

WELCOMING REMARK
BY
H.E. Dr. WORKNEH GEBEYEHU,
MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE
FEDERAL DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF
ETHIOPIA
AT
THE 5TH MINISTERIAL RETREAT OF THE
EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF THE AFRICAN UNION

8-9 December 2016
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Your Excellency, Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, Chairperson of the African Union Commission,

Your Excellency, Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the Executive Council,

Distinguished ministers,

Excellencies Ambassadors,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all let me welcome you to Addis Ababa for the Ministerial Retreat of the AU Executive Council, which is being held for the 5th time since 2014.

As you will agree with me, our Ministerial Retreats have become valuable opportunities for us to sit-down with the AU Commission and conduct frank discussions on our continental priority programmes, as well as the achievements and difficulties encountered in their implementation.

Although, this is the first Ministerial Retreat that I am attending since my appointment as Minister of Foreign Affairs, I have been briefed on how the previous four meetings have been successful in the design and implementation of strategic issues such as Agenda 2063 and other institutional matters of the AU Commission which were later adopted by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we open our 5th Ministerial Retreat today, I would like to emphasize on the critical importance of the thematic issues we are about to discuss during these two days. Our first session on the “Political Trends in our Continent” is timely and significant. This theme will give us the opportunity to deliberate, among others, on how to deepen democratization and good governance in our continent.

The session on the Commodities Strategy is equally significant and is in line with the Outcome Document which was issued at the end of the Ministerial Retreat in Bahr Dar, Ethiopia, in 2014. In our discussion on this subject, we are expected to find effective and judicious ways of exploiting our natural resources, so that our people could share the benefits in a meaningful manner. To this end, securing competitive value for our natural resources in the global market place is vital. We

have to earnestly find skillful solution where we can end the status quo of being price takers than price setters.

Moreover, we will have a follow up on our previous decisions on the Flagship Projects and the Ten Year Implementation Plan of Agenda 2063. The domestication of Agenda 2063 into our national development policies is, indeed, a priority that requires our full attention during this retreat.

I am confident that in a relaxed atmosphere of a retreat, and common spirit of unity of purpose, insightful recommendations will come out of our discussions on these and other important issues. Without any doubt, the upcoming sessions of the African Union Policy Organs will benefit from this exercise.

Finally, I wish to commend the African Union Commission, and particularly the African Union Leadership Academy, for organizing the first ever debate between the candidates for the post of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission. This is in line with promoting the spirit of Pan-Africanism, and bringing our Union closer to the people. Ethiopia has done its share to support this initiative by facilitating live broadcasting of the debate to all member States of the African Union.

I wish you fruitful deliberations and a pleasant stay in Addis Ababa.

I thank you.

