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**REMARKS BY THE DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE AU
COMMISSION**

H.E. AMBASSADOR THOMAS KWESI QUARTEY

ON THE OCCASION OF

AFRICA HEALTHY LIFESTYLE DAY 2019.

THEME: HEALTHY LIFESTYLE PROLONGS LIFE

Addis Ababa, 7th March 2019.

Excellences,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

On behalf of the African Union Commission and on my personal behalf, I would like to welcome you all to the 2019 Africa Healthy Lifestyle Day commemoration under the Theme, “Healthy Lifestyle Prolongs Life”.

This is a day declared by the Special Session of the AU Conference of Ministers of Health and adopted by the Executive Council in the framework of the WHO Strategy for prevention and control of Non-Communicable Diseases.

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Guests,

The African Union as you know, is committed to tackling the health challenges facing the African continent in order to protect its citizens from premature ageing, premature death and disability. Thus, laying a strong foundation for achieving Agenda 2063 an ambitious target of an African population that is healthy, well nourished, and enjoying a life expectancy of above 75 years.

The theme of this year’s Africa Healthy Lifestyle Day, “Healthy Lifestyle Prolongs Life” is quite timely. Evidence suggests that eating a healthy diet, exercising regularly, keeping a healthy body weight, not drinking too much alcohol, and not smoking can add more than a decade to our life expectancy. The prolonged life expectancy that comes with healthy lifestyle will no doubt consolidate the African-driven response that aims to reduce the burden of diseases through scaled-up health interventions, inter-sectoral action and empowered communities as stipulated in the Africa Health Strategy 2016-2030.

Despite the numerous benefits of living a healthy life, which increases our life expectancy and overall health, many people do not still adhere to this kind of lifestyle. Nearly 80% of deaths from Noncommunicable diseases occurs in Low- and Middle- Income Countries. In some African countries, nearly 50% of all adult deaths are as a result of Non-communicable diseases. Therefore, we need awareness and commemorations like this to nudge us closer.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The African Union has declared 2019 as the “Year of Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons in Africa”. This is coming at the right time because the exorbitant costs of managing Non-Communicable Diseases is a contributing factor to forced displacement of people from and within Africa. Additionally, the conditions in which refugees, migrants and internally displaced people travel and live exacerbate and cause life-threatening deterioration in health. Therefore, there is the need for concrete steps to address the health needs of refugees, migrants and internally displaced persons.

A healthy work environment will no doubt ensures longevity and increase work productivity. There are huge gains in health and life expectancy by simple changes in our behavior pattern. I call on everyone to join hands together to narrow the life-expectancy gap between Africa and the industrialized countries by adopting a healthier lifestyle.

I wish you a successful Africa Healthy Lifestyle Day Commemoration.

I thank you all.