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Statement by H.E. Ambassador Bankole Adeoye, AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, on Nelson Mandela Day, Sunday 18 July 2021

Addis Ababa, Sunday 18 July 2021 – Today’s celebration to mark Nelson Mandela Day is critical given the context we find ourselves in, fighting a global pandemic whose effects have magnified existing fault lines and crises. The epidemic has made it challenging to meet the demands of social and economic justice. With many livelihoods burdened by daily hardships amidst conflict and instability, we must act to embrace peaceful means to conflict resolution. In light of today’s occasion, we pay homage to President Mandela’s life and reflect on our ability to have a positive effect in our communities and continent. In doing so we recognise our power as individuals to make a difference.

Today we reflect on the decade 2014-2024 which is themed Madiba Nelson Mandela Decade of Reconciliation in Africa. Its adoption is an expression of the commitment of our Heads of State and Government to promote and protect human and peoples’ rights in Africa. As a champion of change, President Mandela was instrumental in reconciliation efforts and inspired Africans to unite and confront challenges. His love for his continent encourages us to change attitudes and ensure peaceful coexistence. As we forge onward in implementing the Madiba Nelson Mandela Decade for Reconciliation in Africa, today’s festivities motivate us to remain active citizens and agents of the change we want to see.

Within the framework of implementing the objectives of the Madiba Nelson Mandela Decade of Reconciliation in Africa, we remain committed to working towards sustaining conducive conditions for the realisation of the African Union (AU) Agenda 2063. We will realise this goal by, among other things, ensuring the implementation of the African Peace and Security Architecture and the African Governance Architecture through two key documents - the AU Post-conflict Reconstruction and Development Policy Framework as well as the AU Transitional Justice Policy, in line with the Constitutive Act of the AU, which calls for peaceful resolution of conflicts, respect for the sanctity of human life, condemnation and rejection of impunity. The AU Transitional Justice Policy was developed with a view to, inter alia, strengthen the capacity of Member States, AU Policy Organs and Regional Economic Communities and Mechanisms to respond timeously and effectively to the adverse effects of violent conflict. As a home-grown instrument, the policy is unique to Africa, rich in its progressive methodologies and approaches, and is rooted in African shared values, traditional justice systems and experiences.

This year's Nelson Mandela Day is of particular significance as it also marks the fifteenth anniversary since the adoption in 2006 of the AU Post-conflict Reconstruction and Development Policy by our Heads of State and Government in Banjul, The Gambia. The policy is the AU's main entry point in peacebuilding matters, being the authoritative policy that addresses the needs of communities emerging from conflicts and supports the process of reconciliation and sustaining peace. As the AU continues to make progress in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, the imperative for comprehensive and integrated actions and plans to foster reconciliation and for the recovery, reconstruction and development of societies emerging from conflicts becomes paramount. The policy framework is embedded within a wider context of the AU's support to Africa's strategic vision. The AU's experience in different situations has highlighted the need to address post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding as part of a holistic process, with activities ranging from conflict prevention, management and resolution, peace support operations, reconciliation, reconstruction and beyond.

I call upon all Africans to strengthen our collective efforts towards a just and peaceful continent, free from hurt and hardship, since tolerance and a culture of peace are shared goals, which should be at the centre of our efforts. Together, we can achieve more. Equally, I applaud and appreciate the critical role played by Member States in taking measures to consolidate and sustain peace, including by embracing a culture of tolerance and breaking down barriers impeding our vision towards a peaceful and prosperous Africa. Today more than ever, it is important that we infuse our commitments with positivity and draw from proactivity, justice and peace - values President Mandela cherished.