

YOUR EXCELLENCY, NARENDRA DAMODARDAS MODI, PRIME OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDIA AND CO-CHAIRMAN OF THE SUMMIT

YOUR EXCELLENCY, ROBERT MUGABE, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZIMBABWE, CHAIRPERSON OF THE AFRICAN UNION AND CO-CHAIR OF THE SUMMIT

YOUR EXCELLENCIES, HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT

YOUR EXCELLENCY , DR. NKOSASANA DLAMINI-ZUMA, CHAIRPERSON OF THE ARICAN UNION COMMISSION

DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

Permit me, right at the beginning of my remarks, to express my joy and satisfaction for the warm welcome and generosity extended to me and my delegation since our arrival in the beautiful and historic city of New Delhi. I am overwhelmed and humbled by the arrangements graciously made for our stay in New Delhi by our hosts, Their Excellencies President Pranab Mukherjee and Prime Minister Narendra Damodardas Modi, as well as the Government and people of India

I also wish to take this opportunity, Your Excellency Prime Minister Modi, to thank You, and through You, the Government of the Republic of India, for the kind invitation extended to us to attend this important Third Africa-India Forum Summit. I should like to assure our Chairpersons of my delegation's full support, as indeed we have full confidence in their ability to guide this partnership to greater success in years to come.

Distinguished Co-Chairs,

Excellencies Heads of State and Government,

Distinguished Delegates,

It is truly befitting that we are gathered here today, representing the peoples of Africa and India, during this month of **October**, which is the month in which **Bapu Mahatma Gandhi** was born.

Bapu Mahatma Gandhi inspired India and Africa to fight against colonialism and imperialism; with his peaceful demeanor and strategy he set an example for independence and civil rights movements across the world. His vision and philosophy of devotion to the truth, nonviolence in the fight against all forms of discrimination and peaceful co-existence amongst peoples should continue to inspire and guide us and future generations.

Your Excellencies

The strong bond of friendship forged by history, common challenges, shared goals and aspirations between Africa and India continue to provide a concrete foundation for the consolidation, institutionalization and transformation of our cooperation into a Strategic Partnership beyond 2015. It is in this context that we hail, as most appropriate, the theme for this

Summit, namely: **“Partners in Progress: Towards a Dynamic and Transformative Development Agenda”**.

As we move forward to cement and enhance our partnership, we need to focus attention on the content and details of a dynamic and transformative development agenda based on the priorities of Africa as outlined in the African Union Agenda 2063, and its First Ten Year Implementation Plan. Such an agenda should further embrace priority areas pursued by the Government of India, as well as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. There is imperative need to identify implementable areas of cooperation that will ensure a positive and lasting impact on the lives of our peoples.

Your Excellencies,

In order for Africa and India to realize transformational, sustainable, inclusive economic growth and development, we need to invest heavily in infrastructure, agriculture, education, capacity building, skills development, science, technology and innovation. We also need to enhance our cooperation in health and other social areas. We are confident that with the support of the Government of India, the international financial institutions and the private sector, these areas of our strategic cooperation will grow and flourish.

There is no doubt that trade between African countries and India is key to the attainment of sustainable economic development in our two regions. It is a matter of grave concern that bilateral trade between Lesotho and India is almost negligible and below potential. I therefore urge the private sector in both countries to work hard to promote bilateral trade in order to redress this

situation. Lesotho commends the Government of India for the decision to expand its Duty Free Preference Scheme (DFTP) to Least Developed Countries, (thirty four of which are in Africa) which was launched in 2008 and became operational in 2012.

Distinguished Co-Chairs,

There is need for us as Africa and India to speak in one voice and most importantly to act in unison to accelerate reforms at the United Nations, particularly the reform of the UN Security Council. We remain resolute that the Security Council reform should be pursued with unity and vigour. It cannot be right that more than half the world's population remains on the periphery of an important decision making body like the Security Council.

It is a well-known fact that developing countries are the least polluters of the environment; and yet they bear the brunt of the negative consequences of climate change. This cannot be allowed to continue. We owe it to ourselves and future generations to leave a clean environment for posterity. The International Community, therefore, has to seize the opportunity that will be presented by the Climate Change Conference to be held in Paris later this year and commit itself to the achievement of significant reduction of carbon emissions into the atmosphere.

Distinguished Co-Chairs

Your Excellencies

In conclusion, I wish to underscore our support for the fundamental principles and ideals that underpin Africa-India Strategic Partnership, namely, equality, mutual benefit, solidarity and promotion of people-to-people cooperation. Last,

though not least in importance, allow me to take this opportunity to record my delegation's endorsement of the India-Africa Draft Declaration and the Framework for Strategic Cooperation.

I THANK YOU