

**REMARKS BY MADAME JULIANA LUMUMBA ON BEHALF OF MOHAMED EL MASRY, CHAIRMAN, UACCIAP**

**Excellencies**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

On behalf of the chambers of 46 African countries, and their member businesses, it gives me great pleasure to address this distinguished gathering of African chambers and business leaders, the job creators, the true engine of growth and socio-economic development in our ever reforming and globalizing world.

The first chambers of commerce were founded back in 1599 in continental Europe (Marseille, France and Brugge, Belgium). The world's oldest English-speaking chamber of commerce was established in Glasgow, Scotland, in 1783. Today, there are over 13,000 chambers worldwide, most of which are coordinated by National Federations.

Africa followed late where most of its chambers were established in the past century. Moreover, Africa has been a late player in the international chamber scene. Though The International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) was founded back in 1919, yet today, only 13 African countries are within its 140 countries membership.

Continental federations started half a century ago with the Eurochambres created in 1958, as the Association of Chambers of Commerce and Industry in 45 European countries through a network of 2000 regional and local Chambers through their 45 national federations.

At last, 46 African chambers met in Egypt in 2005, and established the Union of African Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Agriculture and Professions, with the aspiration to serve African business by promoting trade, investment and human resources development, opening markets for African goods and services, and increase the free flow of capital. It aims at supporting the African private sector and business community to achieve the economic revival of their continent.

A continent that has one-eighth of the world which will double in 28 years. Today Africa offers almost a billion consumers, and more important, a low cost, young work force.

A continent that has one-fifth of the world land surface, rich in all types of natural resources, hence offering a golden opportunity for investments in manufacturing, agriculture and services.

A continent that is catching up with the modern world, hence offering vast opportunities in all aspects of construction and infrastructure.

A continent that is at last the focus of the whole world, with funding availed from all development institutions and donors.

The continent that is today the land of untapped opportunities.

Our Union, has been created to promote all this, from the China-Africa Summit in Beijing, to the Euro-Africa summit in Lisbon, to the Turkey-Africa summit in Istanbul, we are working hand in-hand with

**All African Chambers of Commerce Conference      Private Sector a Venue for African Renaissance  
November 25-26/2008, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

our partner countries and regions, attracting investments, promoting trade in goods and services, and displaying the potential Africa offers.

During these meetings with heads of states, we succeeded in establishing the African-Chinese and the African-Turkish Chambers, which are important steps on the long road of the internationalization of our Union and strong bridges to carry our African trade and investment promotion drives.

Our Union, that is accredited by the African Union, and thanks to its host country, Egypt, is provided all diplomatic immunities by the decree of His Excellency President Mubark, and is supported by the Government of Egypt at several fronts.

Our Union, that aims at

- Promoting inter- and intra- African trade and investment and promoting technology transfer and human resources development.
- Bridging member companies of its chambers as well as linking regional African clusters aiming at economic integration of the African continent
- Assisting in economic integration through promoting the harmonization of regulations, standards and specifications at all fronts.
- Collection of the available data on trade, production and technology, then disseminating timely verified business information

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

Today, after several board meetings and their appointment of the high level secretary general, the former Congolese culture minister Mrs. Juliana Lumumba, and her support staff, we are on the right track.

Today, we meet with the aim of building more bridges of cooperation and mutual understanding by and between the businesses of Africa.

Such bridges, that would facilitate, trade, investment, and technology transfer, and raise them to the level that merits to the existing potential, for the benefit of all sides, in a win-win situation.

Meetings such as today, are one of those bridges, which can help formulate visions, develop initiatives, and come up with practical work plans.

We, at our Union, supported by the Government of Egypt, did not wait, we are building a new chamber tower to host our Union, to be the house of African chambers. Moreover, we have embarked on an important initiative for the creation of Africa's Business Portal, which is being implemented by Microsoft in partnership with African IT sprouting companies. Such a partnership was a capacity building and technology transfer success story on its own.

This African Business Information Network, whose detailed design phase was completed with a full-fledged working prototype, and all its required hardware was provided through the Egyptian ministry of Communication and Information Technology along with the required training centers and trainers.

**All African Chambers of Commerce Conference      Private Sector a Venue for African Renaissance  
November 25-26/2008, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

The vision was to create "A networked African business community, able to transcend their commercial capacities beyond their domestic barriers, capable of soliciting and identifying sources of information that empowers their business and an enabler for their local communities to access knowledge and acquire highly needed technologies and skills."

Now it is the time for African chambers to benefit, to host their information and utilize the business portal to promote intra- and extra- African trade and investment.

Now, that we have demonstrated that Africa is coming up with world class initiatives, at its own cost, we do call upon our partners, to build upon what we initiated, enlarge and improve, bridging our digital divide, and assisting Africa's businesses in their strive to globalize.

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

In November 2006, I had the honor of addressing 48 heads of state participating in the Africa China summit. A summit where the Chinese president Hou Gentau offered Africa a 5 billion dollars grant to establish industrial zones and investment projects, and another 5 billion dollars for trade finance to enhance joint cooperation. At a time, where we did not have any initiative from our side.

Today, I assume, that with our own initiatives, all our partners, would compliment what we are doing, build upon it, improve and innovate for the mutual benefit of all sides.

Funding only is not what we seek, it is the technologies, investments and market access that we are striving for, to enable us to bridge the socio -economic divides. Now let us walk-the-talk, let us set a work program, instruments and timelines.

Timelines for the coming phase to compliment what was already done in the past period such as providing diplomatic immunities, the appointment of the high level secretary general, Mrs. Lumumba and her support staff, the establishment of the Africa's Business Portal, the start of construction of our new building, and the establishment of African bilateral chambers, just to name a few.

We shall call for a board meeting in early 2009 to present the new work program which shall include a workshop and exhibition on the African Agriculture sector during the Cairo International Fair in March 2009 to which we do invite you all to participate and utilize as a platform for increasing our African trade and investment.

Last, but not least, I would like on behalf of all my African colleagues to thank the Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Associations, the African Union, and the Government of Ethiopia, for their initiative, kind invitation and excellent organization.

We do look forwards to more cooperation, for a better Africa, the land of untapped opportunities.

Thank you all; Mohamed El Masry