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MEC for Finance: Free State Province**

**Speaking Notes on the Occasion of the Centre for Africa Studies Africa Day  
Colloquium**

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Distinguished ladies and gentlemen

Today we are celebrating the founding of the African Union, the successor of the Organisation of African Unity which was established in 1963 in Addis Abba, Ethiopia. For many African countries, the day signalled the end of one era and the beginning of another. It represented a desire for lasting peace and development. The day gave hope and inspired courage to change the course of history. The tide was turning and things were set to change. The ravages of colonialism that imposed a huge premium on African countries and weighed heavily against peace and development were increasingly fading.

The Organisation of African Unity's founding fathers such as Haile Selassie, Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere and Jomo Kenyatta vowed in the founding charter to:

- Promote the unity and solidarity of African states;
- Coordinate and intensify their cooperation and efforts to achieve a better life for the people of Africa;
- Defend their sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence;
- Eradicate all forms of colonialism; and
- Promote international cooperation.

All these noble aspirations found resonance throughout the African continent. They entrusted the future of the continent to the courage of its people to transcend the challenges they face and seize opportunities available.

Shaping these enduring intentions, was the understanding that the realities of the time require renewed energy and great conviction. Enjoined together by their cause and need, member states shared the same vision that they can mutually conquer their adversities and build a brighter future for the continent.

Describing the moment of the formation of the Organisation of African Unity, the then President of the African National Congress, Oliver Tambo said,

"The Organisation of African Unity is one of the most hopeful symbols of African aspiration and determination to carve a proper place for our continent in the world".

With the transition to the African Union in July 2002, the founding principles of the Organisation of African Union remained. The quest for unity and solidarity among the African countries and the people of the continent still defines the essence of the African Union.

This includes the promise to defend the territorial integrity of the member states, and promoting peace, security, and stability. Equally important is the relentless yearning to promote democratic principles, good governance, sustainable development, economic prosperity and the integration of African economies.

Ladies and gentlemen

Fifty years after the formation of the African Union, we have so much to celebrate. More and more, dreams and hopes of our past are becoming realities of today. In an unprecedented feat, there are now two women presidents in the African continent, President Joyce Banda of Malawi and President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia. An equally foremost achievement not only for the African continent, but most importantly for South Africa, is that our very own former Minister Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma was elected as the chairperson of the African Union Commission.

Equally encouraging is that according to the International Monetary Fund's World Economic Outlook, growth in sub-Saharan countries will surge to 6.1% in 2014, way ahead of the global average of 4%. Countries such as the Ivory Coast which is the world's biggest producer of cocoa and Mozambique with the world's biggest natural gas reserves will see astonishing growth rates of 8% next year followed by Nigeria as the Africa's top oil producer, with a 7% growth rate. Given this unparalleled economic growth, poverty on the continent should be in decline. These developments dramatically advance the objectives of the African Union.

Similarly, we are also encouraged by many achievements we have attained as the Free State province. Access to basic services has markedly improved since 1994. According to the 2011 Statistics South Africa Census data, 97.8% of the people of the province now have access to piped water. Households with access to electricity for lighting have increased from 74.4% in 2001 to 89.9% in 2011. Our continued investment in education is illustrated by the trajectory of the Grade 12 pass rate that has increased from 75.7% in 2011 to 81.1% in 2012 in the province. In addition, the Free State province has taken the lead in supporting students at various tertiary institutions throughout the country through our extensive bursary programme.

Ladies and gentlemen

Notwithstanding these successes and positive developments, challenges still persist and much still needs to be done. Many African countries continue to be blemished by conflict, poverty and political instability.

All these and other problems diminish the greater prospects for peace and development that we so much desire. As a means to deal with these and many other challenges, the African Union launched the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) in 2003 as a far-reaching initiative to redefine the African growth and development trajectory.

The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) is celebrating its 10th Anniversary this year. The Anniversary's signature event is the APRM Colloquium, which has been scheduled to take place on 21 and 22 May in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The APRM Colloquium coincides with the 50th Anniversary of the African Union. The Colloquium arranged by the Centre for Africa Studies today supports and contributes to this anniversary celebration and I wish to express my appreciation to the organizers for taking this initiative.

The Addis Ababa Colloquium will serve as a platform for high-level discussions on Governance-related issues among prominent African scholars, thought leaders, government officials, governance academics and practitioners. The discussions are expected to highlight the importance of good governance in the social, political and economic transformation processes to the promotion of sustainable growth and development in Africa.

The African Peer Review Mechanism is a mutually agreed programme, voluntarily adopted by the member states of the African Union, to promote and re-enforce high standards of governance. It is a self-monitoring mechanism.

The APRM's mandate is to ensure that the policies and practices of participating countries conform to the agreed values in the following four focus areas: democracy and political governance, economic governance, corporate governance and socio-economic development.

The area of **Democracy and good political governance** looks at ensuring that member state constitutions reflect the democratic ethos, provide accountable governance and that political representation is promoted, allowing all citizens to participate in the political process in a free and fair political environment.

Good **economic governance** including transparency in financial management is an essential pre-requisite for promoting economic growth and reducing poverty.

The focus area of **corporate governance** focuses on promoting ethical principles, values and practices that are in line with broader social and economic goals to benefit all citizens. It works to promote a sound framework for good corporate governance.

Poverty can only be effectively tackled through the promotion of democracy, good governance, peace and security as well as the development of human and physical resources and these issues are included in the focus area of **Socio-economic development**.

The primary purpose of the APRM is to promote the adoption of laws, policies and practices which will lead to political stability, high rates of economic growth, sustainable development and continental economic integration. This is done through the sharing of experiences and by identifying and promoting best practices as well as interventions to build capacity. Not only do these APRM fundamentals go beyond the participating countries' intentions, but also

the never ending societal aspiration of a better life, better Africa and better future.

Soon after this process was initiated, South Africa was one of the first countries to accede to the APRM process in March 2003 in Abuja, Nigeria. The progress made by the APRM is significant. Between January 2006 and January 2011, 14 member countries were peer reviewed. As at 29 January 2011, the APRM counted 30 member states.

South Africa's early participation in the APRM process was hardly surprising given that the triumph of democracy also meant the pursuit of the noble intentions embedded in the APRM process. Envisioned in our quest for democracy was the need to transform the country, foster economic growth, accelerate development and improve the living conditions of our people.

Being part of the APRM process was therefore an expression of the desires that defined the long path that we travelled in the struggle against apartheid. Having emerged from decades of colonialism and apartheid, not only were we willing as South Africans to open ourselves and share our story of democratic triumph, but most importantly, to drive ourselves to continue to embed democratic principles.

Like all other provinces, the Free State is an inseparable part of South Africa's APRM process. The APRM objectives embody the province's economic, social and political aspirations knitted together in an integrated development web. Through this process, we have been able as a province to critically and genuinely assess our performance as a means towards the attainment of our development imperatives.

In support of the national effort, the Free State embarked on a process to strengthen the APRM in November 2005 with the inauguration of the Free

State Provincial Governing Council to implement the provincial chapter of the APRM process. This entailed the following:

- Consultation with stakeholders throughout the province on the four APRM thematic areas.
- Consultation with the Country Review Mission led by the Panel of Eminent Persons.

During April 2010, the Free State hosted the APRM provincial consultative conference with specific focus on the land question. This engagement was intended to listen to the people of the Free State and solicit their inputs on the land question.

The reconfigured Free State Provincial Governing Council was established in July 2011 as an instrument of our participatory democracy. Social partners that form part of this process include the provincial institutions of higher learning, labour and business formations and non-governmental and community-based organisations. These institutions and organisations have played an important role in highlighting the successes and challenges that characterize the Free State province as reflected in the APRM Country Reports.

During February 2013, another provincial consultative conference was hosted to solicit inputs that have been taken up in the third APRM Country Report to be presented at the African Union later this year. More recently, on the 10<sup>th</sup> of May, the extended APRM National Governing Council met to consider the final draft of the third country report. This report covers the period from October 2010 to January 2013 a period which saw numerous positive developments as well as challenges.

According to *The Economist's* Democracy Index, the World Bank's Governance Indicator Report and the Institute of Race Relations' Rainbow Index, South Africa achieved better scores in the areas of political stability, good citizenship and liberation of the poor. These sources, of course, also show a slight decline in key areas such as the control of corruption and the ability of government to provide quality public services. This critique forms part of the body of information which informs government's strategies that are also included in the third country report.

In particular, government has acknowledged service delivery challenges, instances of xenophobia and violence against women and children as these challenges have persisted over the three reporting periods and government has developed robust mechanisms to root them out. Various measures are being instituted to clean and strengthen the police, mobilise communities against xenophobia and violence against women and children as well as to capacitate the judiciary and oversight institutions.

In many of these APRM engagements, both the University of Free State and Central University of Technology played a significant role. Your wisdom has and continues to shape our province and country's destiny. This will not stop.

We view this partnership as a pedestal for sincere and reflective dialogue driven by the quest for a shared commitment to the development of the province and the country. We owe it to our people to ensure that their desires are realised. In this journey, we must ensure that we succeed as the costs of failure are too great to even contemplate.

I thank you all

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