

STATEMENT DELIVERED BY THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF
INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS HON. CORNELIUS
DEVEAUX AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE AFRICAN
UNION PRESUMMIT WORKSHOP ON ENGAGING PRESS
ATTACHES AND FOCAL PERSONS IN COMMUNICATION AT
EMBASSIES OF AFRICAN UNION MEMBER STATES IN THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AU COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

2014 – 2017

Mr Chairman,

Distinguished Guests

Colleagues of the fourth estate

Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives me great pleasure, on behalf of the Ministry of Information, Communications and Technology of the Republic of Sierra Leone, to address this auspicious and epoch making gathering of distinguished African brothers and sisters working to promote the course of African Unionism, thirty six years after Sierra Leone hosted a meeting of the Organization for African Unity (OAU) in 1980 under the leadership of one

of the legendary legacies of the pioneers of African Unionism, the late Dr. Siaka Probyn Stevens who was one of the founding fathers of our party, the All Peoples Congress (APC), and the first executive President of this country who made history by being the first opposition party in post-independent Africa to democratically oust a sitting government through the ballot box.

Let me therefore, on behalf of the present government and leadership of His Excellency Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma, join my colleague Minister in extending a very warm and hearty welcome to distinguished African brothers and sisters.

In a very traditional way I say to you all ‘ekushe’ and wish you the best of your stay in the capital city with an umbilical cord to the abolition of slavery.

In recognition of the efforts being made by our current President, Dr Ernest Bai Koroma, who in his capacity as Chairman of the Committee of African Heads of State pushing for reforms in the United Nations Security Council continues to relentlessly impress for a permanent and significant African representation in that all abiding apparatus of the UN system, the theme for this auspicious event, “Engaging the DIC with press attaches of the AU member state embassies in a bid to broaden outreach of the AU and expand knowledge about the Union in view of Agenda 2063”, could not have come at a time better than now.

Mr. Chairman, Sierra Leone has played and will continue to play a leading role in the quest for one Africa as has been eloquently characterize by such leaders as Kwame Nkrumah, Samora Machel, and all those who weathered the storm to set the stage for today's accomplishment.

They initiated the journey of a thousand mile leaving significant imprints in the sands of time which should serve as guiding principles and flag posts as we in our generation continue to fix the missing pieces in the jigsaw to a politically, socially, economically, culturally and determined all inclusive continent.

It is therefore, a matter of obligation on this generation of leaders for Africa to do things very differently to take advantage of the current momentum towards realizing the full compliments of Agenda 2063, which strives for an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena.

Mr. Chairman, in consideration of the undeniable reality that significantly more action is still required on a number of fronts, Sierra Leone stands out as an example of the required religious, political and cultural tolerance that embraces heterogeneous backgrounds in a common purpose and as a nation that has as its breastplate the principles of good governance and inclusive democratic participation, human rights and the rule of law with government's accountability and transparency to the people as a guiding principle.

Aiming to encourage discussion among all stakeholders, “Agenda 2063” is an approach to how the continent should effectively learn from the lessons of the past, build on the progress now underway and strategically exploit all possible opportunities available in the immediate and medium term, so as to ensure positive socioeconomic transformation within the next 50 years.

In this regard, one party dictatorship, military coups, disingenuous economic policies and divisive democracies should at all times be denounced and discouraged from flourishing while we should at all times strive to promote peace and stability, good governance and accountability to the people, building a peoples centered unionism that will unite our people for a common purpose and a common agenda and rekindle the passion for Pan-Africanism, a sense of unity, self-reliance, integration and solidarity.

As a global strategy to optimize use of Africa's resources for the benefits of all Africans., Sierra Leone as a nation with a people-centered government and political agenda is heartened to learn that Agenda 2063 aims to encourage discussion among all stakeholders and is an approach to how the continent should effectively learn from the lessons of the past, build on the progress now underway and strategically exploit all possible opportunities available in the short, medium and long term, so as to ensure positive

socioeconomic transformation within the next 50 years.

The relevance of information communication and dissemination to the realization of the objectives underscores the necessity of this gathering just as it pinpoints the importance of media practitioners as drivers of an all important process.

Consequently, the main objective of this workshop, which is to consolidate a good working relationship with the focal persons responsible for communication issues in the Embassies so as to increase awareness about the African Union and to create impact on the lives of the African citizens to own the integration process by contributing in the development of the continent at all levels is a step in the right direction.

It is also very encouraging to learn that the workshop will highlight some major achievements and high moments of the AU Commission during the past four years, from 2012 to 2016 and brainstorm on a popularization strategy to raise awareness on the different programs and projects of the AUC.

This approach is long overdue and our people need it now more than ever before. Proactive disclosure of information and accountability to the people could be the magic wand that fixes the missing pieces in the jigsaw.

The women, the youths and young people, the farmers and peasants, the educated and the non-educated, the people of divergent backgrounds and civil society should all be informed. It is only then, that they can make

informed decisions and be active participants in quest for a sustainable continent thus ensuring ownership of the process of Unionism.

Let me conclude my statement by asking the DIC of the AU to convey our highest consideration to H.E Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, the First Female Chairperson of the AU Commission.

Finally, let me, on behalf of the government and people of Sierra Leone, wish you a successful engagement with great and good tidings for our continent and the struggle to establishing a just and equitable society.

I thank you for your attention.