

30 January 2015

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa,
President of the 69th Session of the General Assembly,
at the 24th ordinary session of the Assembly of the African Union**

**Your Excellency Mohamed Ould Abdelaziz, President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania and
Chairman of the African Union,
Your Excellencies Heads of State and Government,
Your Excellency Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, Chairperson of the African Union Commission,
Your Excellency Ban Ki-Moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations,
Your Excellency Mohamood Abbas, President of the State of Palestine,
Honourable Ministers,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am greatly honored to address this 24th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of African Heads of State and Government, in my capacity as President of the 69th Session of the United Nations General Assembly.

I appreciate this opportunity to speak to you today on the work of the General Assembly. I will specifically focus on the upcoming events and activities related to the priorities I set for the session.

Before I do so, allow me to salute the steadfast efforts of the Governments and people of Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone in responding to the Ebola outbreak. I also commend the support provided by regional and international partners, including ECOWAS, the African Union and the United Nations. I call on the international community to continue supporting these countries, especially in their long-term recovery, and building stronger and resilient health systems.

Your Excellencies,

This year, 2015, is particularly important for the United Nations. It is also important for Africa. While it marks 70 years since the founding of the United Nations, the African Union is also set to adopt its fifty-year socio-economic development framework, through Vision 2063.

At the United Nations this year, we have three major on-going processes to be concluded before the end of the year. These are: the Third International Conference on Financing for Development in July; the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda in September; and the Conference of parties on Climate Change (COP21) in December.

Fifteen years ago in 2000, you joined other world leaders and adopted the Millennium Declaration, with its constituent eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). 2015 being the target date for their realization, the MDGs have had significant impact in many African countries, although it has been uneven across goals and countries. We should spare no effort to accelerate progress towards achieving the MDGs, or to get as close as possible to doing so in the remaining time.

Upon my election as President of the General Assembly, I selected “Delivering on and Implementing a Transformative Post-2015 Development Agenda” as the theme for the 69th Session. I am glad to inform you that on 19th January, I launched the negotiating process for the successor framework to the MDGs. It is appropriately referred to as the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda.

Unlike the MDGs, however, the new agenda will encompass all three dimensions of sustainable development, namely: the social, economic and environmental aspects. Using Sustainable Development Goals as the main basis for negotiations, the agenda’s overarching objective is to eradicate poverty and improve people’s lives. Inevitably, it is critical to ensure that:

- Adequate means of implementation, including financing, technology development and transfer; and capacity building are incorporated. As the new agenda encompasses more than socio-economic issues, the amount of resources required will be much greater; and
- At national levels, we need to increase domestic resources, both public and private; attract more foreign direct investment, and strengthen global partnerships. We also need to find ways to incentivize the private sector, sovereign wealth funds, pension funds, capital markets and other stakeholders to make the critical investments needed. Official development assistance (ODA) alone will not be sufficient to finance the required transformative agenda.

It is important to note that, the outcome of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, scheduled to take place in July here in Addis Ababa, will be very important in providing resources required for the new agenda. Africa must be deeply involved in these negotiations.

Meanwhile, I am convening a High-level Thematic Debate on Means of Implementation for a Transformative Post-2015 Development Agenda in New York on 9 – 10 February to focus on this very important issue.

Excellencies,

The adverse effects of climate change are being acutely felt across Africa; threatening food security and undermining efforts to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development. Africa’s efforts through CAHOSCC have been laudable, and were well received at COP210 in Lima.

As we build up to COP21 in Paris, with the expectation for an internationally binding agreement on climate change, it remains important to maintain our resolve towards ensuring adequate mitigation and adaptation measures. Similar effort should be exerted to ensure financing for climate change technologies, including investment in renewable clean energy technologies.

On 29th June, I will convene a High-level Event on Climate Change to maintain the political momentum, and galvanize efforts at the mid-point between COP20 and COP21 in Paris.

Excellencies,

The theme for this session, “Women Empowerment and Africa’s Development for the Concretization of Agenda 2063” is both important and timely. As we celebrate 20 years of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action, I will convene a High-level Thematic Debate on 6th March, to galvanize political commitment and action towards achieving greater gender equality and women empowerment. In this new era of Africa’s progress, we must not shy away from taking bold decisions to empower women and girls. The outcomes of your Summit will be an important input in this global debate.

Equitable land distribution, property and inheritance rights, as well as women’s access to credit and markets, will be critical steps for the empowerment of women.

The other priorities and issues of interest for the 69th session include:

Strengthening cooperation between the United Nations and regional and sub-regional organizations. AU-UN cooperation, including with sub-regional organizations, has delivered tangible positive results. To enhance this cooperation, I am convening a High-level Thematic Debate on Strengthening Cooperation between the United Nations and Regional and sub-regional organizations on 4th May. Addressing the threat of terrorism and extremism through promoting dialogue, tolerance and reconciliation. The recent terrorist attacks in Nigeria, Somalia, Kenya, Pakistan, France and elsewhere around the world are a stark reminder of the threat posed by groups such as ISIS, Boko Haram, Al-Shabab and Al-Qaeda. We need collective action to defeat them. My other priority is the reform of the Security Council, taking into account the current global realities. Today, the Security Council is one of the most undemocratic organs of the United Nations. My effort is to work towards text-based negotiations, within the Inter-Governmental Process. The need for unity and cohesion of the African Group on this issue cannot be overemphasized.

Excellencies,

This is just part of the work we have ahead, but there is a lot more to be done. I am committed to ensuring positive outcomes.

In the days ahead, it will be my honour and privilege, to invite Your Excellencies to participate in some of the High-level thematic debates and events outlined above.

Once again, I am grateful to you for your support, and request you to remain actively engaged, as we discharge the responsibility of leading the General Assembly.

I thank you for your kind attention.