

**Statement of H.E. Dr. Anthony M. Maruping, Commissioner for  
Economic Affairs at the Opening of the**

**Experts' Meeting of a Regional Approach to Development in the Great  
Lakes Region, Addis Ababa, 18 July 2013**

~~Excellence H.E. Dr.~~

Honourable Ministers, Excellences,

On behalf of the Chairpersons of the  
AU, Dr. I want to welcome you all  
to this

Distinguished Guests,

the chairpersons of the AU, Dr. Dlamini Zuma and of

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of my colleague Com of Eco Affairs, Dr. Maruping,

I am pleased to welcome you all to the AU Commission on the occasion of  
the meeting of the A Regional Approach to Development in Countries of the  
Great Lakes Region.

Allow me to take this opportunity to thank our co-organizers of this meeting,  
the UN and the World Bank, for their continued support in championing  
peace, Security and Economic Development in the Great lakes Region and  
Africa as a whole.

Recently, we commemorated our fiftieth Anniversary. It was an important  
moment of reflection on our past and rededication to the future of Africa.  
We have now embarked on a new journey towards Africa 2063.

Amongst our pledges for the future, we have committed ourselves to a  
number of priorities in achieving Africa 2063 vision.

We undertook not to bequeath wars to the next generation of Africans. We  
must educate our populace, and ensure healthy bodies and minds; we  
need to modernize and expand Africa's infrastructure and connect our  
peoples and countries. We need to address the issue of inadequate  
physical infrastructure such as roads, access to clean Water and sanitation,  
electricity, and telecommunications networks and we must strive to attain  
inclusive growth by promoting shared growth, and pro-poor growth such as  
involvement of women and youth among others.

The signing of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for DRC  
and the region, agreed between DRC and its neighbors under the auspices

of the AU and the UN on February 24, 2013, was an expression of our collective awareness, solidarity and a shared responsibility. It illustrated the commitment of all the countries of the region to make renewed efforts to peace and a better life for all the people of the region. It generated hope for a region that had more than its share of violence and conflict which did not only lead to loss of lives but also to loss of Economic development opportunities.

Excellences,

Distinguished Guests,

As we gather here today, let us brainstorm and generate concrete and implementable proposals bearing in mind that lack of economic opportunity and the failure of the state to provide essential services to the citizens is a recipe for political instability anywhere in the world.

Believing that a lasting solution to the conflicts in the great lakes region will be found sooner than later, we need to move ahead and tackle the rampant problems of poverty and unemployment through deepening economic growth in Great Lakes region by widening the sources of growth through diversification and hedging against external risks, and by pursuing regional integration as an economic goal that increases labour demand, mobility and economies of scale through expanded market for our local produce.

We also know that progress towards regional integration is hampered by poor transport and communication (for example: air, road and rail) interconnectivity. This constraint is a major impediment to intra-regional trade and needs to be addressed. Also, capacity building for trade is critical in positioning the Great Lakes region and of our continent to take advantage of potential opportunities created by its God-given abundant natural resources and the multilateral trading arrangements already put in place.

Excellences, Distinguished Guests,

I cannot end my statement without highlighting the role of private sector as the engine of development. The success of efforts to lift millions out of poverty and expand the middle class, including women and youth, will depend largely on the extent to which success is recorded in attaining high levels of balanced economic growth and sustainable development over time, which is not possible without significant private sector activity. In other words, poverty alleviation will remain a distant dream unless the private sector takes its rightful role as the engine of growth.

The AU's vision for the private sector is based on true partnership. The Great Lakes region of Africa needs a strong, modern, competitive, innovative and vibrant private sector able and ready to work with the public sector to enhance the competitiveness of the region, create employment opportunities and enhance economic growth and development. The public sector, while creating the enabling environment for private sector activity, must see the private sector as a critical partner with which socio-economic development can be achieved. The private sector must also intensify efforts to make the necessary investments, be innovative to increase competitiveness and live up to its corporate social responsibility.

Of course, we all know that there are challenges such as restricted access to financial products and services, missing knowledge and skills, inadequate physical infrastructure networks, especially roads and electricity, but with true partnership between public sector and private sector, we are optimistic that these challenges, will be history.

Finally allow me to draw your attention once again on the ultimate goal of all our interventions: to allow the people of the Great Lakes to live in harmony and peace, to use the proceeds from their natural resources to build infrastructure, social services, to invest in science, technology, research and innovation as enablers of rapid progress and contribute towards a shared prosperity; to allow our people to participate in development of their country through meaningful partnership as a way of promoting stakeholders driven growth. It is therefore critical that in all our endeavours, we involve women and youth, as drivers of peace, economic transformation, and prosperity for all.

I thank you for attention.