

**STATEMENT OF H.E. DR. ELHAM M.A. IBRAHIM, AUC
COMMISSIONER FOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENERGY, AT THE
OPENING OF THE MEETING OF THE MINISTERIAL WORKING
GROUP ON TOURISM DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY IN AFRICA IN
THE CONTEXT OF THE AU AGENDA 2063, SEYCHELLES, 13TH –
14TH MARCH 2014**

- **Honorable, Mr. Jean Paul Adam, Minister of Foreign Affairs,
Republic of the Seychelles;**
- **Honorable, Mr. Alain Saint ANGE, Minister of Tourism and
Culture, Republic of the Seychelles Michael;**
- **Honorable Ministers responsible for Tourism, of South
Africa and Gabon,**
- **Distinguished Heads of delegations from AU member
states,**
- **Representative of regional and international organisations;**
- **Distinguished Delegates;**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen:**

1. First of all, I would like to convey to you the warm greetings of H.E. Dr Nkosazana Dlamini ZUMA, AUC Chairperson, who could not be with you today due to other pressing commitments.
2. It is my pleasure to welcome you to this special Ministerial working meeting on tourism taking place in the exotic islands of Seychelles. For sure, there could not be a better venue for this meeting than this place which embodies the very spirit of tourism of our continent. For me, the name Seychelles immediately creates in my mind, images of all that is beautiful with Africa. You can imagine how lucky we felt at the African Union Commission, when the Government of Seychelles offered to host this meeting which will define the long term aspirations of the continent in the tourism sector.
3. At this point I would like to recall that, the idea of organizing this Ministerial working group meeting, was initiated and discussed here in Seychelles, between H. E. The AUC Chairperson, and H. E. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Seychelles,
4. On behalf of the African Union Commission and on my own behalf, I would like to thank the authorities of the Republic of Seychelles for welcoming us into this beautiful country and for the hospitality we

continue to enjoy since our arrival. In that regard, I would also like to specifically recognise and express our deep appreciation for the untiring support that we got from Ambassador Joseph Nourrice and his staff at the Embassy of the Republic of Seychelles in Ethiopia during the entire period of preparing for this event. It was exemplary.

5. Honourable Ministers, your presence here today is the most important factor to the success of this meeting and its objectives. I, therefore, want to thank all of you most sincerely for taking time to come and bringing along your experts to this place to work for the continent.

Honorable Ministers,

Ladies and gentlemen

6. The African Union Commission is in the process elaborating its long term strategy for speeding up development and integration of Africa. This strategy which envisages Africa's prosperity in the next fifty (50) years since 2013 is known as the **African Union (AU) Agenda 2063**. It will be comprehensive and articulate on the aspirations of the African peoples in all their socio-economic endeavors.

7. The framework of the strategy that will be presented to you during this meeting, as an ongoing work, involves defining the main goals, identifying the key issues and proposing the strategic actions that would be required in each socio-economic sector in order to enable the sector to enhance its performance and, contributes to the goals of the AU Agenda 2063.
8. The African Union Commission is well aware of the huge direct and indirect contribution of tourism to the economies of our countries at both macro and micro levels. Its impact is so widespread. This is one sector that permeates our societies in ways that are incomparable to others; from the modern travel agent in a big city to the small and unsophisticated artisan in the village. It is the meeting platform of people from different places, cultures and backgrounds.
9. It is this high potential of tourism for economic growth and integration of our societies that has pushed the African Union Commission to prioritize inclusion of the sector in the framework of the AU Agenda 2063.

Honorable Ministers

Ladies and gentlemen

10. It is common knowledge now that Africa has a huge tourism potential in all aspects of the sector such as natural environmental wonders, exotic wildlife and plants, ancient cultures and historic relics. All these have not yet been well exploited and promoted to the extent of generating commensurate benefit to African countries. Furthermore, the majority share of the African tourism business is controlled by foreign operators who have easy access to huge capital and technological resources than African operators.

11. Therefore, we have the responsibility of identifying and implementing interventions that are required to optimize the role of tourism as an engine and a catalyst for economic development and growth in Africa. For example, within the AU Agenda 2063 framework, we can address critical issues for boosting Africa's tourism such as:

- Undertaking joint marketing including packaging and promotion of cross-border tourism attractions;
- Removing tourism visa constraints – *Seychelles has done that and the benefits have been well documented;*

- Promoting joint projects for infrastructure development and investment – *for example, promoting African cross-border investment in hotels, airport, roads, ports, etc.*; and
- Capacity building for people working in the tourism industry.

Honourable Ministers

Ladies and Gentlemen

12. In defining the tourism strategy for Africa in the context of the AU Agenda 2063, we were very conscious of the need for a right start. To do this, we realised that we needed to seek, first and foremost, the guidance of the key policy makers in the industry. This is how we came to identify and invite you to this working group to help us in carrying out this important task.

13. So far, the experts have spent the entire of yesterday brainstorming and deliberating on the various alternative strategies for the type of the tourism industry that we wish to have in our continent in the coming fifty (50) years. They have outlined their recommendations which will be presented to you shortly. You will be invited to consider these recommendations with an open mind and express your views freely on them. It is the specific conclusions of your discussions

which will constitute the key elements of the tourism sector in the AU Agenda 2063.

14. I sincerely believe that you will do justice to this work and enable Africa to have a robust long-term strategy for its tourism sector.

15. I wish successful and fruitful deliberations to this Ministerial Session.

THANK YOU