

AFRICAN UNION

الاتحاد الأفريقي



UNION AFRICAINE

UNIÃO AFRICANA

---

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA P. O. Box 3243 TELEPHONE: 011-551 7700  
FAX: 011-551 7844, WEBSITE: [www.africa-union.org](http://www.africa-union.org)

---

Welcome Remarks of the Chairperson of the African  
Union Commission, HE Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma

to the

**29<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the  
Executive Council of the African Union**

Kigali. RWANDA, 13 July 2016

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

**Excellency, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Rwanda, Our sister Louise Mushikiwabo and our gracious Host**

**Your Excellency, Moussa Faki Mahamat, Foreign Minister of the Republic of Chad and Chairperson of the Executive Council**

**Honorable Ministers Members of the Executive Council, and Heads of Delegations,**

**Excellency Dr. Carlos Lopes, Executive Secretary of the UNECA**

**Excellency Erastus Mwencha, Deputy Chairperson of the AU Commission and other Commissioners**

**Excellency Dr. Ibrahim Mayaki, CEO of the NEPAD Agency**

**Representatives from AU Organs, Executive Secretaries of the RECs, and AU representative and liaison offices**

**Excellencies Members of the PRC,**

**High-level Officials from the capitals, AU Commission and other organs staff**

**Representatives of Civil society**

**Members of the Diplomatic Corps,**

**Members of the Media**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

Thank to Dr. Lopes for the sobering analysis of migration. Next year is the Year of Youth, to reap the Demographic Dividend, and the issues you raised must be attended to.

A warm welcome to the 29th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council of the African Union, and a special welcome to all the new members of the Executive Council who join us for the first time.

We thank our hosts - the President, Government and People of Rwanda - for the warm reception and excellent organization in the beautiful city of Kigali.

The city is testimony not only to the resilience of the human spirit, but an example of how African cities can become nodes of transformation: as centers of commerce, education and culture; as productive hubs for industries, as vibrant markets for consumers and as inclusive, safe, green and peaceful spaces for all inhabitants.

**Your Excellencies,**

It is with grave concern that we start this Executive, as over the past few days we see the resurgence of the conflict in South Sudan, after more than two years of talks. Hardly two months after the formation of the Government of National Unity, the belligerents seem to back in the trenches, and the people of South Sudan, instead of celebrating five years of independence, once again are barricaded in their homes or must flee like sheep before the wolves.

As a continent, we must respect the lives of our people.

Governments and leadership are there to protect the vulnerable, to serve the people; not to be the cause of the people's suffering. What is happening again in South Sudan is totally unacceptable. The continent cannot stand by and witness the suffering inflicted on the children, women, men and young people of South Sudan, inflicted on fellow Africans.

We continue to count the cost of conflict management and peace operations as the largest single budget item of the African Union, resources that should be spent on promoting the African skills revolution, on supporting young entrepreneurs, on building roads, houses and provide capital, land and technology to women and smallholder farmers.

Most importantly, we count the cost in civilian and peacekeepers lives lost, in homes destroyed when they were rebuilt not too long ago, in our girls abducted, in leadership and opposition that have resources to purchase 'tanks, helicopter gunships, mortars and rocket-propelled grenades' which are used against the people; when there are no resources to buy food as our people go hungry or medicines as children die of malaria.

I hoped this Summit will say, "Enough is Enough!"

We made a Solemn pledge during the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary that we shall not bequeath wars and violent conflicts to future generations of Africans, and to silence the guns by 2020. We must all do more to honour this pledge.

Our 2016 theme on Human rights must be a spur to action: to intervene in conflict situations before they spiral into violence, and to ensure that we strengthen democracy, human rights, promote unity in diversity and inclusive governance in all our countries.

Our Human rights institutions that we created have the obligation to report, and to identify challenges, because none of us have impeccable records on human rights, it is a journey and we have not yet reached our destination. As countries, we must work with our institutions to ensure that we improve on the specific areas identified.

Silencing the guns requires a different approach to peace and security. Since the majority of our countries are stable and peaceful, we must continue to resolutely focus on the Agenda 2063 priorities such as building energy, road, rail and ICT infrastructure, to power and connect homes and industries; expanding agriculture and agro-processing; investing in the health, skills and education of our people, especially Africa's children, and young men and women, and building inclusive, democratic and tolerant societies.

We must put the African people first.

### **Your Excellencies,**

During the four years of the term of this Commission, the Executive Council has played an important role in driving the mission of our Union. It has done this through regular reflections on challenges facing the continent. It had robust discussions on what must be done by the African Union, regions and countries to move our transformation agenda forward.

Indeed, the Executive Council sought to live up to the entreaty of Julius Malimu Nyerere, who said:

*Unity...can make it difficult for Africa and the African peoples to be disregarded and humiliated. And it will increase the effectiveness of the decisions we make and try to implement for our development.*

*My generation led Africa to political freedom, he said.*

*The current generation of leaders and peoples of Africa must pick up the flickering torch of African freedom, refuel it with their enthusiasm and determination, and carry it forward.*

Indeed, as we reflected on how to create conditions for the implementation of Agenda 2063, the Executive Council at its Bahir Dar Ministerial Retreat in 2014, noted that *‘the dream of an Africa that is integrated, peaceful and prosperous is achievable, provided that we construct this future, **based on actions taken now.**’*

Many of these actions occupied our minds during this period: such as the need for an African Commodities Strategy, to consolidate and rapidly expand the small gains in beneficiation, including critical sectors such as agro-processing as we work to eliminate hunger.

Without a relentless focus on value addition and manufacturing, Africa will fail to create the jobs needed to absorb the millions of young men and women joining its labour markets each year, and to reap the demographic dividend of a young and growing population.

We must therefore continue to strengthen our capacities to take the actions needed today, as urged by the Bahir Dar Retreat. Many of these capacities for the implementation of Agenda 2063 are within our power and of our choosing.

It includes the choice to be Pan African in our outlook and actions, as we collectively reflect on the African paradox: of a continent that is rich in natural resources, and yet its people are poor.

The resolution of this paradox is indeed the mission of current generations of leaders and peoples of Africa.

Some of the actions to resolve the paradox will have regional dimensions: as we strengthen integration, build common regional markets, develop infrastructure that connects us and harmonized policies so that we strengthen free movement of people, goods and services.

We also have responsibilities at national levels. Foreign Ministers as Members of the Executive are in the strategic position with a view of the Pan African perspective as well as national priorities.

They have a bird's eye view of how movement on national development contributes to the continental agenda, and to therefore promote cooperation amongst their neighbours and countries, and drive the Pan African agenda.

This role of the Executive Council, as a catalyst and enabler of the Pan African agenda, has found expression in a range of issues over the last four years: in reflections during the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the OAU in 2013, the development of Agenda 2063, the response of the AU to the Ebola crisis in 2014, on the Integration agenda, on issues such as wildlife conservation and tourism, and the monitoring of Agenda 2063 Ten Year Implementation Plan and Flagship projects.

It is as a direct result of this Pan African catalyst role of the Executive Council that we are able to move a step forward at this Summit, to present the African passport, and we hope to also move forward on the Continental Free Trade Area.

The response from African citizens from all parts of the continent on the idea of an African passport has been overwhelming. They want to study, trade, do business, invest, visit the tourists and heritage sites in their own continent, and experience its rich and beautiful diversity.

The Executive Council has thus been seized with this continental agenda for social and economic transformation, deeply aware that the resolution

of the African paradox requires united and deliberate action, and that united we are stronger.

As Kwameh Nkrumah said:

*If we are to remain free, if we are to enjoy the full benefit of Africa's resources, we must be united to plan for our total defense and the full exploitation of our material and human means in the full interest of all our people.*

*To go it alone will limit our horizons, curtail our expectations and threaten our liberty.”*

### **Your Excellencies,**

This august body during the past four years has also worked with the Commission and the PRC to improve the working methods of the African Union, and commissioned a comparative study of other regional organisations to this effect.

This resulted in the decision of the Assembly in July 2015, which is being implemented - to ensure that our Summits focus on the strategic matters critical to the well-being of the African people and continent.

The process also saw the operationalization of the AU Specialised Technical Committees of Ministers, with powers to take decision on matters pertaining to their respective mandates. This means that Ministers across different sectors - from justice to health, environment, mining, tourism, social development and gender to finance have become more active, and can do more to move forward the Pan African agenda in their areas of competence.

The approach to working methods of the Union also informed the reforms of the Commission, which we've undertaken over the four years, including review of staff rules and regulations and our performance management system; revitalizing administrative structures; strengthening our internal and external audit processes and finalizing key policies on travel, procurement and ethics, to ensure that we use resources effectively

and prudently. We also implemented measures to improve the regional and gender spread of staff in the Commission and Organs, but more needs to be done.

It includes the work still in progress on the restructuring of the AU Commission and other Organs, which we presented to the Summit in January 2016, to become fit for purpose for the implementation of Agenda 2063.

Moreover, the decision on streamlining work of the AU also called for review of the Constitutive Act and Statutes, so that our Union and its organs are also fit for purpose for the continental integration agenda. This work needs to be continued.

The adoption of Agenda 2063 also meant a much more strategic approach towards Africa's global partners and partnerships, laying the foundations for our common African positions on the SDGs and on climate change.

More importantly, we consolidated continental partnerships with the UN Economic Commission for Africa, the African Development Bank and the African Capacity Building Foundation, with Regional Economic Communities, as well as with youth, women and civil society organisations and other continental institutions, based on the common agenda of transformation.

### **Excellencies,**

The words of Gamal Abdel Nasser, one of the founders of the OAU, rings true today, when he said: *He who cannot support himself, cannot take his own decisions.*

Pertinent words indeed. Self-reliance is a cornerstone of Pan Africanism, and fifty-three years later, remains a challenge for current generations.

Over the last four years, we've made some progress, and this Summit must consolidate efforts, so that we finalise our decisions on sustainable financing and the Peace Fund.



## **Excellencies,**

As we discuss Human rights with a particular emphasis on the rights of Women, it is appropriate that we are doing so here in Rwanda.

Rwanda is a leader in the world and in Africa on the issues of the empowerment of women and girls. It does this through the critical mass of women in its parliament (64%) and in government (39%), as well as in the judiciary and local councils. It also has deliberate programmes to ensure equal access to productive assets such as land, property and capital, and access to education and health.

The impact of these policies are visible, in the progress the country has made over the last two decades, rising out of the ashes of the 1994 Genocide, especially on key human development indicators such as reducing household poverty, access to health care and insurance, as well as to education.

A few days ago, the African women's movement presented President Paul Kagame and myself with awards as Gender Champions. On that occasion, I made the remark that we should stop the saying that behind every successful man, there is a woman. That is not right.

What we need and want today is for men and women to work side by side.

Side by side for the eradication poverty, hunger and disease.

Side by side to resolve conflicts and build peaceful societies.

Side by side to make our continent great.

Let me take this opportunity to thank the Executive Council for the guidance, the cooperation and being always responsive whenever called upon by the Commission during the past four years.

The Retreats ensured common purpose, robust engagements and a focus on the strategic challenges of the continent. Moreover, the establishment of the *Bahir Dar Ministerial Follow-up Committee on Agenda 2063* means stewardship and monitoring by the Executive Council of our continental agenda.

We are confident that you will lend the same support, in fact even more, to the incoming Commission. They have the task to build on the foundations we laid in the adoption of Agenda 2063, and as implementation moves to the next level.

As the Commission's term draws to an end, thank you again for your support, as we bow out gracefully.

I Thank you