



## 'Seize your future', ECA Chief says at Executive Council of the African Union gathering

Johannesburg, 11 June 2015 (ECA)- "If Africans do not occupy the policy space vacated in the recent past, thanks to the various crises that shook the pillars of the financial system and facilitated the emergence of new South engines of growth, they may not have another chance," Mr. Carlos Lopes, the Under-Secretary of General of the United Nations and the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa said during the opening ceremony of the twenty-seventh ordinary session of the Executive Council of the African Union in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Addressing the delegates, who included Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, Chairperson of the African Union Commission; South Africa's Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Mr. Maite Nkoana-Mashabane and the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Zimbabwe and current Chairperson of the Executive Council Mr. Simbarashe Mumbengegwi, Mr. Lopes stressed there has never been a better time than the present for Africa to "take ownership of its own development trajectory" and transform its economies.

Mr. Lopes reminded those present that several crucial global initiatives which will affect Africa's long-term aspirations such as the implementation of [Agenda 2063](#) [1] and the expected adoption of a post-2015 development agenda with its set of sustainable development goals represent an opportunity for the continent to act with "as much coherence as possible" and synchronize these schemes with existing national and sub-regional plans and development strategies.

Mr. Lopes reiterated the need for leaders and institutions to be visible to people and to assist with political will to drive visions and plans for sustainable development forward. He noted "we must make sure that others see and feel what leaders and policy makers are up to, and are aware of what we consider to be an imperative".

Leaders, institution and policy makers have a role to play in ensuring ownership of transformation plans that take into account the women and Africa's expanding youth population. As Mr. Lopes underscored, despite averaging a better growth since the beginning of the century than most regions in the world, this however "has still not translated into decent jobs, the elimination of large pockets of poverty, or dealt a blow to pervasive inequality in Africa".

Clearly solid plans and strategies are necessary as "Africa must industrialize for sustained growth" said Mr. Lopes while noting that countries that have been successful in terms of development determined their own future, like the East Asian countries that started massive industrialisation and as a result transformed their economies in the 1980s and 1990s.

Africa might have survived the global crises of 2008/2009 better than most other regions and the narrative shifted from that of a 'hopeless continent' to that of 'Africa rising' but structural

transformation of the continent based on credible macroeconomic frameworks, backed by adequate financing to enact infrastructural development must happen now if the continent is to improve the lives of its people.

Composed of Ministers or Authorities designated by governments of member states of the African Union, the Executive Council is responsible to the Assembly and makes decisions on policies in areas of common interest to the Member States. The 27<sup>th</sup> ordinary session of the Executive Council of the African Union is being held from 11 June to 12 June 2015.

[Twenty-seventh ordinary session of the Executive Council of the African Union – Statement by Carlos Lopes](#) <sup>[2]</sup>

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- [1] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LzSciRP2Ok8>
- [2] <http://www.uneca.org/..node/7729>
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