

**AFRICAN UNION**

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**STATEMENT BY H. E. DR. NKOSAZANA DLAMINI ZUMA,  
CHAIRPERSON OF THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION,**

**AT THE OPENING OF THE 5<sup>TH</sup> MINISTERIAL RETREAT OF  
THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

**8-9 DECEMBER 2016  
ADDIS ABABA**

**Your Excellency, Chairperson of the Executive Council and  
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Chad  
Excellency, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, our gracious  
host  
Excellency Deputy Chairperson Erastus Mwencha and  
Commissioners  
Excellencies, Ministers and Deputy Ministers  
Excellencies, Heads of AU Organs, Delegation Leaders  
Excellency, Representatives from our sister organisations  
UNECA, AfDB and ACBF  
Excellencies Representatives from RECs  
Members of the PRC  
AUC Staff and Officials from Capitals**

We are pleased to welcome you to the Headquarters of the African Union, and to this 5<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Retreat of the Executive Council.

We hold this Retreat as the Cuban people just buried the father of their modern nation and a friend to many African countries. Fidel Castro strive to develop his people – during the first few decades of his reign building over 10,000 new schools and raising literacy to 98% and amongst the best and most accessible health care system in the world.

In 1966, he founded the Organization for Solidarity with the Peoples of Asia, Africa, and Latin America to support anti-colonial struggles in the three continents.

Cuba's role in assisting the decolonisation process in Africa was second to none. Without fear of contradiction some of us would not be here today if not for the support of the Cuba people.

From the early 1960's Castro threw all his support behind the

Cuba from the onset supported the development of post-independent African health and education systems, and till today trained tens of thousands of African health workers and deployed Cuban doctors, including during the Ebola pandemic.

We therefore remember his contribution and shall remain grateful.

**Your Excellencies**

The Executive Council, as an Organ of the AU, plays an important role in monitoring agenda of the Union, the integration agenda and making recommendations on strategic approaches to take forward this agenda.

Since the first Retreat of the Executive Council in Bahir Dar in January 2014, this forum has played a key role in providing guidance on the evolving of Agenda 2063, through its strategizing and monitoring role.

It has made critical recommendations on such areas as the Agenda 2063 flagship projects, Free movement of People and the African Passport, on Streamlining the work of the AU, Africa's place in the world, Harmonization of Higher education and so forth.

This 5<sup>th</sup> Retreat will once again discuss progress with Agenda 2063, since we have now conducted domestication missions in over 30 countries. We place emphasis on domestication, because it allows for Agenda 2063 and the SDGs to become an integral part of national development plans and budgets of Member states.

Our outreach and popularizing on Agenda 2063 continues. Over the last year two forums were held with African Editors Forum (in Kigali and Pretoria), as a critical constituency to popularize Agenda 2063. The All African Council of Churches recently held another session on their role in implementing Agenda 2063 and other sectors are doing the same.

We must ensure that Member states, RECs and other Organs too take responsibility for popularizing Agenda 2063. In this regard Togo and Namibia can be singled out for the work they have done, after the domestication mission, to consult widely with their citizens as they develop their national plans, amongst others.

### **Excellencies,**

The 5<sup>th</sup> Retreat will also discuss the Global political trends , the balance of forces in the world and the implications for the continent and its agenda. There are many positive trends in the continent, in the four years of the Commission's term over 50 elections were held,

the majority peaceful and fair, with elections management improving.

During the same period, we have also seen growing mass protests across the continent. Citizens protesting about living conditions and wages, issues of governance and services, and democratization and inclusion.

These protests are signs of the opening of political space, but at the same time the violence associated with this protest is worry-some. As citizens become more aware of their rights, including the programmes of Agenda 2063, we are likely to see more such mobilization around these aspirations.

On Governance, as we implement our national, regional and continental frameworks, we are also rebuilding the planning and implementation capacity destroyed primarily during the dead decades of structural adjustments. This process is uneven, but we must build the capacity of our institutions as we implement our programmes.

In this regard, the proposals from the African Capacity Building Foundation arising from its earlier report, should be taken forward to help build Member states and RECs capacity for implementation of Agenda 2063.

We are making progress on the African passport, the CFTA, the Pan African Exchange project and other Flagship projects, as we will hear during this session tomorrow.

On a global level, there are also many opportunities and challenges, and Africa must continue to position itself in such a manner that advances its agenda. This is a key matter for debate, and we've placed it on the agenda following the developments around the world, but also the recent developments in in Malabo.

The 5<sup>th</sup> Retreat will also consider the draft Commodities strategy, looking at oil and gas, minerals and agricultural products, so that these natural resources contribute towards job creation, industrialization, our collective food security and transformation.

May I also note that tomorrow the AU Leadership Academy will host the first MjadalaAfrika leadership debate. This is part of the ongoing process to popularize the African Union amongst our citizens, with opportunities provided to all Member states to broadcast it in the four AU languages. The plan is to have similar MjadalaAfrika debates on other topics of Pan African interest, so we wish all who will take part in the debate all the best.

### **Excellencies,**

In conclusion, this Retreat brings together amongst the major stakeholders responsible for implementation of Agenda 2063: Member states, the RECs, AU Organs, the AfDB, UNECA, ACBF and the NPCA.

Each of us has a role to play, that we are best placed to do.

At the same time, we have to work together, think together, plan together and act together for our plans to come to fruition.

On behalf of the Commission, we thank all the Excellencies, Ministers and others from the capitals, the PRC members, representatives from UNECA, AfDB, ACBF, NPCA and RECs.

We look forward to robust and frank discussions that will ensure that we take forward our continental programmes.

I thank you.