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**Statement by the Chairperson of the African Union Commission,  
HE Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma to the  
25<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the African Union Assembly of Heads of  
State and Government**

**Johannesburg, 14 June 2015**

Your Excellency, President Robert Gabriel Mugabe, Chairperson of the African Union and President of the Republic of Zimbabwe

Your Excellency, the President of the Republic of South Africa, our host country

Your Excellencies, Heads of State and Government of the Member States of the African Union;

Deputy-Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr. Jan Eliason

The Secretary General of the Arab League, Mr Nabil Elaraby

Representative of the Palestinian Authority

Visiting Heads of State

Excellencies, Former Heads of State and Government and former Secretaries General and Chairpersons of the OAU and AU

Dr. Lopes, Executive Secretary of the UNECA

Dr. Donald Kaberuka, President of the African Development Bank

Excellencies, Members of the Executive Council and other Ministers;

Representative of AU Organs

Deputy Chairperson Erastus Mwencha and fellow Commissioners

Visiting Ministers

CEO of the NEPAD Agency, Dr. Ibrahim Mayaki

Excellencies, Heads of African Regional Economic Communities and African Union Specialised and Representative offices;

Excellencies, members of the Permanent Representatives Committee;

Members of the Diplomatic Corps;

Distinguished invited guests;

Distinguished Guests

Officials from Capitals

Ladies and Gentlemen

Let me welcome all of you to this 25<sup>th</sup> Summit of Heads of State and Government. *Karibuni Aukana!*

I would like to thank the President, the government and the peoples of the Republic of South Africa for the excellent hospitalities and facilities extended to all of us.

A very warm welcome and congratulations to the Presidents who are joining us following elections in their countries: President Muhammadu Buhari of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, President Hage Geingob of the Republic of Namibia, President Filipe Jacinto Nyusi of the Republic of Mozambique and Prime Minister Pakalitha Mosisili of the Kingdom of Lesotho. We also congratulate Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, President Faure Gnassingbé of the Togolese Republic and Omar al-Bashir of the Republic of the Sudan for their re-election.

Excellencies, when we met in January this year, we were still in the throes of the Ebola epidemic. But, thanks to the resilience, and hard work of the peoples and governments of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, to the young African men and women of ASEOWA, to Member states, the private sector, to the international community and to the African citizens; Liberia has been declared Ebola free for the last 78 days. We congratulate President Sirleaf Johnson, her government and the people of Liberia for this achievement.

In the other two countries Sierra Leone and Guinea, numbers have significantly reduced. We should not get complacent. We must stay the course until the other two countries are also declared Ebola-free.

The lesson from the Ebola Virus Disease is that with African solidarity and resolve, we can find our own solutions to our challenges. The disease also exposed the weaknesses of our health systems, especially public health. As we move towards recovery, we must train more health workers, and build and strengthen our health systems and infrastructure.

### **Excellencies,**

We've been faced by the incidents of xenophobia, and the tragedy of many people dying in the Mediterranean sea, leaving their countries out of desperation, to make a living elsewhere.

In 1906, one of the finest sons of our soil, Pixley ka Isaka Seme in his George Wilson Curtis Medial winning essay at Columbia University said,

*The African people, although not a strictly homogeneous race, possess a common fundamental sentiment which is everywhere manifest, crystallizing itself into one common controlling idea. Conflicts and strife are rapidly disappearing before the fusing force of this enlightened perception of the true intertribal relation, which relation should subsist among a people with a common destiny.*

It is this common destiny that should guide us towards an integrated, prosperous, peaceful and people-centered Africa which is a dynamic force in the world. Of course for this to happen we should refuse to camp forever on the borders of the industrial world, and having learned that knowledge is power, educate our children and youth, as Pixley ka Isaka Seme said, in 1906.

Indeed, if we educate and skill our people, with an emphasis on science, engineering, technology, maths resource and innovation, including technical and vocational skills; our people will stop undertaking the perilous journeys across the Sahel and the Mediteranean sea.

When we undertake this skills revolution, extremists, armed groups and terrorists will find it difficult if not impossible to recruit our young women and men.

Instead, our youth will have the skills to generate electricity, including renewables.

They will produce enough food for the entire Africa, as they modernise and grow agriculture and agroprocessing, and agribusiness.

They will stop camping at the borders (and shores) of the industrial world, but will transform our economies through industrialisation, manufacturing and by adding value to our natural resources.

They will develop our blue economy and build our infrastructure, connecting our capitals and commercial centres through ICT, and through highways, rail, aviation and oceanic and waterways. They will

ensure that this is done through the most modern of technology, including the Pan African high speed rail network.

They will create a uniquely African continent whose economic development will not only be based on profit, but on the needs of the people, driven by the youth and women. They will create a prosperous and non-sexist continent. They will take charge of our outer space.

## **Excellencies**

To achieve Seme's dream, there are a few hurdles we have to overcome. We must believe in ourselves. We have to realise that the demographic dividend is possible if we adopt the right policies, manage our diversity and make every citizen feel valued and part of the driving forces for change and progress, irrespective of tribe, religion, colour or creed, and whether they are man, woman, boy or girl.

In the world today, the countries that now drive the world economy are those with huge populations, such as the emerging economies of China, India and Brazil. Even in Africa, the largest economy (Nigeria) has the largest population.

They are in the same league in terms of population as Africa, but they have the advantage that they are united.

It is for this reason that even though we cannot be one country, we need to speed up our integration and unity.

We must recall Kwame Nkrumah's words that Africa must unite or perish.

Excellencies, this is why we are so excited about the signing of the trade agreement by the twenty- six countries that make up the Tripartite of COMESA, EAC and SADC in Shamal Sheik this week. This indeed is a good basis for the launch of the Continental Free Trade Area. Of course, if we add ECOWAS - it will be 41 countries, making the Continental Free Trade Area well within reach. This will not only boost intra-Africa trade, but also boost investment. In a similar vein, if we move faster on the free movement of people, goods and

services, and the African passport, we are sure to see an increase in trade, as well as tourism and economic growth.

Excellencies, the adoption of the First 10-year implementation plan of Agenda 2063, the Africa we want, will signal a new determination and a desire to bequeath a better Africa to the next generations.

We should chart a new unique Africa, without comparison. Our ancient civilizations cannot be compared to any other.

For instance, the obelisk of Axum, the civilizations of Egypt, the Nok and the Ashanti; the Empires of the Shongai, Mali and Monomotapa, the Royal Houses of Nubia, d'Oyo, Benin, Kongo, Kanem-Bornu and Dahomey; Abyssinia, Zimbabwe and Mapungubwe compared to no other; the Egyptian, Ethiopian and Sudanese pyramids; the mosques of Timbaktu, our languages, our art, music and dance; our geniuses created what is uniquely African.

As the leading generations of our time, it is upon us to help chart our uniquely African path and place in the world today. Agenda 2063 is our roadmap and beacon.

Seme also said:

*“In all races, genius is like a spark, which, concealed in the bosom of a flint, bursts forth at the summoning stroke.”*

It is our responsibility in all sectors to create the conditions that act as a summoning stroke for the human genius of Africans. It will be contributions of Africa's young people, its men and women, its intellectuals, its entrepreneurs, its artists, and its sports people today that will shape our destiny.

We are a century late in terms of Seme's dream, but we can see in the cities and towns, in rural areas, the spark of this brighter Africa.

In building our shared prosperity we must be uniquely African, by placing the human being, rather than only profit at the centre.

As Seme said: *The most essential departure of this new civilization is that it shall be thoroughly spiritual and humanistic - indeed a regeneration moral and eternal!*

### **Excellencies,**

By January next year we shall present the comprehensive strategy to build African capacity and skills for implementing Agenda 2063. This capacity and skills plan shall be geared towards the empowerment of Africa's young people, women and girls, creating an enabling environment for them to become the drivers of our transformation and development.

Over the last fifteen years, our development agenda has focused on primary education, its now time we urgently paid attention to vocational and higher education. We cannot drive our economic development only through primary education. We need champions for higher education, to help steer and support the African higher education sector. At the Universities Summit hosted in Dakar Senegal by President Macky Sall in March 2015, His Excellency graciously accepted to be one of these champions, who paying special attention to the issue of harmonization of higher education.

This will enable our young people to study and apply their skills anywhere on the continent. We need more such champions. I am sure we shall have more champions volunteering to join him in this task.

Between now and January, we must also do more to popularise the 10-year plan, to align Agenda 2063 to our national and regional strategies and report on our recommendations on the allocation of roles and responsibilities between the RECs, the AU Commission and the Nepad Agency.

We will send teams to the countries that ask assistance to domesticate their plans. We will undertake that exercise together with NEPAD.

The AU Commission and other organs will also align their Strategic plans with Agenda 2063.

## Excellencies

Our coastline and waterways are amongst the largest in the world and offer for us much opportunity. Consequently, on 25 July this year we shall launch the Decade of African Oceans and Seas. We will also celebrate that day annually as the Day of African Oceans and Seas, so as to fully utilise and create awareness on the opportunities presented to us by the ocean and seas. We therefore call on all coastal countries, island states and countries with waterways to join us in launching this important decade, so that Africa can be part of this Blue economy.

Already, African women in maritime met in Luanda, Angola earlier this year, refusing to camp at the borders, but instead charted areas of cooperation for women in shipping, port management, fishing and other areas of the blue economy. We have to take charge of our oceanic space.

## Excellencies

Africa has many examples of indigenous and good farming practices, some of them climate smart and we must share these experiences, and replicate and upscale them.

In addition, more must be done on agro-processing and businesses, as part of building our collective food security, to reverse our high food imports bill and as part of industrialisation and job creation.

We look forward to the recommendations from the High Level Gender Panel and Ministers of Women on financial inclusion and agro-businesses to this Summit.

## Excellencies,

We announced in January that the Pan African Parliament will host the 3rd AU Intergenerational dialogue, and we are glad to report that this indeed took place. The young men and women from across the continent met with the Parliamentarians from PAP, a target for youth employment and investment in our Agenda 2063 first 10 year plan and for an annual report on the status of the continent's youth.



In my 2013 email to Kwame Nkrumah, I spoke about students forming AU clubs. I am happy to say there is a delegation from the University of Cape Town's AU club who are present here. We would like to know about similar clubs in other universities. We welcome the UCT AU Club delegation, and we encourage all students and youth to form AU clubs at their institutions and communities.

We are also happy about the numbers of women at this Summit from all over this continent. As they say in South Africa: *Malibongwe, Igama lamakhosikazi* - We praise the Women!

Excellencies, Seme contended that *'the victories of peace are greater and more abiding than the spoils of war.'*

It is for this reason that our Peace and Security Council, our peacekeepers, mediators and our high representatives are working tirelessly to silence the guns within the five years we have pledged.

But, as political leadership, governments, political parties, faithbased organisations and communities, we must play our part, to build tolerant, inclusive and democratic communities and societies, where the dignity and rights of all are respected.

Unfortunately, women and children are the main victims of conflicts, enduring untold miseries, hardships, sexual and other forms of violence, in wars and conflicts which they played no part in starting.

Our resolve to silence the guns, must therefore give hope to women and children suffering from the terror of Boko Haram and Al Shabaab. Our resolve must provide renewed hope to the peoples in conflict ridden areas in Darfur, East DRC, Libya, Mali, Somalia, and South Sudan, where lives and livelihoods have been shattered.

We must in the words of Seme ensure that *'conflicts and strife rapidly disappear before the enlightened perception...among a people with a common destiny.'*

Excellencies

We are encouraged by the movement on the decision on Alternate sources of funding, to incrementally provide more domestic resources

for the AU and its organs. Starting from next year, we will take the first step in this direction, which is testimony the determination of Africans to take charge of their destiny.

We thank the South African government for the Golf Day and fund raising dinner last night, and for all the individuals pledges.

Excellencies, we welcome the fact that we shall debate the Summit theme *Women's empowerment for the realisation of Agenda 2063* later today. Agenda 2063 is about the people, we cannot leave out halve of the population. May I also remind all of us, that women and youth form the majority of the voters.

We should therefore heed President Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela's words when he said:

*The legacy of oppression weighs heavily on women. As long as women are bound by poverty and as long as they are looked down upon, human rights will lack substance.*

*As long as outmoded ways of thinking prevent women from making a meaningful contribution to society, progress will be slow.*

*As long as the continent refuses to acknowledge the equal role of more than half of itself, it is doomed to failure."*

Ngiyabonga  
Asante sane  
Ke a leboga  
Shukran  
Mercie  
Muchos obrigade  
Kanimambo