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**STATEMENT BY H.E. DR. NKOSAZANA DLAMINI ZUMA
CHAIRPERSON OF THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION
AT THE OPENING SESSION OF THE 4TH AFRICA-ARAB SUMMIT**

**MALABO, EQUATORIAL GUINEA
23 NOVEMBER 2016**

**Excellency, President Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea and our gracious host;
Your Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Amir of the State of Kuwait and co chair of this summit;
Excellency, President Idriss Déby Itno, President of the Republic of Chad and Current Chairperson of the African Union and co chair of this Summit;
Excellency, President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania and Current Chairperson of the Arab League;
Excellencies Heads of State and Government;
Excellencies Heads of Delegations;
Excellencies Heads of International and Regional Organizations;
Excellency, Secretary General of the League of Arab States;
Distinguished Delegates;**

It is a great honour and distinct privilege for me to address you all at this opening ceremony of the 4th Africa-Arab Summit, which is taking place in this beautiful city of Malabo.

At the outset, please allow me to express my deep gratitude to His Excellency Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea and, the Government and the people of Equatorial Guinea, for hosting the 4th Africa-Arab Summit and for placing these excellent facilities at the disposal of our delegates.

Let me also take this opportunity to congratulate and express our gratitude to H.E. President Idriss Déby Itno of Chad and H.E. President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz of Mauritania, the co chairs of this Africa Arab Summit

I also wish to express our gratitude to the outgoing Co-Chairs of the Summit, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Amir of the State of Kuwait, and to His Excellency Hailemariam Desalegn, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia for steering the Africa-Arab Partnership over the last 3 years.

Our appreciation also goes to the Member States of the Coordination Committee whose commitment and dedication has resulted in the implementation of some of the agreed upon projects and activities.

Please also allow me to welcome to this partnership the new Secretary General of the League of Arab States, my colleague and brother, Mr Ahmed Aboul Gheit. I wish to assure him of the Commission's full support.

I also wish to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the former Secretary General of the League of Arab States H.E. Dr Nabil Elaraby, for the contributions to strengthening of the Partnership.

Next year will mark the 40th Anniversary of the decisive and historic Cairo Declaration and the Plan of Action on Africa-Arab Cooperation. The adoption of the Declaration and comprehensive Plan of Action serves as the basis for our political, economic, cultural and social interactions.

At the same time this 4th Africa-Arab Summit is being held at a time when Africa is demonstrating strong commitments to transform its economy and improve its social conditions through the implementation of Agenda 2063, “The Africa We Want”, which is also linked to the global commitments related to the Sustainable Development Goals. Consequently, these should form the basis of our deliberations, cooperation and partnership.

Excellencies and Highnesses, Africa will account for about 80% of the projected 4 billion increases in the global population by the turn of this century¹. This will result in almost half of the world’s youth being African in that year². At a time when the developed world is and will be facing an ageing population, this presents a window of opportunity, which if properly tapped can generate for us a demographic dividend towards higher and inclusive growth.

Our partnership should therefore take this into cognisance and we must pay particular attention to Africa’s 2017 theme of ***Harnessing the Demographic Dividend through Investments in the Youth***. In order to effectively harness this dividend we must do more to grow our economies by investing in human capital such that we can create sustainable and decent jobs. This will also require deliberate and actionable commitments towards investing in youth innovation as well as in the sciences and technology. In this regard, I wish to propose that this partnership considers facilitating for skills and cultural exchange programmes so as to mutually benefit the young people from our regions and encourage a culture of understanding amongst our youth.

Excellencies and Highnesses The population growth also implies an added pressure on the need for more food and nutrition with the value of the agribusiness market being projected to reach 1 trillion dollars by the year 2030³. The extent to which Africa capitalises on having 60% of the world’s remaining arable land will determine global food security and nutrition. Since Africa has the necessary land, water and sun required for the growth of this sector, this

¹ Paulo Drummond, Vimal Thakoor, and Shu Yu, *Africa Rising: Harnessing the Demographic Dividend*, IMF Working Paper 14/143

² Victoria Woollaston, *World’s Population Will Soar to 11 billion by 2100 and Half Will Live in Africa, Claims Report*, in Daily Mail: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-3192285/World-s-population-soar-11-billion-2100-HALF-live-Africa-claims-report.html>

³ Akinwumi Adesina, *President, African Development Bank Unlocking Africa’s potential to create wealth from agriculture in* www.afdb.org/en/news-and-events/article/unlocking-africas-potential-to-create-wealth-from-agriculture-14841/

presents yet another potential area of emphasis for our collaboration for the benefit of Africa and the Arab world. Our partnership must therefore work towards modernizing our agriculture, raising our agricultural productivity, developing agro industries, and investing in value adding processing for agriculture.

Closely related to this sector of agriculture is the Blue Economy. Africa is one big island with two oceans and seas with 38 coastal and island countries having a coastal line three times the size of her landmass. Over 90% of her imports and exports are transported through the seas, oceans and waterways. No doubt maritime and the blue economy is the next frontier for our socio-economic development. This offers investment opportunities for the Arab world as we accelerate the implementation of our *African Charter on Maritime Security, Safety and Development*.

Excellencies and Highnesses Agenda 2063 calls upon us to conduct a radical industrialisation programme, which will see us adding value and benefiting our natural and mineral resources. In this regard, our 27th Summit hosted in Kigali, Rwanda earlier this year, called upon an acceleration of processes related to this radical programme, which includes the conclusion of the negotiations of the Continental Free Trade Area and the promotion of the free movement of persons and goods. In this context we intend to build Pan African businesses that will contribute to the growth of intra-African trade from less than 12% in 2013 to approaching 50% by 2045.

Excellencies and Highnesses, Growth in these areas and in all the sectors of our economies will require energy and in this era of climate change we ought to focus on renewable energy, so that we may bequeath a sustainable world to future generations. Again, this presents further investment opportunities and potential private sector collaboration, particularly as it relates to product development and skills enhancement.

I wish to express our gratitude and appreciation to His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Amir of the State of Kuwait and take this opportunity to congratulate the 2015/2016 winners of the Al-Sumait Prize for African Development.

Excellencies and Highnesses Our regions face similar challenges, be it the relatively lower oil and mineral prices which have adversely affected most of our economies or be it the various wars and conflict situations confronting our peoples. All these signal the need for us to diversify our economies such that our growth is people centred and inclusive. All this requires that we win the hearts and minds of our people and foster win-win partnerships that address the needs of our peoples in order to secure lasting peace and development.

The Africa-Arab Partnership has not been without challenges these include the non-functionality of some of the coordination and implementation mechanisms, limited involvement of the Private Sector and civil society, limited resources, negative effects of globalization, war and terrorism, amongst others.

I am glad to note that today large numbers of African countries are mobilizing support and strengthening their citizens' engagement and ownership of Agenda 2063. This is in line with Aspiration 6 of Agenda 2063 which calls on all of us to focus on building "*An Africa where development is people driven, unleashing the potential of its women and youth*". I therefore wish to propose that this Summit place added consideration to programmes and projects that will facilitate for the empowerment of women, over and above the youth focus I have implored for earlier.

One of the major challenges facing this partnership has been the lack of resources. We must redouble our efforts and ensure that before our next gathering the mooted Joint Conference of Ministers of Economy, Finance and Trade meets so as to discuss the financing aspects for our action plan.

Excellencies and Highnesses, Our collaboration over the past four decades has yielded a better world for our people; of note is the political and diplomatic support we have extended to each other at critical times. Herein, I am referring to the legendary Arab Alliance, which provided solidarity and practical support to the African struggle for independence as well as the continued support and cooperation of Africa to the cause of the Palestinian people and their inalienable right to self-determination. Our partnership has been one that is principled and has also advocated for the right to self-determination of all peoples. It is in this respect that we hope we can work together, in the spirit of cooperation and friendship, to resolve the outstanding issues of Palestine and Western Saharawi.

I also wish to assure Your Highnesses and Excellencies that the African Union is ready to work together with the League of Arab States to achieve our mutual interests and secure "*An integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in global arena.*"

I also take this opportunity to thank you as our partners for your having continued to stand with us in our journey to bequeath a better and secure future for our peoples. To this end, I implore all of us to spare no efforts for the success of our partnership.

I thank you very much and wish the 4th Africa – Arab Summit a resounding success.