

CLOSING CEREMONY

Addis Ababa, 29 January 2018

- **Excellencies, Heads of State and Government, and First Ladies**
- **Excellency, Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union Commission**
- **Excellencies, Former Heads of State, and Former Leaders of Our Organisation**
- **Heads of Institutions and Senior Officials**
- **Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen**

I would like to thank everyone for a successful summit, and welcome, once again, the new Heads of State and Government, participating for the first time, and wish them success in their work.

We had the opportunity before the summit to hold a conclusive and positive reform meeting, and we will continue consulting as the process unfolds.

Our time here together is a most precious moment on our annual calendar. We must therefore get the most out of our Summits. We have to start on schedule, and focus on the most important priorities. Let's work together to do even better next time.

As we go forward, I would encourage closer collaboration with Africa's private sector on the Union's key initiatives. The business community is always eager to get involved, and more importantly, they are critical partners in creating opportunities and building the prosperity our continent needs.

Finally, an issue that deserves more of our attention is conservation. I wish to thank former President Benjamin Mkapa for highlighting this matter and, in his own right, continuing to champion it.

Africans need to take the lead, in partnership with like-minded global organisations, in the conservation agenda on our continent, because it affects all of us directly.

Driving conservation will allow us to get the most out of our continent's assets, contribute to better management of our agriculture and tourism sectors, and support efforts to mitigate climate change.

As announced yesterday, we are on the cusp of creating a Continental Free Trade Area. We look forward to welcoming all of you to the summit on this issue in Kigali in the third week of March.

Once again, I thank the African Union Commission, starting with the Chairperson of the Commission, and the Secretariat, and all Commissioners, for organising this Summit as well as they have done.

I also want to thank you all for your contributions and your commitment to the ideals of the African Union. I wish everyone safe travels as you make your way back home.

I thank you very much.