

AFRICAN UNION

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Opening Address by

Dr. Beatrice Njenga,

**Acting Head of Youth Division and Head of Education Division,
Human Resources, Science and Technology Department,
African Union Commission**

at the

3rd Edition of the Simulation of the Summit of African Union

14 May, 2016

Tunis, Tunisia

Programme Director;

Excellency, Minister of High Education and Scientific Research for the Republic of Tunisia Mr. Chiheb Bouden;

Excellency the Ambassador of the Republic of Cameroon to the Republic of Tunisia, Mr Victor Loe;

Mr. Hamza Ghedamsi, President and Founder of Model African Union;

Representative from the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, Mr. Henrik Meyer;

My esteemed predecessor and former colleague Dr. Raymonde Agossou;

Invited guests;

The young women and men here gathered;

Ladies and gentlemen,

We are greatly humbled and honoured to have had the opportunity to participate in this, the third Simulation of the African Union Summit. I also wish to extend congratulatory well wishes from Her Excellency the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma and the entire commission. It is Her Excellency's sincere belief that the commitment displayed by the youth of Tunisia requires further replication throughout the continent and in the diaspora. This simulation certainly advances the observations of our founding fathers who, through Kwame Nkrumah, observed

that: *“the forces that unite us are intrinsic and greater than the superimposed influences that keep us apart.”*

Indeed, our superordinate goal is to ensure a united and *“integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena”*.

Such an Africa ought to holistically address the needs and aspirations of young people who constitute over 65 per cent of our population. This is what motivated Africa’s leaders to conduct world wide consultations during 2013 with a simple question to all Africans here and in the diaspora; “what type of Africa would you want to see in the year 2063”. Dreaming long term has offered us with a blue print for Africa’s development over the next 50 years or so. The product of those dreams has given the continent a new lease of life through the aspirations and implementation programme of Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want. Through the seven aspirations, one of which is “an Africa where development is people driven, unleashing the potential of women and youth”, we hope to accelerate Africa’s development. We are currently ceased with the task of ensuring that Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want is domesticated by all our member states. I am pleased to report that in just less than one year about 30 Member States have embarked on the process of domestication.

The task left for the youth is to ensure that all our member states domesticate it and provide us with all the relevant skills and vigour for the implementation of its first ten priority projects, which seek to:

- (1) Improve Africa's infrastructure through projects such as the Integrated High Speed Train Network;
- (2) Improve and broaden access to education through the Africa Virtual and E-University;
- (3) Maximize on the beneficiation of our natural resources through the African Commodity Strategy;
- (4) Promote dialogue amongst all relevant African stakeholders through the Annual African Forum;
- (5) Increase intra African trade through the Continental Free Trade Area;
- (6) Promote the free movement of people through the African Passport
- (7) Address energy and water resources through the implementation of Grand Inga Dam Project which can potentially power Africa's development,
- (8) Promote access to information through the Pan African E-Network;
- (9) Secure lasting peace through Silencing the Guns by 2020, and
- (10) Promote innovation through the African Outer Space Strategy.

In implementing these ten projects we will improve living standards, transform our economies to be more inclusive and sustainable economies whilst also integrating our continent, empower our women, youth and children and ensure a well governed, peaceful and cultural centric Africa.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

As you can see a better Africa is within reach. To paraphrase the words of Tunisia's first and former President Habib Bourguiba "Africa is ready to turn the page", all we require is your participation.

That is why for us today's dialogue is an important milestone. Today's dialogue will assist us in refining our development agenda. This dialogue assists us in ensuring that the youth are an integral part of all our decision-making processes. This is one of the envisaged outcomes of the African Youth Charter whose tenth anniversary we will celebrate in Bangui in the Gambia in a week's time. I take this opportunity to invite you to present the outcomes of this dialogue during that milestone event, which we will mark under the theme **"10 Years Implementation of the African Youth Charter: Accelerating Youth Development in Africa"**. That milestone event will also offer us an opportunity to reflect and take stock of our actions related to youth development and empowerment.

In taking stock of our actions we will also consider the role and responsibilities of young people in their own development. This is in line with the decisions of the 26th ordinary session of the African Head of States and Governments Summit, which declared the year 2017 as ***'African Year for Harnessing Demographic Dividends for accelerated Youth Empowerment'***.

At the centre of ensuring that Africa's youth embrace the values and ideals of the common agenda, is ensuring that our education systems are enhanced to

instill African values, including mutual responsibility, pan Africanism, peace and democracy; This is what will ensure that the children and youth as they mature will be imbued with a sense and desire to think Africa first, rather than always wishing to 'escape' from Africa. Furthermore, the AU education science and technology strategies within Agenda 2063 are calling for a paradigm shift in education and training, to promote critical and innovative thinking; and imbue the young people with entrepreneurial skills so that they will not only be employable, but will be able to identify opportunities for entrepreneurship thereby contributing to expanding the labour markets. The strategies call for strengthening intra-Africa collaboration among scientists and researchers to strengthen the African character of scientific research towards ensuring Africa-led solutions to African challenges, while placing Africa among the front runners in social and technological innovation.

These are the efforts that will convert our youthful population into a veritable valuable demographic dividend to usher in Africa's prosperity.

Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen

The African Union Commission is committed to partner young Africans at any given opportunity such as this and ensuring that appropriate platforms are made available for you to be active players in all the activities of development in the continent. Such investments and opportunities in young Africans by the African union include internships; the African Union Youth volunteer Corps (AU-YVC) programme, and scholarships especially at the Pan African University, scientific awards and grants, celebration of African Youth Heroes among others.

I believe this simulation exercise will provide you insights of the decision making processes of the African Union, build in you the spirit of Pan-Africanism and equip you with the prerequisite leadership skills that will prepare you as leaders of this continent. I therefore entreat you to take every aspect of this exercise seriously in order to get the most out of it. The works of freedom fighters such as President Habib Bourguiba and Kwame Nkrumah should spark energy in you to do more for Africa.

As AU Ambassadors, continue to promote and take part in the implementation of all African Union activities and instruments especially the Youth Charter and Agenda 2063. This awareness I believe draws more interest, commitment and action towards the implementation and achievement of the African we all want.

As Ambassadors and actors of this shared vision be ambassadors and leaders of peace and democratic principles; ambassadors of mutual responsibility and consensus building towards shared freedoms and shared prosperity for Africa to take the 21st century

In conclusion, I congratulate you once again for this great initiative and action. This dialogue is a clear demonstration of your readiness to play your role as vibrant young Africans in helping implement and achieve the African We Want.

Thank you all and I wish you fruitful deliberations.