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I- Salutation:

II- Greetings:

> I bring you warm greetings and sincere best wishes on behalf of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia, the Government and the people of Liberia, and our Embassy in Washington DC

I like to thank Dr. Michael Mwanze and the organizers for the remarkable visionary to showcase the unique history, rich, diverse and heterogeneous culture and region of the continent of Africa. As many of the continent's 54 countries celebrate fifty years of independence, the African Union looks forward to the dawn of a bright future for the continent.

III-OAU/AU background:

As many African countries gained independence from colonial rule, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) was established on May 25, 1963 to seek the collective interests of the entire African Continent and the African people.

The aims of the OAU included to promote the unity and solidarity of African States; co-ordinate and intensify their cooperation and efforts to achieve a better life for the peoples of Africa; defend their sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence; eradicate all forms of colonialism; and promote international cooperation.

Liberia, Africa's first independent republic in 1847, played a very critical leadership role in the creation of the OAU. Liberia was leader of one of the two main groups of countries that advocated different roadmaps regarding the creation of the OAU and its functions.

The 'Monrovia Bloc' was an informal association of African states with a shared vision of the future of Africa and of Pan-Africanism in the early 1960s. The Monrovia Group believed that Africa's independent states should cooperate and exist in harmony, but without political

federation and deep integration as supported by its main rival, the Casablanca Group.

The Casablanca Group advocated for African political unification and federation. They believed that only significant, deep integration, as has since occurred in Europe through the European Union, would enable Africa to defeat colonialism, achieve peace, foster cultural dialogue, increase the continent's geopolitical influence and promote economic development.

The Monrovia Group's idea ultimately prevailed. In 1963, states from both groups joined to form the OAU. The OAU's pursuit of integration was minimal and its opposition to continental federation unequivocal.

 Following nearly 40 years of existence, the OAU was reorganized and renamed as the African Union (AU), a continental body consisting of 54 countries in Africa. The AU was established on May 26, 2001 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and launched July 9, 2001 in South Africa.

The objectives of the AU include the following:

* to achieve the greater unity and solidarity between the African countries and Africans;

* to accelerate the and social-economic integration of the continent;

* to promote peace, security, and stability on the continent;

* to promote sustainable development at the economic, social and cultural levels as well as the integration of African economies;

* and to promote cooperation in all fields of human activity to raise the living standards of the African people.

Since its establishment, the AU has played a very critical role in conflict resolutions in Africa. For example, the AU's intervention in a member state was the 2003 deployment of a peacekeeping force in Burundi, as well as the deployment of peacekeepers to Sudan in Darfur and Somalia.

V- The Role of Instability in Africa:

The current objectives of the reinstituted AU and the subsequent implementations of them, especially as it relates to the issue of instability via military coups and other forms of unpopular disturbances is very encouraging.

Recently, what would have been the eighth coup in the Nation of Burkina Faso, if it had succeeded, was instantly condemned by the African Union. The current newly elected President of Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari, taking the lead on behalf of the AU, called the coup and the actions of the General who led it, a "brazen contravention" of Burkina Faso's constitution and demanded the army's withdrawal.

African Union and African Civil Society must be bold to tell military or civilian influenced leaders that coup d'états are outdated and not allowed in Africa anymore. The era of coups is over in Africa and the military must be made to understand that taking power by force without the mandate of the people is a massive setback to Africa's peace, security and democratic progress.

The period between 1960 and 1970 and beyond has generally been described as the decade of coups in Africa. In an effort to justify the overthrow of governments, the military deemed it a national and patriotic obligation to rescue their countries from total collapse and thereby restore national pride. Once coups started in Africa, they became like a new piece of fashion wear that everyone wanted to be seen with.

The reasons for overthrow were listed as rampant corruption, nepotism, and other forms of unchecked abuse which led the masses into disappointment, disillusion and loss of faith in the Governments.

It didn't take the same masses long to realize that their military saviors were unable to "swallow the bone of the meat they had killed".

Military interventions were themselves not necessarily free of incompetence, corruption, and mismanagement and in most cases, caused more harm and left nations worse than before. Soldiers became more wealth-seekers, property-grabbers and bribe-takers.

The process to forcefully removed military regimes became the showcase for some of the worst instances of humanitarian disasters on the continent. Therefore, the way forward is the stance that the AU, along with the international community has taken against such disruptions. These events of massive and untold human suffering have interfered with developing a strong and unified Africa over several decades.

A wave of peaceful democratic transitions have swept the Continent in recent times. This is a remarkable feat. This movement has to become the normal way of

political life on the Continent. As that happens more and more, the difference will be felt both nationally and internationally, and the benefits, which includes, stability and peace as opposed to crisis and chaos will obtain.

A "grown –up" Africa is ready for more serious consideration in the form of investment and development. Investment, of course, create employment and subsequent economic activity, which lead to more peace and more chances for changed and improved lives.

IV- The Future of Africa:

It has been estimated that by 2050, Africa's population would have reached 2.1 billion people, with a productive and skilled workforce of 1.1 billion. Africa will be the youngest region in the world, with a labor force larger than that of China and India (Africa 2050: 2014).

When the continent of Africa celebrated the Golden Jubilee of its existence in 2013, its leaders began to forge an agenda for the next fifty years of the development direction of the continent. And following intensive

consultations and preparation, the African Union policy organs finally adopted an agenda for 2063.

Agenda 2063 is a shared framework for inclusive growth and sustainable development for Africa. The agenda is expected to be a continuation of the core values and aspiration of the pan-African drive that will seek unity, self determination, freedom, progress and collective prosperity.

The African Heads of State and Government declared to rededicate themselves to the continent's accelerated development and technological progress. Consequently, the aspirations of the African leaders and the expectations of the African citizenry can be summarized as follows, (Agenda 2063: September 2015):

* A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development (By 2063, Africa should be a continent of shared prosperity)

* An integrated continent, politically united based on the continuous ideals of pan-Africanism and the vision of Africa's Renaissance.

* An Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law.

* A peaceful and secured Africa (a conflict-free continent).

* An Africa whose development is people-driven, especially women and youth,

* And an Africa as strong, united, resilient and influential global player and partner (with a bigger role in world affairs).

As part of a process to achieve all of these, the OAU, now AU established strong and well-functioning regional institutions, including:

* CEN; SAD; COMESA; ECCAS; ECOWAS; IGAD; SADC; UMA. It is the hope of all Africans that these regional institutions will serve as vessels through which Africa can sustain peace and stability and promote sound macro-economic and market-oriented economies to spur growth, trade and investment expansion.

V-Closing:

Distinguished invited guests, fellow academics, our development partners, ladies and gentlemen,

As I close my remarks, I would like to remind here that achieving Agenda 2063 will call for changes in attitudes

and mindsets to strengthen pan African values and self reliance, solidarity and hard work. Africa should and must take charge of its global narrative in order to occasion its continental realities and priorities that will ensure Africa's position on the world stage.

I thank you for the opportunity to make these remarks,