



**REMARKS BY
H.E DR. AISHA L. ABDULLAHI (AMB.)
COMMISSIONER FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS**

**AT THE
MULTISTAKEHOLDER DIALOGUE ON THE DRAFT DISCUSSION PAPER OF THE
AFRICAN UNION ON AFRICA 2063 AGENDA
ABUJA, NIGERIA
24 JULY 2013**

**DELIVERED ON HER BEHALF BY
AMB. FEBE POTGIETER-GQUBULE
ADVISOR TO THE CHAIRPERSON**

Your Excellency, Mr. Abdoulie Janneh, Chair of the AGI Governing Board

Your Excellency, Mr. Dauda Toure, UNDP Resident Representative in Nigeria

Ambassadors and Members of the Diplomatic Corp accredited to Nigeria

Distinguished Representatives of UN Agencies

Distinguished Representatives of African CSOs, Think Tanks, Academia and the Media

Dear Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen

Let me begin my remark this morning to you all with warm words of welcome from H.E. Dr. Aisha L. Abdullahi, Commissioner for Political Affairs of the African Union Commission, who wished to be with us here today, but couldn't do so due another call of duty.

I am also delighted and honoured to be here with you in this beautiful city of Abuja, a well-planned city with the impressive Aso Rock rises majestically over the city's central government district.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Our gathering here today is strategic and far reaching as you would come to realise in the course of these two days. It is why the Department of Political Affairs has collaborated with the Africa Governance Institute (AGI) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to convene this Multistakeholder Dialogue on the Draft Discussion Paper of the African Union on Africa 2063 Agenda. I therefore thank the African Governance Institute under the Chairmanship of H.E Dr. Abdoulie Janneh, for its unwavering commitment and partnership with the Department of Political Affairs. Let me also add that this would not have been possible without the generous support of our friends and partners at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). They have been indeed our partners in progress.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:

As I indicated earlier, our gathering here is quite strategic. It is coming at the time we are celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the OAU/AU. The African Union as enshrined in its Constitutive Act aims to promote “an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena”. The 50th Anniversary of the OAU/AU is a unique moment in our history to celebrate our modest achievements in writing our own narratives of our past, present and the future that we look forward to. We hope that doing this will enthuse and energize the African population and use their constructive energy to accelerate a forward looking agenda of Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance in the 21st century.

The celebration of the yearlong 50th Anniversary which is being marked by several events such as this, serves as an opportunity for stock taking and putting in place a strategic vision for the coming 50 years in what we are calling an Africa 2063 Agenda. We are quite optimistic that 50 years from now, when the AU will be celebrating a centenary, it will be done in a more integrated, united, prosperous, peaceful and democratic setting.

This reflection also becomes necessary taking cognisance of our peculiar history and struggles. We have evolved from the dark continent of those years to becoming the next frontier. Our growth rates have become global reference statements. Our economies are becoming bigger and larger. Our youthful demography is an envy of our sister continents. Elections have become frequent and evolving into a norm our people are used to. We have suddenly become the new bride. In short, we are at a point that we can say confidently that the second scramble for Africa is here.

This beautiful narrative however comes with new forms of challenges. As much as we have made significant economic progress, the challenge of lifting a significant number of our people out of poverty remains a concern. Our demography which is meant to be a resource is on the verge of becoming a threat. Our business interaction with the rest of world is increasing at faster rates while intra-Africa trade remains a paltry percentage of that. Even with the wave of democracy taking root in the country, the institutionalisation of democratic norms and practices is still very much a challenge. Today, new forms of

popular struggles are emerging with the popular uprisings in Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya as case points.

These new forms of challenge require new ways of thinking. It is important to rethink our strategy in a way that we are able to understand the dynamics and be able to respond accordingly. In short, we need to have an interpretative understanding of our peculiar concerns and develop a response properly nuanced in the socio-economic and political dynamics of our environment. It is only in finding Africa-tuned solutions to our African based challenges that we can begin to approach the next fifty years confidently, strategically and pragmatically.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Let me also at this juncture address the misconception about the Africa 2063 Agenda of the African Union. A lot of commentaries have argued that we should be more realistic and plan for the next ten years instead of looking at 50years when biologically a lot of us are not likely to be here. I think this is a simplistic and rather selfish way of dismissing this agenda as irrelevant. Let me state categorically that it is important for us to begin to think strategically. We must begin to think far ahead. We must not repeat the mistakes of the past. It is only when we can envision a future that we can begin to put structures in place to get to achieve it.

Taking each day as it comes will rather make us susceptible to all forms of influences. I strongly believe this Agenda 2063 is our own masterplan with which we will march into the African Centenary with pride and our shoulders held up high. This can only happen if we all support it and contribute to its development with all that we have intellectually and physically. This is a people driven agenda and it is driving force for convening this dialogue.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:

At the Political Affairs Department, our focus is on ensuring that the Africa Governance Architecture and Platform becomes fully operational so as to assist us in driving the shared values agenda of the Union beyond just ratifications but to actual implementation. We have made remarkable progress in norms and standards setting

over the last half a century, it is however important that going into the next 50 years, we ensure that institutional frameworks that have been established to guide and facilitate the implementation of these norms work and fire at full throttle.

We must emphasize on the imperatives of deepening democratic practices and institutionalising good governance practices to ensure the growth and development of our continent. An attempt to understand Africa's agenda 2063 cannot be made without an appreciation of the imperatives of strengthening good governance, consolidating democracy, adherence to the rule of law, constitutionalism, and the respect for human and peoples' rights. There is a symbiotic relationship between good governance on one hand and human development and peace and security all of which are equally desirable and prerequisites for continental integration. Democratic governance is a guarantor for sustainable human development, peace and security and political stability in Africa, and the absence of any of these stalls continental integration, unity and prosperity.

It is therefore my hope that this gathering will help to give muscle and flesh to the proposals as contained in the draft 2063 Agenda of the African Union. I have no doubt that with the calibre of participants at this dialogue, this will be achieved.

Thank you for your attention and I wish you an engaging deliberation.