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**Closing Remarks of the African Union Commission
presented to the Second Intercontinental CSO Forum,
Brussels, Belgium,
25 October 2013**

**By Dr. Jinmi Adisa, Director, Citizens and Diaspora Directorate
on behalf of the Chief of Staff, Mr. Jean Baptiste Natama**

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***Your Excellency, Mr. Andris Piebalgs, Commissioner for
Development in the European Commission***

Your Excellences, Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

***Members of the Joint CSO Steering Committee of Africa and
Europe and the Secretariat***

***Honored and Distinguished Representatives of the Civil Society
from Africa and Europe,***

Colleagues and Friends at the high table

Our friends from the Fourth Estate in the Media,

Facilitators and Rapporteurs,

Participants from all walks of life,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

On behalf of the African Union Commission, I have the honor to present this closing remark. Our Deputy Chief of Staff, Ms. Hesphine Rukarto took ill suddenly and cannot be here as originally scheduled to present it on behalf of the Chief of Staff, Mr. Jean Baptiste Natama.

We are now approaching the end of this august Forum that puts the people at the heart of the Africa-EU partnership process. This gathering is a reflection of how statecraft in general and the content

of democracy has evolved organically to fully embrace the active participation of non-state actors and the wider population at the grassroots.

The African Union and its European counterpart and their governments and Member States must take due pride in this achievement. Accordingly, the first mark of the success of this meeting is that it has taken place not once but twice. The space given to civil society is not a token but part and parcel of a process. It has been institutionalized and is guaranteed to continue.

Too often at both national and continental levels in Africa and Europe, we hear about openings to civil society as part of a policy process but the general focus is on side consultations. In contrast, this civil society space is a living mechanism that thrives and is therefore, bound to grow. The space is structurally guaranteed and is being used autonomously and in a collaborative fashion. Nonetheless, there is a simple but potent lesson for civil society in the way it is used. A space resembles an office. It has latency. It is as big as the person who occupies it.

Your deliberations in the last three days touched on various issues that the African Union highlighted in its opening remarks. These include the use and control of civil society space in the partnership framework, the reconfiguration of thematic themes and allied institutional structures, the implications for reform of the JAES process, relations with other stakeholders, problem and issues of coordination, post-Forum implementation agenda and the wider issue of direction “where we go from here? “

These reflections form an integral part of the preparation for the Third Africa-EU Summit of April 2013 when the political leaders of Africa and Europe will meet officially to put their seal on the content and

structure of the third partnership cycle. We expect that representatives of Civil Society will have their seat at the table. They will be present at the creation to submit your inputs directly to the Summit. The consequence is that when you look closely at the outcomes of that Summit in the mirror, civil society should see itself in it.

Yet it is imperative to remember that there is a community of stakeholders in the African and European Union. Consequently, there is a community of stakeholders in the Africa-Europe partnership. Thus as civil society must see itself in the outcomes, so also must others including state parties, the private sector, sub-regional organizations, community based groups etc. The difficulty with a situation where a great deal of people is clustered around a mirror is that no one can see his or her own reflections in full. Some will be captured in a frontal way, other will only have side views and yet others will have headshots but everyone will be in the photograph. The leaders will come up with a wholesome and finely balanced document that will be greater than the sum of its parts.

With this in mind, there is a clear need for your post-Forum agenda to be dynamic and enterprising. To achieve your objectives, you must ensure that whatever you come up with in this meeting must be a living document. It must be attuned to the consideration of other stakeholders that will follow. There will be a Joint Task Force meeting on 29 October this month here in Brussels in the immediate aftermath of your meeting and several follow-up meetings of state parties. You must be part of the deliberations when you can and responsive to them when you cannot. Your deliberation and conclusions would affect and influence these parties. Similarly, you must expect and open yourself to their influence. Events and situations will also impact on civil society perspectives and those of other stakeholders and the political leaders of the continents of Africa and Europe. Thus a variety

of factors will determine the ultimate outcomes of the Summit of April 2014.

In conclusion, I wish to make three firm promises concerning the outcomes of this Intercontinental CSO Forum. First is that we will faithfully report your deliberations and outcomes to our principals in the African Union at the level of the Commission and the Union at large. Second is that they will consider and take account of the report and your outcomes document with the seriousness it deserves. Third and finally, I wish to reiterate the pledge made in the opening address that the African Union Commission will support your recommendations, proposals, measures and strategies that will strengthen the Africa-Europe partnership in manner that will enable and accelerate the pace of the delivery on its promises to the African people.

We wish all participants safe journey back to your various destinations.

I thank you all.