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Final press release of the Assembly of the AU

25TH ASSEMBLY OF THE AFRICAN UNION COMMITS TO MAINSTREAMING WOMEN AS THE CONTINENT BEGINS TO IMPLEMENT AGENDA 2063

Heads of State and Government of the 54 member states of the African Union (AU) met in Johannesburg, South Africa from the 14th to 15th June. The Assembly meeting was the last in the three meetings that form the summit of the AU, which started with a meeting of the Permanent Representatives Committee (PRC) from 7-8 June and moved on to the meeting of the Executive Council from 11-12 June.

This year's summit was held under the theme, Women's Empowerment and Development Towards Agenda 2063. Agenda 2063 is a fifty year framework that sets Africa on the path to achieving integration, prosperity and peace. Its first ten year implementation plan was adopted by the Assembly.

The theme of women's empowerment and development was a common thread in all discussions since the 25th summit of the AU started on the 7th of June in Pretoria. It was carried through to the meeting of the Union's Executive Council held from the 11th to 12th June in Johannesburg, where AU Commission Chairperson, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, announced that a gender scorecard would be launched as an instrument to monitor progress in women's development, share best practices and hold each other accountable.

At the meeting of Heads of State and Government, the AUC Chairperson launched a campaign to consign the hand held hoe to the museum, in an accelerated effort to assist women with access to modern technology, land, credit, and extension services in order to empower women in agriculture and agro industry.

The summit theme also received the support of many prominent women including international actress and UN ambassador, Angelina Jolie.

The Assembly adopted wide ranging decisions aimed at pushing forward the implementation of Agenda 2063. Below is a summary of the decisions, declarations and resolutions. Full versions will soon be available on AU Web Site: www.au.int.

The Assembly adopted a **declaration on 2015 Year of Women's Empowerment and Development Towards Agenda 2063**. The declaration contains commitments to:

- Enhancing women's contribution and benefits from formal agriculture/ agri business value chains.
- Enhancing women's access to health
- Pushing forward women's economic empowerment

- Enhancing the Agenda on Women Peace and Security
- Enhancing women's participation in governance
- Enhancing women and girls' access to education, science and technology
- Mutual accountability to actions and results
- Strengthening the AU Commission to support delivery on these commitments

The declaration ends with a commitment to an expedient process of translation of these economic and transformational commitments into results.

On the decision on the **launch of the continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) negotiations**, the Assembly launched negotiations for the establishment of the Continental Free Trade Area aimed at integrating Africa's markets in line with the objectives and principles enunciated in the Abuja Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community and requested the Continental Free Trade Area-Negotiating Forum (CFTA-NF) to organise its inaugural Meeting in 2015 and to work towards concluding the negotiations by 2017.

On the **Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) outbreak**, the Assembly noted that the EVD outbreak emergency is over and the African Union Support to Ebola Outbreak in West Africa (ASEOWA) mission is preparing for the final exit by the end of its current mandate on 18 August 2015. The Assembly congratulated the People and Government of Liberia on being declared Ebola free by the WHO on 9 May 2015.

The Assembly expressed appreciation to all Member States that contributed volunteer health workers to ASEOWA, and commended the Commission for putting in place adequate safety measures that ensured the safe return of all the volunteer health workers.

The Assembly expressed appreciation to Member States and Partners that supported ASEOWA and the affected countries with financial and material resources and invited all Member States to participate at the highest level, in the International Conference on Africa's Fight against Ebola being organized under the theme: "Africa Helping Africa in the Ebola Recovery and Reconstruction", that will take place in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea from 20 to 21 July 2015.

The Assembly requested the Commission, in collaboration with Member States and Development Partners to establish an African Volunteer Health Corps to be deployed during disease outbreaks and other health emergencies.

On the **report of the AIDS Watch Africa (AWA)**, the Assembly decided to extend the AU Roadmap on Shared Responsibility and Global Solidarity for AIDS, TB and Malaria Response in Africa from 2016 to 2020 to achieve full implementation and reaffirmed its commitment to strengthen health systems and to increase domestic funding in line with the Abuja 15% target. It called upon countries and development partners to contribute towards the 5th replenishment target of the Global Fund in order to control TB, Malaria and HIV/AIDS.

Naming of African Union Garden under the name of Professor Wangari Maathai
In recognition of environmental conservation and protection and in appreciation by the African Union for her contribution to the African Continent and the whole world, Assembly endorsed the proposal by the Republic of Congo to name the AU Garden under the name of Professor Wangari Maathai.

On the outcomes of the Dakar Summit on Higher Education, the Assembly requested the AU Commission to take the lead in building the African common space for higher education and research. It requested member states to, among others, strengthen their support and investment in higher education in order to develop a critical mass of high level intellectual capital, and promote youth employability through entrepreneurship skills and innovation.

Assembly also committed to the establishment of a team of ten Heads of State and Government (two from each geographic region) as African champions of education, science and technology and endorsed President Macky Sall of Senegal as the first coordinator of the group champions.

On the **state of progress and accelerated implementation of the decision on the Establishment of the South-South and Triangular Coalition in support of Africa Post 2015**, the Assembly requested the Commission to organize, in collaboration with partners, the Conference of Partners of the Coalition before the end of December 2015.

On the **decision of the high level committee on the post 2015 development agenda**, the Assembly reiterated its call to member states to participate, at the level of Heads of State and Government, in the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD), and encouraged member states to attend, at the highest political level, the September 2015 UN Summit on the adoption of the Post 2015 Development Agenda.

On the **sixteenth report of the committee of ten heads of state and government on the reform of the United Nations Security Council**, the Assembly reaffirmed that the Common African Position, as contained in the Ezulwini Consensus and Sirte Declaration, shall continue to serve as the only viable option that reflects Africa's legitimate right and aspiration to rectify, inter alia, the historical injustice endured by the Continent. It also reiterated its call that Member States of the African Union include the issue of the reform of the Security Council among the priorities of their foreign policy while engaging with non-African Partners; in particular, to include in their statements at the United Nations General Assembly Debate the need to redress the historical injustice the continent continues to suffer.

On the decision on the election of 6 members of ACERWC, the Assembly appointed the following members of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) for a five year term: Mrs. Dikéré Marie-Christine BOCOUM of Côte d'Ivoire; Ms. Aver GAVAR of Nigeria; Ms. Maria MAPANI-KAWIMBE of Zambia; Mr. Clement MASHAMBA of Tanzania; Mr. Benyam Dawit MEZMUR of Ethiopia and Ms. Goitseone Nanikie NKWE of Botswana.

On the decision on the election of 3 members of the ACHPR

The following 3 people were appointed members of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) for a six (6)-year term: Mr. Solomon Ayele DERSSO; Mrs. L. King JAMESINA ESSIE of Sierra Leone and Mrs. Sylvie KAYITESI ZAINABO of Rwanda.

On **polio eradication in Africa: our historic legacy to future generations**, the Assembly adopted a declaration that reaffirms the AU's commitment to help deliver a

polio-free Africa as a historic legacy to children of all future generations. The declaration encourages all the Member States of the African Union to allocate additional domestic resources to strengthen routine immunization and disease surveillance initiatives, and closely monitor the full implementation of the 2013-2018 Polio Endgame Strategic Plan.

The Assembly adopted a **declaration on the launch of the negotiations for the establishment of the continental free trade area (CFTA)**. The declaration launches negotiations for the establishment of the Continental Free Trade Area aimed at integrating Africa's markets in line with the objectives and principles enunciated in the Abuja Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community.

On **the situation in Palestine and the Middle East**, the Assembly adopted a declaration that calls on the international community to exert pressure on Israel to stop all settlement activities, release Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails and equally demands that Israel refrains from arbitrary arrests of Palestinians including children and women which is an act of violation of international laws and human rights norms including the Geneva Convention on the Rights of Women and Children. The declaration calls upon the international community to exert pressure on Israel to lift the blockade on the Gaza Strip and open the border-crossing for the movement of people and goods and respond immediately to the humanitarian situations due to this siege.

A **declaration on self-reliance** was adopted. It approves the First Ten-Year Implementation Plan of Agenda 2063 and its Financing Mechanism, as a step towards Africa's collective vision for the level and depth of integration and development that the continent must achieve in the next 50 years.

It also recalls that the summit agreed that, through the African Union Foundation, a vehicle established for resource mobilisation on the continent, the AU will work with the African people, including the private sector, to explore other innovative sources for funding our Union. The declaration reiterates the Union's commitment to the implementation of the fast track programmes and initiatives of Agenda 2063.

In addition, the Assembly adopted a **resolution on Chagos Archipelago** in which it urges the United Kingdom, pending the return of the Chagos Archipelago to the effective control of the Republic of Mauritius, not to take any measures or decisions that might affect the interests of the Republic of Mauritius without the latter's full prior involvement, in accordance with the Award of the Arbitral Tribunal and international law. **WZM/HMC**

All the decisions, declarations and resolutions of the Assembly of the AU will be available on the AU website, www.au.int soon.