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

to the

**African Editors Forum and AU Commission
Roundtable on Agenda 2063**

Kigali. RWANDA, 13 July 2016

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Prof. Shyaka Amastase, CEO of Rwanda Governance Board
Colin Haba, President of the Association of the Rwanda Journalists
Ms. Emrakeb Assefa, Executive Secretary of The African Editors Forum
Chairperson and leadership of the African Editors Forum and other Members of the Fourth Estate
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a great pleasure to have this engagement between senior African editors, journalists and the AU Commission, about the present and future of our beloved continent, and the role we must play in working towards an Africa that is integrated, peaceful, prosperous and people-centered, and that plays a dynamic role in the world.

This ideal was also at the center of our liberation and anti-colonial struggles, a mission of the early Pan Africanists and the founders of our Union.

The early generations of Pan African journalists, at the turn of the nineteenth century, realised that they needed to give voice to the aspirations of their people. Many started their own newspapers. Thus the World Newspaper Archives Chronical, wrote on their online collection on African Newspapers from 1800-1922:

Through eyewitness reporting, editorials, legislative updates, letters, poetry, advertisements, matrimony and death notices, this unique collection chronicles the evolution of cultures and countries across Africa during a time of drastic change. From repercussions of the Atlantic slave trade, life under colonial rule and the results of the Berlin Conference to the emergence of Black journalism, the Zulu Wars and the rejection of Western imperialism, these newspapers provide a wide range of viewpoints on diverse cultures.

The mass media on the continent and beyond thus played a critical role in the struggles for liberation. It exposed the cruelty and

exploitation of colonialism, and played a role in mobilizing the African people towards their liberation struggles.

They covered the battles and manifestos, helped to mass-produce pamphlets and carried the messages of liberation in popular media through cartoons and comic strips, and many other forms.

They helped shape a narrative of liberation and independence.

At the same time, some newspapers and journalists, also perpetuated the ideology that justified colonialism and the slave trade with its narrative of '*the white man's burden, darkest Africa, the seduction of the primitive.*' David Spur in *The Rhetoric of Empire* for example chronicled how Western journalists justified the exploitation of the resources of colonies. Colonization, he said, was presented as a gesture of „*human solidarity*“ because it „*unites the intellectual and moral qualities of Europe with the material wealth of the tropics*“.

Thus we had these two competing narratives.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Back to the present. As we celebrated 50th years since the formation of the OAU/AU, we sought to define the mission of current generations of Africans, to define the Africa we want. Thus drawing from past experiences, and our desire to write our own future, we developed Agenda 2063.

We did so, through a wide range of unscripted consultations with various stakeholders, sectors within the continent and the Diaspora. We did not meet the Editors Forum, but some journalists participated in these consultations, and I hope this won't be the last.

This conference is a continuation of that and other conversations we've had. The hosting of this conference in Rwanda is also significant, a country where 22 years ago *Radio Television Mille Collines (RTLM)* and the *Kangaru newspaper*, had journalists and

editors who crafted, disseminated and rolled out an agenda of hatred, inciting and instigating the population to perpetrate violence, gross human rights violations and genocide against their neighbours and fellow Rwandese.

Twenty-two years later, the memories are still fresh. I visited the Memorial, and every time it makes me cry. It is a shame that journalists were part of that agenda, indeed it is a shame on all of our. We must continue to reflect on this history, as we shape our continental agenda, including working towards silencing the guns and we must all say, never again.

Conflicts will always be there, but if and where it arises, it must be resolved through dialogue and discussions, not through the barrel of the guns. Its an indictment to say by 2020, it should be yesterday, but being realistic, we must all do more.

Ladies and Gentlemen

We all agree that media and mass communications play an important role to inform, educate, and to influence public opinion. Responsible journalism speaks truth to power and is therefore essential to democracy, to development and to transformation. The African media, in its great diversity, has a responsibility and an important role to play, to promote Pan Africanism and Africa's Renaissance, as we seek to implement Agenda 2063, and to hold us accountable in the decisions we take and their implementation.

Media is influenced as much by prevailing culture, political systems and media freedoms, as it is by issues of media ownership and diversity, and by the changes in media technologies. New technology and social media have democratized and massified access to information and the creation of content, whilst at the same time present new challenges with fast-travelling, often unverified

reporting.

Information is a public good, from the perspective of both development and democracy. This ranges from information on the prevention of disease as we have seen with the HIV pandemic, with malaria and more recently with the Ebola epidemic and now Yellow Fever.

Media and information also protects consumers, farmers and artisans by creating access to information about prices of commodities so that they are not cheated by middlemen, due to lack of information and comparison.

Moreover, during elections media plays a pivotal role by providing citizens with information about political parties, candidates they vote for, election issues and accurate reporting of results.

Media can and should give voice to the powerless, bringing to the forefront the problems faced by citizens, disseminating warnings about disasters and report on whether government lives up to its policies. That is why it is so important that media should be credible, responsible and responsive.

It plays a critical role in shaping narratives, and therefore in socialization. The media holds up, or should hold up, a mirror to our society, giving us a sense of what we look like.

This is a critical role, and as we look at the state of African media today, we should examine all these roles and how these evolved.

Societies and governments, on the other hand, have the responsibility to ensure and defend freedom of expression and the media. Journalists should not be punished for telling the truth and our policies and laws must create frameworks for these rights and responsibilities.

As said before, the roles of the media are influenced by a range of factors including the diversity of African voices, in a changing continent. Diversity and voices are important for Africa, perhaps more so than in any other continent, because of our history.

More specifically, it is important because of what author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie refers to as the danger of the single story, of creating stereotypes, of incomplete stories (and analysis), where one dominating narrative becomes the only story¹.

Within the context of the recent Africa rising discourse, the dominant narrative tend to focus on our growing urban middle class as a mass consumer market for global products - from cars to cell phones, to clothes, to pharmaceuticals, to food.

So the African consumer markets are disaggregated, segmented and analysed, yet the real questions are why Africa produces only 2% of the pharmaceuticals it consumes, why it imports an estimated 83% of process food it consumed food², and why, despite the fact that Africa is the major producer of Columbite-tantalite - coltan for short - a key component in everything from mobile phones and computer chips, to stereos and VCRs³, it imports almost all of these consumer goods. We need to add this part of the story.

This is the dominant narrative about Africa rising, because the rest of the world remains interested in our raw materials and now in our people as part of their consumer markets. For Africans, the real narrative should be about how a growing Africa contributes to eradicate poverty, by skilling its people, industrializing, building infrastructure, increase access to basic services and creating jobs. The focus on the middle class also hides a perspective, which does not advocate for working people to earn wages to make a decent

¹ *The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make the one story become the only story.*

² How the EU starves Africa into submission. By Calestous Juma. 26 October 2015

³ Guns, Money and Cell Phones. By Kristi Essick. *The Industry Standard Magazine*. Jun 11 2001

living, and we happily accept the working poor as a fact of life. Why should anyone wake up in the mornings, do a decent day's work, for 48 hours a week, and not able to put food on their tables and send their children to school. We must compare what multi national companies pay workers in Africa and elsewhere in the world.

As we therefore transform Africa, including changing its fate from an exporter of raw materials to manufacturing for its own domestic market of over a billion people and growing, Africa as a consumer market for others should not become our single story.

The other single story, I want to talk about, is the narrative about the importance of overseas development aid and foreign direct investment for African development. And yet, the continent already fund since 2009 Africa over 85% of its development.

Out there, this part of the story is not told. This plays into our own understanding that without help and from a benevolent other, we can achieve nothing. We thus buy into our own lack of capacity, or as one writer put it, Africa is destined for underdevelopment and therefore be on our permanent need of a disability benefit from the world in the form of aid. This mindset will persist if we don't tell the full story.

There is a lot we are doing already and that we can do for ourselves. Aid is welcome, but it can be the mainstay of our development.

There is yet another single story, which must be challenged, and challenged with determination, and that is the stereotypes about women in the media.

The findings of the *Gender Media Baseline Study* by GenderLinks and the Media Institute of Southern Africa of 2003, a study covering over 25,000 news items in ten Southern African countries, which I'm sure you are all aware of, is highly instructive. According to the study:

- Women accounted for only 17% of news sources, similar to the global average, across both public and private media; the media does not think it should ask women, that they can say anything news worthy.

- The voices of young women (under 35 years) and women over 50 years were virtually unheard in both print and electronic media.
- In all countries, a woman is much more likely to be identified as a wife, daughter or mother (or ex-wife) rather than a man is likely to be identified as a husband, son or father (or ex-husband);
- Although at the time women represented 18% of parliamentarians in the region, they constitute only 10% of sources on political stories. Even those SADC countries with the highest representation of women in parliament - South Africa, Mozambique and Tanzania - had some of the lowest proportions of women politicians being accessed as news sources. South Africa, for example, at the time had 31 percent women in parliament and a similar proportion in cabinet. Yet women constituted only eight percent of the politicians quoted in the media monitored.
- Only 22% of news stories published were written by women journalists; and
- The only occupational categories in which female views dominated were beauty contestants, sex workers and home-makers.

This study was done more than a decade ago, and as far as I know has not (yet) been repeated, but Ive not seen much change. But, the Africa Media Monitor website page on Gender and Media still notes:

When women do speak, their roles are often limited to victims, family of somebody or when they are celebrities. Professional people, when quoted, on the other hand are almost all men.

We must also ask whether the campaigns against child marriages and against maternal mortality are sufficiently covered.

It would therefore, be interesting to hear from the African leadership gathered here, after getting these findings 13 years ago, what as a

media you did to change this situation. Has this situation changed, if we repeat this study today would we find something different?

Indeed, we must look at the issue of women in the media, their working conditions, the pay gap and glass ceiling, and other challenges they face, because the same may be true of women journalists in Africa, as is the case in a report about women in the Indian media, when it noted the progress since Beijing:

their share of jobs in all media has increased, they are not restricted to fashion, cookery, art and culture but are also reporting from the battlefields, stock market and the Parliament's press gallery.

In fact women journalists are radically changing the media and giving it a broader base by mainstreaming health, environment, social concerns and women's issues⁴.

It is therefore important to get more women in the media, because they bring different perspective. I trust the same can be said about African women in the media.

Last, but not least, another part of the story is how it is always African conflicts that grab the headlines, and hardly ever African development stories.

My experience as Commission Chairperson on countless occasions have been, whether speaking at a meeting about African mining, science and technology, agriculture or universities, I always get asked about the conflicts, and have to insist that the journalists also ask me about mining, agriculture, our universities. Conflicts must be covered, but it should not be the single story about Africa.

We seem to have this tendency to find more negative stories about ourselves, written by ourselves, which provides much of the canon-fodder and confirmation for the views of the outside world and their narratives about us.

Ladies and Gentlemen

⁴ Executive Summary. Status of women journalist in the print media. By Pamela Bhagat

I have used these examples of how a narrative is shaped about Africa, and I am sure there are countless others. So as we discuss Agenda 2063 today, we must address such issues as:

- Who shapes the narrative of stories on Africa, is our media Pan African in how it covers African stories, and what do we mean by a Pan African media, as against a Chinese, a US, French, European or Brazilian media?
- How vibrant and diverse is the media in Africa today, do we lead the way on African stories, or do we report about them when the major news agencies of the world do, in exactly the same manner?
- There is no questioning the merit in the advent of more economic and business media titles on the continent, but from which perspectives? Do they advocate for an endogenous Africa growth path?
- What is the impact of social media on the shaping of the African narratives and attitudes? And;
- What needs to be done to strengthen media freedoms, diversity of ownership and the profession?

We ask and should answer these questions, Ladies and Gentlemen, because we believe that the media and mass communications are critical to the success of Agenda 2063: in educating, informing, and in changing mind-sets so that we instil in Africans a belief in their ability to change their destiny.

From Cairo to Cape Town, from Dakar to Djibouti, as African Media personnel you have the opportunity and responsibility to strengthen the bonds of Africans around the continent and the world, highlighting our common human heritage and destiny, and our rich and beautiful diversities.

President Nyerere was a great Pan Africanist, he wrote that wherever he goes across the world, they say there goes an African, not a Tanzania. Therefore, Tanzania is a piece of Africa. But the real revolution is Pan African.

Recently Ebola was in three small West African countries, but flights were cancelled to Cape Town, Mombasa and Cairo. We also didn't help by cancelling flights to the affected countries. But, our fates are interlinked.

Over the course of the next few days, you will witness the work we are undertaking in relation to Free Movement of Goods and Persons through the launch of the African Passport. This is under discussion at the Summit, to devolve the African passports to countries. We already have a decision in January 2016, that we all should have a 90 day visa free policy to all African countries. Ghana, in the spirit of Nkrumah has taken the lead. It is also your responsibility to popularize this decision, and to check progress on the continent.

If we don't integrate, we are the only losers. For example, in 2000 we decided that we should have a single African aviation market, and open skies agreement amongst each other. We failed to implement it, and by 2014 we've lost 40% of our own markets. The lack of implementation of our decisions have a price.

Implementation of Agenda 2063 therefore critical. On the African Continental Free Trade Area, there are mega trading blocks being formed across the world, all which exclude us, but we are slow on building our own African common markets.

We must work together, so that you are not put in jail and harassed for reporting the truth, and you must also

I am not sure why the African Editors Forum can't have observer status to the African Union, but I will check since that is one of your desires.

Like the Somali proverb: *"until the lion tells his story, the story of the hunt will always glorify the hunter."*

I thank you.