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THE PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

LE PRESIDENT DE L'ASSEMBLEE GENERALE

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**Statement of H.E. Mr. Vuk Jeremić,  
President of the 67<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly,  
at the African Union Executive Council Summit Meeting**

Madam Chairperson,  
Distinguished Ministers,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a great honor to address the African Union Executive Council as President of the United Nations General Assembly.

At the onset of my remarks, allow me to express my gratitude to former Chairperson Dr. Jean Ping for his hard work and stewardship of this Organization over the past five years.

It gives me particular pleasure to congratulate Madam Dlamini Zuma on her election as the Chairperson of the AU Commission. I am confident that under her able leadership, the African Union will continue to successfully address the challenges facing this Continent.

Excellencies,

In my previous capacity as Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, I was privileged to travel to this Continent on close to 40 different occasions for bilateral visits, or to attend meetings of this Organization.

I have held Africa very close to my heart for a great many years.

When I was growing up in Yugoslavia one of the founding members of the Non-Aligned Movement Africa represented for us a grand symbol of endurance. In school, we learned about how the people of this Continent had time and again overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles with forbearance and dignity, including centuries of exploitation unique in the annals of human history. We celebrated pioneers such as William S. Tubman, Modibo Keita and Gamel Nasser; Ben Bella, Nyerere and Kenyatta; Kaunda, Lumumba, and Mandela.

I still remember a class assignment to read a book entitled *I Speak for Freedom* by another of this Continent's greatest sons, Kwame Nkrumah, where he wrote that "united, Africa could become one of the greatest forces for good in the world."

This is a noble premise upon which I hope to see the rising of a new Africa resolved to transform itself into a sturdy bastion of peace and economic prosperity; and aware that the quest to unite the Continent is the surest way to unleash its enormous potential, fulfilling the aspirations of Panafricanism and the African Renaissance.

Excellencies,

As President of the UN General Assembly, I believe that bridging the gap between the promise of Africa and the reality on the ground in many parts of the Continent should be a strategic task for the entire United Nations system.

Further strengthening the UN's engagement with NEPAD, for instance, is critical. I will work hard to ensure the General Assembly continues to play an active role in supporting the initiatives and programs of all African-owned and African-led processes.

This Continent's priorities should be the UN's priorities starting with fulfilling the Millennium Development Goals. This must remain at the core of our shared vision for the future of Africa.

We hear predictions that a number of countries will not achieve the MDGs by the 2015 deadline. I believe, however, that by redoubling our efforts, the targets can still be largely met. I have come here to seek your guidance on what the General Assembly can do to ensure expedited progress over the next three years including how to overcome the lack of implementation of monetary commitments.

I have also come here to consult with you on how we can properly set the parameters for the post-2015 agenda especially as they apply to Africa.

The General Assembly was given the responsibility by world leaders last June in Rio to adopt the Sustainable Development Goals a central pillar of the post-2015 agenda. In fact, I believe this is a strategic issue of the first order one that may frame much of the UN's work for decades to come.

African countries, which collectively represent the largest coherent voting bloc in the General Assembly, can play a critical role in defining the Sustainable Development Goals. As President of the General Assembly, I will closely engage with all UN Member States to ensure that the SDG process becomes the world's top priority.

Excellencies,

The establishment of enduring peace is an important prerequisite to meeting the singular development needs of Africa.

With all due respect to existing efforts by the 'international community' to ameliorate the multiple crises in the region, I do not think enough resources are being devoted to address the complex security challenges facing this Continent.

I have no intention to enumerate them here you all know what they are, and have much better ideas on how to overcome them than I could ever have.

But I stand at your service to help you further draw the world's attention to these security challenges, and in doing so place the General Assembly at the disposal of the African Union. I propose that we partner up and organize together a thematic debate in the UN on the Peaceful Resolution of Conflicts in Africa.

I would welcome the high-level participation of AU members, and take this opportunity to invite your respective countries to join in this critical debate which will take place in New York in April.

In the context of this event, I suggest that we adopt a special resolution in the General Assembly, which would refer to African conflict prevention efforts, and commemorate the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Organization of African Unity the precursor to the African Union.

It would not only celebrate the AU's substantial legacy of achievement; with Member States' support, it may also serve as a blueprint for how cooperation between the UN and the African Union can be further strengthened in the time ahead from peacekeeping to development, from green energy to human rights, and from climate change to disarmament and non-proliferation.

Excellencies,

As we take the time to reflect not only on what has been accomplished over the past five decades, but also on the fact that there is still so much more road left to travel, we could draw inspiration from the words of Africa's, and possibly the world's, greatest living statesman Nelson Mandela.

I would like to conclude with the words he spoke during his 1994 inauguration address, which for me perfectly encapsulate the vision of the African Renaissance, which has brought us here to Addis Ababa:

“Out of the experience of an extraordinary human disaster that lasted too long must be born a society of which all humanity will be proud. Our daily deeds [...] must produce an actual [...] reality that will reinforce humanity's belief in justice, strengthen its confidence in the nobility of the human soul, and sustain all our hopes for a glorious life for all. [...] Let there be justice for all. Let there be peace for all. Let there be work, bread, water and salt for all. Let each know that for each the body, the mind and the soul have been freed to fulfil themselves.”

Thank you for your attention.