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Welcome Remarks of the Chairperson of the African
Union Commission, HE Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma

to the

**Ordinary Session of the
Permanent Representative Committee of the African
Union**

Kigali. RWANDA, 10 July 2016

Check against delivery

Our gracious Hosts, the Government and People of the Republic of Rwanda

Your Excellency, Ambassador of the Republic of Chad and Chairperson of the Permanent Representative Council

Distinguished Ambassadors, Members of the PRC,

Members of the AU Commission;

Representatives of AU Organs, Regional Economic Communities, the NEPAD Agency, APRM, AU Representative and Liaison Offices, Specialised and Technical Agencies

Representatives from the United Nations Economic Commission, the African Development Bank and the African Capacity Building Foundation

Officials from Capitals, and AU Commission staff

Representatives from Civil Society

Representatives from the Diplomatic Corps

Ladies and Gentlemen

A warm welcome to the 32nd Ordinary session of the Permanent Representative Committee, and we are very pleased to be in the vibrant, immaculate and growing city of Kigali.

It is always a pleasure to visit our capital cities, to witness the changes, and to see how progress is being made in transforming the lives of the African people.

We thank the President, the Government of Rwanda and the People for their legendary hospitality and impeccable organization.

It is also important that we have this meeting in Rwanda, a country doing everything to make sure that women are treated as equal citizens, where men and women work side by side to ensure the progress of the country and of the continent.

Excellencies,

This Summit is an important milestone in our Union, as it considers the end of the term of this Commission and the election of new leadership.

This is perhaps an opportunity to reflect on the route we travelled together during this four period, and how playing our respective roles, we take forward the mission of the African Union to build an integrated, peaceful and prosperous Africa, driven by its own people and playing a dynamic role in the world.

Though we have different yet complementary roles, this mission is what defines how the Permanent Representative Committee and the AU Commission carry out their work, over the past four years and going forward.

It is a mission that is informed by the core Pan African values that define our union: unity, cooperation, solidarity and self-reliance, and being, and thinking and acting Pan African.

The issue of *unity and cooperation* remains critical for all the programmes and initiatives of Agenda 2063. It would be difficult for us to move forward on the transport corridors that connect our countries; on the regional energy pools that must power industries and homes; on free movement of people; on regional value chains in beneficiation and manufacturing, without cooperation amongst countries and with the Regional Economic Communities.

One of the reasons for slow movement on some of these issues, like the single African aviation market, was our focus on national interest, to the detriment of the continental interests. As a result, Africa have lost over 40% of its market share, and Member states have open sky agreements with many more non-African countries, than they do with other African countries.

The Permanent Representatives of Member States in Addis Ababa are in a unique position, based as they are in the capital of Africa and where the Commission is headquartered, to advocate for that balance between the national interests and the continental common good.

The unity and cooperation also relates to the development agenda of the continent. Part of the reason for the African Union and RECs pre-eminence in matters of peace and security in Africa, has been the fact that we have a vibrant Peace and Security Council, that meets regularly, and do follow-up, but we do not have the the same vibrant engagement on the developmental and economic priorities in the continent.

Excellencies,

This links very closely to the need for *solidarity* amongst Africans. We know that in areas such as peace and security and elections monitoring, our countries have practiced the customary African solidarity, by contributing human rights and elections observers, by contributing troops and other personnel to peace operations.

We also witnessed during this period of over twenty countries also responded to the AU call for health workers to make the ASEOWA mission a success, in the fight against Ebola.

At the same time, the Commission had to work very hard to convince Member states not to further isolate the affected countries, when some of them stopped their national airlines from flying to these countries and some stopped the nationals from the countries from traveling to their countries.

The Agenda 2063 programmes and priorities also require a great amount of solidarity, to support each others' initiatives and not to get bogged down into counter-productive competition amongst each other. And yet the tendency of giving better market access, terms of trade, investment conditions to foreign companies, countries and non-African regions than we do amongst ourselves, persist.

Closely linked to our principles of unity, cooperation and solidarity, is that of *self-reliance and independence*. This is a matter that we have been seized with at PRC, Executive and Assembly, and some times the PRC and the Commission have not seen eye to eye on it.

And yet, Your Excellencies, based as you are at the Headquarters of the AU, you are most closely aware of the impact of the over-reliance on outside funding have on the Commission and Organs, and on our ability to focus on the continental priorities. The reality remains, that he who pays the piper, calls the tune.

The Commission, of course, can, has tried to and must do better to ensure that it streamlines its activities to focus on Agenda 2063 priorities, to cut down on wastage and wasteful expenditure, to be more prudent so that it focuses on those activities that have a real impact for Member states and our citizens.

The decision of our Heads of State and Government, to move towards greater self-reliance and funding for AU operations, programmes and peace operations must be our guiding mantra. We must continue to work together to see how to operationalize, implement and monitor this decision. We rely on PRC members to work with us to continue to convince their capitals on their commitments to this decision.

Last, but not least, all these values requires that we all - in the Commission and the PRC - be *Pan African* in our outlook and actions.

Internal domestication of Agenda 2063 has commenced in at least 34 countries to date, as well as some of the RECs. We should by January 2017 present the monitoring and evaluation framework to the Executive Council for adoption, with joint indicators for our First Ten year Implementation Plan as well as for the global Sustainable Development Goals.

This process of internal domestication of Agenda 2063 should help us to see in real terms the link between our national interests and the Pan African agenda and progress.

Progress in one or more countries - indeed progress in as many countries as possible - will provide a tipping point, which should help even those who lag a bit behind.

The larger and growing economies in different regions have to also play their role, as locomotives for growth, skills, research, investment and development. If they themselves lag behind or slow down continental growth, it will have an impact, not only in their national context, but in their sub-regions, regions and the continent.

The progress on the Continental Free Trade Area is one such area where, unless we take a Pan African stance, we will perish as individual countries and as a continent.

The world is moving towards mega trading blocks, that all exclude Africa, and the Doha development round of negotiations have failed to even start. Unless we unite to form our African common market, the little bit of preferential trade we have at the moment, will be further eroded.

Excellencies,

We have more to win, than to loose from implementing our African agenda.

If more countries sign up on the Arusha Declaration on Harmonization of Universities, like East Africa has done, we provide more opportunities for all African young people to do degrees of their choices and to practice their professions in the continent.

If we continue to build momentum on continental free trade and movement of people, goods and services it will create better conditions for our traders, farmers, businesses, entrepreneurs and innovators to invest, trade with each other and build Pan African companies and brands.

If we all build on progress to empower women and girls, we can all move a step closer towards healthier families, more cohesive communities and more peaceful and democratic societies.

Excellencies

The relationship between the Commission and the PRC has been characterized by cooperation, through stormy at times. The PRC has also kept the Commission on its toes, as it should.

This working relationship requires ongoing attention and the incoming Commission too will have to engage on this matter, guided by our statutes and decisions of our higher organs.

The PRC must remain active in strengthening and engaging the other organs, the Pan African Parliament, the Commission and Court on Human and Peoples Rights, ECOSOCC and the APRM. These are critical institutions of our continent, in the context of strengthening development, governance, democracy and human rights and they need our support.

The PRC continues to play an important role in preserving the institutional memory of our Union, through the institution of regional deans, and should therefore help to guide the incoming Commission on all decisions of the AU, and especially on Agenda 2063.

We thank the PRC for their support on critical matters, and for the robust engagements we had during this period. We must continue to see these robust engagements in the context of our common Pan African mission, to build an African Union of the People, and a continent that is integrated, peaceful and prosperous and plays a dynamic role in the world.

I thank you, and wish this 32nd Ordinary session of the PRC fruitful deliberations.