

President Muhammadu Buhari's Address at the 25th AU Summit in Johannesburg South Africa, June 14th 2015



Excellency, President **Robert Mugabe**, Chairman of the Union,
Excellency, President **Jacob Zuma**, our Host, Excellencies fellow Presidents and
Heads of Government,
Excellency Mr. **Jan Eliasson**, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations,
Excellency, Dr. **Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma**, Chairperson of the AU Commission,
Excellencies, Heads of Delegation, Invited Guests,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

Please permit me to join previous speakers in conveying my delegation's appreciation to our host, H.E. President Jacob Zuma, to his Government, and the brotherly people of South Africa for their warm hospitality, and for the excellent arrangements made for our comfort and for the success of our meetings. As this is my first address at this august assembly, may I also congratulate H.E. Dr. Robert Gabriel Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, for his unanimous election as the Chairman of our Union, at the 25th AU summit in Johannesburg South Africa, June 14th 2015

2. I feel highly honoured and extremely pleased to be able to address you today, barely two weeks after my inauguration as the President of Nigeria, following the 2015 Presidential election in my country. That process, which was adjudged as the fairest and most credible in the history of elections in Nigeria, was midwifed by the dogged and sustained determination of the Nigerian people, and their desire to deepen our democracy. Their quest was amply supported, and even encouraged by

the goodwill of our friends and partners in the international community. I therefore wish to seize this opportunity to convey my very deep appreciation to all those who contributed to the success of that election.

3. My election has been described as historic. I agree that it is indeed historic because for the first time in the practice of democracy in my country, an opposition Party has defeated the ruling Party in a keenly contested election. The election was also held against the backdrop of the fears and concerns expressed both in Nigeria and among our international friends abroad and partners that the outcome of the election could spell doom for Nigeria. I am glad that even though those fears and concerns were not without basis, the outcome was totally different, to the relief of all of us.

4. I cannot fail to acknowledge the very positive role played by my predecessor, H.E. President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, in averting the feared crisis, and in facilitating the peaceful transition of power between the two parties. I also wish to express my deep appreciation to all who honoured us with their presence at my inauguration, and even those, who for unavoidable reasons were unable to attend. I thank you all.

Mr. Chairman,

5. It is gratifying to note that our Union has made laudable progress over the past one and a half decades since its transformation from the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to the African Union (AU). Notably, we have been able to redirect our priorities at the continental level from mainly political goals to more diverse aspirations that are equally fundamental to our survival and development in a global community.

6. It is however clear, Mr. Chairman, that some of the greater challenges to our peoples within this Union still lie in the political, economic, as well as peace and security spheres. Our continent is currently bedevilled by the twin evils of terrorism and insecurity; poverty, youth unemployment, and underdevelopment. The destructive effects of the inhuman and criminal campaigns of the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria and neighbouring countries; the Al-Shabab attacks in East Africa, and the activities of the Al-Qaida in the Maghreb, all bear testimony to a continent under siege.

Mr Chairman, Excellencies and Colleagues

7. On our part, I was convinced on my assumption of office that the best approach would be to work within the framework of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) to mobilise collective support to fight against Boko Haram. I have in this regard, directed the relocation of Nigeria's Command Centre to place it closer to the theatre of action. Furthermore, I have vigorously engaged the members states of the LCBC to better coordinate the strategies and tactics in fighting the insurgency in the region.

I believe that this approach can be enhanced through complimentary regional and continental efforts.

8. The images in the international mass media of African youths getting drowned in the Mediterranean sea on their illegal attempts, and often times illusory hope of attaining better life in Europe is not only an embarrassment to us as leaders, but dehumanises our persons. Indeed, they combine to paint a very unfavourable picture of our peoples and countries.

9. Those of us gathered here today owe it as a duty to reverse this ugly trend. We must put an end to the so-called push factors that compel our young men and women to throw caution to the winds and risk life, limbs and all, on this dangerous adventure. We must redouble our efforts to sustain the economic development of our countries, ensure empowerment of our youths, create more jobs, improve and upgrade our infrastructure, and above all continue the enthronement of a regime of democracy, good governance and respect for human rights and rule of law. These and other measures that engender peace and stability must be pursued relentlessly.

10. In this connection, we must persist in our collective endeavour to work together through the African Union and our respective Regional Economic Communities (RECs), to uplift our continent and provide the African peoples the enabling environment for the realization of their legitimate dreams and aspirations. At this juncture, let me assure you of the unflinching commitment of Nigeria to the ideals and aspirations of the African Union as explained in the Agenda 2063, which is geared towards ensuring a peaceful, prosperous and integrated Africa in the next 50 years. It is for this reason that Nigeria is fully and irrevocably committed to the ECOWAS vision.

11. We do so because we believe that African integration is best attained through the instrumentality of our Regional Economic Communities (RECs) as the building blocs of viable continental institutions. Nigeria will therefore continue to play her part in supporting the African Union Commission and other continental and regional institutions in their efforts to prioritize African development in all sectors of human endeavour.

12. The journey might look arduous, but certainly not impossible. There are opportunities in every challenge. If and when we adopt this call for a change of attitude, approach, and disposition towards agreed protocols and commitments, we shall be bequeathing a politically stable, economically developed, and socially harmonious Africa, thereby justifying the confidence reposed in us by our electorates. We will also demonstrate our qualities as statesmen and true daughters and sons of Africa.

13. I thank you for your kind attention.

