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## **Closing Remarks**

**By**

**AUC Chairperson,  
HE Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma**

***Italy-Africa Ministerial Conference***

**18 May 2016**

**Rome, ITALY**

**Programme Director,  
President of the Council of Ministers of the Italian Republic,  
Mr Matteo Renzi;  
Chairperson of the African Union Council of Ministers, and  
Foreign Minister of the Republic of Chad, Mr. Moussa Faki  
Mahamat;  
Our gracious host Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Italian  
Republic, Mr. Paolo Gentiloni Silveri;  
Excellencies, African Foreign Ministers and Heads of  
Delegations; African Union Commissioners; and  
Representatives from UN Agencies  
Academics and Members of the fourth estate;  
Distinguished Guests;  
Ladies and Gentlemen**

It has been an honour to have the opportunity to participate in this first Italy-Africa Ministerial dialogue.

Our peoples have a shared history built over centuries, albeit a very difficult relationship at times. The Italian peninsula is our closest immediate European neighbour.

Our cultures and way of life are interwoven, and thus the significant African community here has found it easier to adapt, as is the case with the large Italian community on our continent.

Back and forth migration and movement between the people of Africa and Italy predates recorded history with archaeological excavations on either side pointing to mutual beneficiary influences.

In the words of Associate Professor for Roman Languages and Literatures, Prof Giuliana Mingheli: *“If you are interested in the question of Italian nation building and identity formation, Africa is really central”*.

It was therefore natural that as we concluded Agenda 2063, our fifty-year vision of The Africa We Want, we are meeting here today with our most immediate neighbour for cooperation.

We met with Prime Minister Matteo Renzi last year at the Finance for Development Conference in Ethiopia, and two short months ago (in March) hosted President Sergio Mattarella at the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa.

On both occasions we agreed that we should undertake our partnership with urgency and determination. The fact that this dialogue is happening so soon after, shows this common commitment.

### **Prime Minister Renzi**

The dialogue today has contributed towards deepening understanding, with mutually beneficial areas of cooperation. We have used Agenda 2063, the SDGs and the outcomes of the Mediterranean Dialogues as the canvass to promote the livelihoods of our peoples on either side of the Mediterranean sea that we share.

Italy has many important attributes and capacities, which we can learn from: its rich history and culture, its economic model with the focus on small, medium and family businesses, its champion sectors such as agricultural implements, automotive and railway industries, tourism, agro-processing and food, construction, textiles, leather and fashion - to name but a few.

Africa, on the other hand, richly endowed with land, forests, minerals and human resources, has to catch up, and catch up fast, in order to ensure a better live for all its citizens, urban and rural, and especially children, youth and women.

Within the framework of its Agenda 2063, Africa is making progress and growing despite the commodity bust and extreme weather conditions.

Africa is the least indebted region of the world, with a debt to GDP ratio of 37%. Expenditure on much-needed infrastructure is growing faster than general government expenditure, and just over the last three years, infrastructure spending has increased from 50 billion to 90 billion US dollars per annum.

Of course, as the presentations in the panels showed, this can only be sustained and lead to the eradication of poverty, if Africa continues to speed up infrastructure development (transport, ICT, energy, irrigation, storage, etc); grow its agriculture and if our economies are diversified.

At present, we only add on average about 15% value to the natural resources that we export. By increasing this to 30%, it is estimated that we can create 7 million new jobs, more than triple the number of Africans migrants said to have left for Europe between 2010 to 2015.

The practical follow-up actions on the issues of common areas that we discussed today, are therefore important for both of us. We had a good dialogue, but what will count are the follow-up actions.

There are already Italian companies that are active in projects and businesses across the continent. Beyond the dialogue, we look forward to working with you on attracting even more investments to African countries, linking African and Italian businesses and entrepreneurs in such sectors as infrastructure, agro-processing, the green economy, renewable energies, tourism, the blue economy, as well as in manufacturing.

Specifically, we should work with Italy on the development of small, medium and family businesses in Africa, since these are so critical to the creation of jobs and shared prosperity.

Yesterday the AU Commission signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Italian E4Impact Foundation, to build more linkages between our universities in the training and mentorship of young entrepreneurs, so that they can enter into the agricultural and agro-processing sectors.

The Milan Expo 2015, with its focus on nutrition and agriculture saw a number of African countries exhibiting. This amazing Expo show-cased what can be done to decisively tackle food insecurity on the continent.

Again in this area of agriculture and agro-processing, there are practical things we must do beyond this dialogue, to tap on the strength of the Italian food and agribusiness sector, as well as its leading role in the manufacturing of agricultural implements.

### **Excellencies**

As we heard today, Africa is the only continent whose growing population is getting younger. This means that as a continent, investing in infrastructure, manufacturing, beneficiation and industrialisation, and agro-processing is critical to ensure that our young men and women have opportunities to contribute our shared prosperity and help us to reap the demographic dividend.

We are therefore working to make the African skills revolution a reality, focussing on the promotion of science, technology, engineering and mathematics education from primary to university level, and with a renewed focus on vocational education and training.

Italy is not only home to amongst the oldest universities in the world, but also amongst the most vibrant higher education sectors. Given the size of the African skills deficit, we hope that Italy will offer more scholarships to African students, and its universities cooperate with African universities, especially in the STEM areas.

It is these measures, so necessary to give young Africans access to opportunities, which will have the greatest impact on migration. Migration throughout the ages has happened for many reasons, and has had profound impacts on all continents, regions and countries. Africa's young and growing population presents opportunities not only for ourselves, but for other societies that are ageing.

Africa is as determined not to leave behind over half of our population, which are girls and women. Investments in girls and women have multiplier effects, in families, communities, the economies and societies. Women, along with young people are the key drivers of Agenda 2063, and for innovation in our continent.

### **Excellencies**

One of the presenters correctly pointed out that conflicts on the continent are reducing. Other research shows that most Africans today live in countries more peaceful, democratic and better governed than two decades ago.

The presenter is also correct that the key challenge is that of human security. Our Agenda 2063 emphasises that the route towards silencing the guns on the continent, is to invest in the African people, our most precious resource, and build inclusive, democratic, people-centered and caring societies, with developmental governments that are accountable to their citizens. In our joint work on peace and security on the continent with Italy, we believe that we share this perspective.

### **Excellency, Mr. Prime Minister**

We believe that this dialogue takes place at a critical juncture in both our histories, where on the one hand Italy as part of the European Union is charting a path towards the future after the

challenges of the last financial crisis and as its societies are undergoing fundamental changes, including ageing populations.

Africa, on the other hand, is determined to change its fate and the condition of its people.

We are indeed talking about an African renaissance, learning from the experience of the great Italian renaissance, which we believe will redefine our place in the world.

In the end we can therefore say that this dialogue has been fruitful and worth all of our attention. Since urgency has been the key theme of our collaboration we are confident that we will all follow-up on the issues raised here today.

It is not done, until its done.

I thank you

**Grazie!!!**