to galvanize energies, actions, advocacy, resources and policy focus to achieve concrete, measurable targets. This will also enable Africa to plan together and prepare adequately for the Beijing Plus 20 Global Conference on the Status of Women.

In November 2013, when the Chairperson addressed you, she indicated that it was our intention to focus our efforts in 2014 on institutional reform of the Commission. The process has been on going. In this regard, the Commission has worked hard to improve corporate governance and accountability, improve performance delivery, enhance financial sustainability and improve our stakeholder management.

1. Some of the key areas worth noting are
  - a. Review and introduction of key **policies** including
    - i. Travel policy
    - ii. Enterprise risk policy
    - iii. Fraud and anti-Corruption policy and
    - iv. The Code of Ethics and anti-Harassment

Furthermore, we are looking at updating, strengthening and tightening staff rules and various operational manuals to

ensure we create a conducive work environment for performance Delivery.

- b. We have also reconstituted **management advisory bodies** including the grievances panel, the Tribunal and the Training and capacity development committee.
- c. The comprehensive review of the **institutional structure** has been initiated with the purpose of transforming the Commission in a full results oriented institution capable of supporting and facilitating the continental integration and Agenda 2063. We hope to provide you with further details of this all important exercises by June.
- d. In the area of financial management, new **financial rules and regulations** have been introduced to streamline efficient use of financial resource. The **IPSAS** (international Public Service Accounting Standards) have also been introduced to ensure that financial management meets international stands of accountability and probity. Our internal and external audit framework has been revamped. Overall there was marked improved in budget implementation with receipt of 57% in assed contributions and 59% execution rate on the approved budget and 81% against funds released.
- e. The establishment of the **AU foundation** as a foundation for mobilizing funds for continental development is also a key novelty.

We are developing a communications strategy to more effectively inform and engage our people about the programmes and policies of the Union. We are also conducting a comparative analysis of other international inter-governmental institutions to learn best practices to seek to ensure that all organs of the Union operate effectively.

**Your Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen:**

The foregoing are but just a few of the activities of the agenda before you.

I cannot end my remarks, however, without referring to the work we have jointly and severely done to contain the Ebola crisis in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. It is not an exaggeration to say that Ebola is perhaps the greatest challenge that Africa has faced in the last decade.

You will recall the world-wide panic that followed the Ebola outbreak, leading to closure of borders from some neighboring countries and travel bans and/or restrictions by many countries around the world against not only the citizens of these three countries, but almost for those of the entire West Africa. The Extra-ordinary Joint Executive Council/Ministers of Health meeting convened by the AUC in September 2014 went a long way in calming the fears, stopping the border closures and relaxing travel restrictions for citizens from Ebola affected countries.

We established the Africa Support to Ebola in West Africa (ASEOWA) as a dedicated mechanism through which to

coordinate all assistance efforts in the fight against Ebola. We realized that response to Ebola was slow and concentrated in building health infrastructure. Apart from Cuba, which pledged health workers at the time, few others did.

We, therefore, decided that the AU should concentrate on mobilizing health workers, as well as resources for deploying and supporting them in the field to assist the few available national health workers of the affected countries. Our business people heeded the call for help and, at a meeting called by the Commission in November, 2014, pledged over \$30 million (USD) to support the deployment of the over 800 health workers currently deployed to the three countries affected and under ASEOWA.

In this regard, we thank most sincerely all the countries and entities that have so generously contributed to the Ebola effort in the form of health workers and infrastructure, funding, equipment, solidarity and advocacy. Equally, I would like to thank the business people, the artistes and the ordinary citizens who have contributed to the Ebola effort. I also want to salute and thank our volunteers, the health workers. These heroines and heroes epitomize the very best of our continent in coming together in solidarity to address common threats.

Excellences, while some progress has been made in containing the virus, Ebola is still very much with us and the health institutional frameworks and capacity remains fragile. We cannot relent in our fight against it. We cannot afford to let our guard down. I have no doubt, however, that working together -- African governments, partners, the private sector and our citizens-- we shall defeat Ebola.



Allow me to conclude by wishing you fruitful deliberations and to remind you, once again, important decisions must be made at this summit: We need to summon all the courage and political will to do the right thing!

Shukranigizila,  
Obrigado,  
Machos gracias,  
Merci beaucoup,  
Asante sana.  
**Ameseginalehu**

I thank you very much