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ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA P. O. Box 3243 TELEPHONE: 011-551 7700

FAX: 011-551 7844, WEBSITE: [WWW.AU.INT](http://WWW.AU.INT)

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Message of the Chairperson  
Of the  
African Union Commission,  
H.E. Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma

on the occasion of the

**International Peace Day**

21 September 2016

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Today, Africa joins the rest of the world in marking the International Day of Peace or - Peace Day. Today, the African Union is engaging its Member States, and all its partners at political, institutional, private sector, civil society and community levels, to encourage all citizens to rally to the core of “silencing the guns” campaign in Africa by 2020.

This year’s theme for Peace Day is: “The Sustainable Development Goals; Building Blocks for Peace.” Indeed, many AU Member States and their leaders are increasingly taking ownership of the SDGs, but more importantly of Agenda 2063: Africa’s blueprint for economic growth and social transformation. However, let us not forget that for as long as the gunfire continues to disrupt the tranquillity of our blossoming societies and haunt the safety and security of our citizens, particularly of our women and girls, we will not achieve these noble aspirations for our people. It is with this in mind that, the African Union declared 2016 the, “Year of Human Rights with particular focus on the Rights of Women”.

It is disheartening that, in 2016, I continue to receive reports of incidences of sexual violence meted out against women and girls as a weapon of war, most recently from South Sudan, Central African Republic, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Today, I would like to reiterate the African Union’s zero tolerance of sexual and gender-based violence and exploitation. Sexual and gender-based violence has no place in our world: we must fight them relentlessly.

As we commemorate Peace Day, the AU wishes to acknowledge efforts by Member States to minimize violence during elections. We continue to encourage political leaders and their supporters to use legal and peaceful means to address elections-related disputes. It is through these methods

that we entrench and deepen our culture of democracy and peace on the continent.

The AU Commission is also pleased with the establishment of the Mediation Support Unit, which will provide logistical and technical support in our mediation initiatives led by our Special Envoys. We will continue to enhance our initiatives in structural conflict prevention as well as increasing our post-conflict reconstruction and development programmes in countries such as South Sudan, Central African Republic and Somalia.

The AU commends the decision by Heads of State and Government to establish the Peace Fund, as well as to support 25% of peace operation funding on the continent. This will provide predictable and sustainable funds to drive our goal of silencing the guns by 2020.

Let this Peace Day be our symbolic renewed commitment to peace, security and development in the world.

Happy International Peace Day.

**I thank you, Asante, Shukran, Merci, Obrigado**

2016-09-21

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Peace and Security

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