

## **AWDF Conference on the AU Agenda' 2063**

**Carleton University, March 12, 2015**

-----  
**Closing Remarks**

**A.S. Azoh-Mbi, Cameroon High Commissioner**

- Excellencies,
- Distinguished Professors,
- Participants,
- Dear Friends,

To mark International Women's Day, a number of inspiring events have recently been organized to portray the leadership role women are playing around the world, notably in the Arab world and in Canada.

Today, African Women Diplomats in collaboration with Carleton University's Institute of African Studies have demonstrated this Leadership by organizing for us this important conference on the development vision for Africa as encapsulated in the A.U.'s Agenda 2063.

This morning, we listened to a soul-stirring and stimulating opening address by Hon. Lois Brown, Canada's Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, a great friend of Africa, who from empirical experience, connected Canada's foreign policy objectives in Africa to the ambitions contained in AU's Agenda 2063.

Then came the incisive, informative and insightful keynote speech by H.E. Dr. Sulley Gariba, High Commissioner for Ghana, who basically demonstrated that Africa's ambitions for the next 50 years are fueled and propelled by Africa's failings and frustrations over the last 50 years – failings and frustrations which contrast sharply with phenomenal strides and successes observed in other parts of the world. There is a rude awakening all over Africa, to the need for

change. In Africa, perhaps more than elsewhere, it is well known and well understood that **when the music changes, the dance steps change also**.

In the three panels that followed, participants delved into specific aspects of the dream for a new Africa, as brilliant and illuminating presentations and discussions by illustrious speakers, highlighted the ambitions of the changing African continent, but also the challenges that must be overcome if the continent is to outpace itself and keep pace with the rest of the fast changing world.

As John H. Clark reminds us **“the purpose of setting goals is to inspire action, not predict it”**. The AU’s Agenda 2063 sets out ambitious goals requiring conscious and committed action from Africans themselves. This is why the three panels were carefully constituted around such themes as Governance and Leadership; Women; and Youth empowerment. The importance of Science and Technology was also highlighted, and we are particularly pleased and honoured to have had with us the representative of the African Institute for Mathematical Sciences (AIMS). AIMS seeks to promote the development of science and technology as underpinnings for transformative change in Africa.

It is understandable that following the observance in 2013, of the AU’s 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the eyes of the continent should now be set on the coming centenary of the organisation in 2063. **“At middle age”** says John Andrew Holmes, **“the soul should be opening up like a rose, not closing up like a cabbage”**. A rose and a cabbage, Africa has both, and from the testimony of our brilliant speakers today, the soul of Africa is surely opening up as a rose.

Hopefully, we rise from this conference with some useful lessons on the compelling history of Africa, but also on the colourful heritage of Africa; on the challenges facing Africa, but also on the chances open to Africa; on the hype, but also on the hope, associated with Africa.

It is increasingly recognized that Africa’s time has come; that it is good to be in Africa, good to invest and do business in Africa, and particularly good to be African these days.

As African Heads of Mission accredited to Canada, one of the leading powers in the world, this is our message to Canada and the world: There is a new Africa,

seeking meaningful partnership with the rest of the world for peace, progress and prosperity.

I conclude these closing remarks by calling on all my colleagues of the AWDF to please rise. It is thanks to their vision and leadership that we have had this most informative and successful Conference. **“There is flattery in friendship”**, says William Shakespeare, but certainly there is no flattery here if I ask that we applaud and thank these women leaders of Africa and the Institute for African Studies for organising this enriching Conference.

Let us also applaud and thank the eminent speakers, the panelists and participants as well as members of the media who all helped to make this conference a success.

Good evening and thank you all.