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**OPENING STATEMENT OF MRS. FATIMA HARAM ACYL,
COMMISSIONER FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY OF THE AFRICAN
UNION COMMISSION ON THE OCCASION OF THE 3RD ORDINARY
SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR
MINERAL RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT**

16 DECEMBER. 2013

MAPUTO, MOZAMBIQUE

Excellency,(Pdt or Representative)

**Excellency, Mrs. Esperança BIAS, Minister of Mineral Resources of
Mozambique**

**Excellency, Mr. Tolesa Chagi, State Minister of Mines of Ethiopia and
Outgoing Chair of the Bureau,**

Mr. Mukhisa Kituyi, Secretary General of UNCTAD

Mr., of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa,

Mr.Director UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa,

Distinguished Participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, Chairperson of the AU Commission and on my own behalf, I have the great pleasure and honour to welcome you today to this 3rd Ordinary Session of the Conference of Ministers Responsible for Mineral Resources Development, which is a statutory meeting of the AU since 2008. Allow me from the outset to thank the Government and People of Mozambique for kindly accepting to host this Conference. I seize the opportunity to also thank them for the very warm welcome extended to all delegations since our arrival in Mozambique.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

This Conference is critical for the future of our continent. Its theme “Leveraging the Africa Mining Vision for Africa’s Renaissance: Towards broader ownership, has been carefully selected in order to align with the

spirit of the theme of the 50th Anniversary of the OAU/AU on Pan Africanism and African Renaissance, whereby our Heads of State and Government reaffirmed, in their Solemn Declaration of 26th May this year, their determination to “build an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven and managed by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the international arena.”

The same spirit that brought our Heads of State and Government to commit to take ownership of, use and develop our natural endowments and resources, through value addition, as the basis for industrialization, should underpin the deliberations of this 3rd Conference. We have taken note of the challenges and opportunities of Africa’s mineral resources sector and we have formulated the African Mining Vision and its Action Plan which were both adopted by Your Excellencies and endorsed by the Heads of State and Government during the AU January Summits of 2009 and 2012 as a continental framework for Africa’s mineral resources. The pressing issue is now effective implementation, hence the recommendation for the establishment of the African Minerals Development Centre (AMDC). You will have the opportunity during this Conference to examine the Business Plan of the AMDC and determine its sustainability in the interests of our population.

It is worth recalling that the African continent has 12% of the world's oil reserves, 40% of its gold, and 80% to 90% of its chromium and platinum. New discoveries of mineral resources are occurring across the continent and converting it into an energy and geopolitical hot spot. And yet our populations are not only still to see the benefits but rather, in many countries natural resource revenues are widening the gap between rich and poor. There is no significant improvement in health, education, nutrition and employment. In deciding on the future of our minerals sector, we should keep in mind that the deepening of inequality could one day prove explosive and be a threat to peace and security. Fortunately, some Governments are learning from others' experiences, creating state-owned mining companies that can enter into joint ventures with private companies in order to profit directly from their resources. Others are publishing contract details online thus increasing transparency and limiting corruption at all levels. There is a high need to double efforts to tackle the issue of money laundering, tax evasion, illicit transfers. There is need to ensure full disclosure of beneficial ownership, efficient tax regimes, fair pricing practices and appropriate royalties.

According to Africa Progress Report 2013 on "Equity in Extractives", produced by the Africa Progress Panel chaired by Kofi Annan, Africa loses twice as much in illicit financial outflows as it receives in international aid. The same Report recommends the adoption of a global common standard for extractive transparency, the realization of the Africa Mining Vision, greater involvement of the African Peer Review Mechanism, building a multilateral regime for tax transparency, adding value by processing natural resources before export, ensuring equity in public spending and protecting artisanal mining which provides precious jobs. Partners could do a lot to assist Africa in those areas. We, in fact, note with satisfaction that two out of the three priorities for the G8 Presidency are tax compliance and transparency.

Before concluding, I would like to seize this opportunity to express my gratitude to the Regional Economic Communities, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, the African Development Bank, and all our partners and stakeholders who are supporting the African Union to push forward the mineral resources agenda and the AMDC.

Excellencies, Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our success will be measured by the way we translate, through leadership, transparency, and accountability, our wealth into meaningful benefits for African citizens. It is high time to use revenues from mineral resources to significantly improve the welfare of our people. As you know, satisfied local communities pose less political risks. Let this Conference be a wakeup call to all decision makers for the need to develop effective and equitable policies and to make the right decisions that present and future generations will remember.

I thank you for your kind attention.