

## **Message of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Dr. Nkosazana C Dlamini-Zuma, on the Occasion of the 52nd Africa Day Addis Ababa, 25 May 2015**

Fellow Africans on the Continent and in the Diaspora

Our Friends and Partners across the world

On this, the fifty-second occasion of us marking the birth of our beloved continental body have the singular honour to wish all of you a happy and fulfilling Africa Day. This year's celebration comes at the time when the African Union is celebrating 13 years since its transformation from the Organization of African Unity. We have indeed transformed the organisation from one pursuing the struggle to liberate the continent and safeguard the independence of African States to one that facilitates work for a united, prosperous and peaceful Africa.

This year's theme which is: "Women's Empowerment and Development towards Africa's Agenda 2063" is a recognition of centuries of African women and women from the Diaspora to the struggles against slavery, racial and gender discrimination, and for the emancipation of our continent and African men and women everywhere.

Women and girls continue to play critical roles – paid and unpaid – in their families, communities, countries and regions, that directly impact on economies and societies.

Despite the constraints that they continue to face, we have made strides, as a result of different waves of struggles by the women's movements. Since the historic Beijing Conference twenty years ago, and the recognition of women's rights as human rights, we have seen progress on women's representation, in the advancement of reproductive rights, on equal pay for equal work, on access to education and basic services.

At the same time, it is estimated that if real change happens at the same, it will take us 80 years before reaching full gender parity. This is simply not good enough. It will mean that our efforts to reverse the curse of underdevelopment and conflicts must wait another 80 years to come to fruition. It also means that Africa will also continue to use less than half of its talents, skills and potentials.

To address these constraints, we crisscrossed the continent and solicited the inputs of all sectors, spheres and levels of society. Our only question was ... What Africa do YOU want to see by 2063. Agenda 2063 is the resulting mandate from the people of Africa here and in the diaspora. Agenda 2063 is an intergenerational mission, an inclusive African strategy to use Africa's resources for the benefit of all Africans.

Our Africa Day celebration is therefore facilitating and celebrating African narratives of the past, present and future that will enthuse and energize the African population and use their constructive energy to accelerate a forward looking agenda of Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance in the 21st century.

We mark this Africa Day with much optimism. Africa has answered the clarion call to shape its own agenda... for the people by the people.

Fellow Africans,

We also mark this Africa Day with several blemishes.

These have included the conflicts that continue to bedevil our beloved continent as is the case, at the moment, in Burundi, Central African Republic, Somalia, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo as well as other Member States.

The recent Xenophobic attacks in the coastal city of Durban and in the economic hub of Johannesburg, is also one such blemish. We take this opportunity to reiterate our condemnation of the unacceptable acts of violence that affected our brothers and sisters.

No matter what the circumstances, such actions cannot be justified. No matter the frustrations, the loss of even a single life cannot be condoned. We also wish to applaud the swift action taken by the South African Government and its citizenry in response to these acts of violence, which also resulted in the loss of life and livelihood.

It has been said that one of the major causes for such incidents as witnessed in South Africa and elsewhere are the challenges presented by poverty and inequality. These are often characterised by the poor fighting the poor over limited and sometimes scarce resources. These incidents also underscore the urgent need for all of us to give urgent attention to issues related to migration and human trafficking. We must address the very circumstances that lead our nationals to leave our shores for better opportunities in other parts of the continent and the world. To this effect, I take this opportunity to also extend our heartfelt condolences to the families of the 800 African brothers and sisters who recently lost their lives on the North Coast of our continent. That incident is also a painful reminder that we must urgently deal with the growth and integration of our continent.

Never and never again must such acts and incidents be witnessed on our continent.

In realising Africa's development, human development is also not negotiable. The pockets of instability and conflict, which have sometimes resulted in loss of life and livelihood, bear testament to that fact. We cannot afford to continue on a trajectory that excludes and is inequitable.

In order to facilitate for inclusive and sustainable growth we must translate Agenda 2063 into our national plans so that we can facilitate for priority areas such as integration, youth and women's empowerment, job creation, energy, and infrastructure development. In translating Agenda 2063 we will need accelerated action towards an equitable growth path, which prioritises the people and connectivity. We must realise key urgent projects that connect us including road, rail, aviation, marine transport, telecommunications, as well as industrialisation and manufacturing.

Our pursuit for accelerating our equitable economic growth path will also place greater pressure on our traditional and mainstream energy sectors, consequently we will begin to seriously implement key projects in the renewable energy sector, which include hydro and wind energy. In accelerating connectivity we will pay greater attention to the promotion of the Continental Free Trade Area.

It is in seeking to accelerate implementation of these (and other) priorities and programmes that we will convene the Africa Economic Platform, in the latter part of this year. The Platform will pursue continental synergy and will bring together Africa's captains of industry, academics, governments and activists. Only through working together can we facilitate for Africa's unity, shared prosperity and lasting peace.

Africa.... One people. One Destiny

Long live Africa and her Diaspora!

Long live African solidarity and unity!

I thank you and happy Africa Day!!