



**Remarks by Mrs. Angela Martins, Head of Culture Division,
Department of Social Affairs, African Union Commission**

On the Occasion of the Celebration of the 5th African World Heritage Day

5 May 2020 (14.30-16.00)

*Theme of the 2020 Celebration: “Youth, Entrepreneurship and Heritage
Sustainability in Africa”*

Mr. Vusumuzi Mkhize -- Director General of the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture of South Africa and Chairperson of the African World Heritage Fund Board of Trustees

Mr. Souayibou Varissou – Executive Director of the African World Heritage Fund (AWHF)

Dr. Mechtild Rössler - Director–UNESCO World Heritage Centre

Ms. Maria Teresa Jaquinta – Senior Project Manager, Member States and Partnerships ICCROM

Ms. Mercy Mbogelah – Site Manager, Ruins of Kilwa Kisiwani, World Heritage Site, Tanzania

Mr. Pierre Kafando – Site Manager, Salonga National Park, World Heritage Site, DRC,

Ms. Njeri Mbure – Youth Forum Alumin

Mr. Michael Sudarkasa – Chief Executive Officer – Africa Business Group (ABG)

Dear Heritage Professionals, Site Managers and Cultural Workers

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

Allow me, on behalf of H.E. Amira Elfadil, Commissioner for Social Affairs, to start by congratulating us all for the celebration of the African World Heritage Day today 05th May 2020. Africa’s rich and outstanding heritage needs to be celebrated, conserved and preserved for generations to come. It is through engagements such as this one that we can raise awareness and

advocate on the need to celebrate, cherish and preserve this important African common good.

Even though the celebration of the African World Heritage Day this year, is taking place at difficult times for our continent and the world at large given the ongoing COVID-19 health crisis, we call upon all AU Member States, heritage professionals, site managers, communities and cultural workers in general to find creative ways to celebrate this very important day and to promote further African World Heritage Sites of Outstanding Value. It is by celebrating our rich and unique cultural and natural heritage that we instil and promote our shared values, the African Renaissance and the Spirit of Pan-Africanism.

I'm aware that due to the COVID-19 Pandemic African World Heritage Sites are already experiencing challenges given the non-existence of tourism activities which is impacting negatively on the Sites revenue generation but as I mentioned earlier, let us use creative ways of promoting the work that we do using the means at our disposal given the current situation.

Allow me also to express gratitude to the African World Heritage Fund for organizing this virtual event, this one of the creative ways to continue our work. The African Union fully support this initiative aiming to empower the African youth through entrepreneurial venture for heritage sustainability. The African Union has taken bold steps to profile youth and heritage in its strategies and initiatives, to mention a few:

Firstly, as you are aware the “African Union Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want” the Blueprint for Africa’s development is built on 7 aspirations. Aspiration 5 of the agenda is promoting “*An Africa with a Strong Cultural Identity, Common Heritage, Values and Ethics*. It is rooted in “*our diversity in culture, heritage, languages and religion [as] a cause of strength, including the tangible and intangible heritage of Africa*’. Here, the World Heritage brand is perceived as a strategy to ensure protection and give value to African cultures and heritage.

Aspiration 6 of the AU Agenda 2063 recognizes the key role of African youth as a driving force for quality change on our continent. It becomes essential for the AU to “*support young people as drivers of Africa’s renaissance, through investment in their health, education and access to technology, opportunities and capital, and concerted strategies to combat youth unemployment and underemployment. Ensure faster movement on the harmonization of standards of higher education to enhance the mobility of African youth and talent across the continent*”. Skills development is key to ensure performance and sustainability. Each young person should be able to benefit from opportunities while contributing to empower others. That’s the spirit developed at strategic level and clearly promoted by the AU Agenda 2063.

Another example of the engagement of the African Union to heritage is highlighted in the proceedings of the Union. During the 33rd Assembly of the Union in Ethiopia in February 2020, our Heads of States declare 2021 the African Union Year for Arts, Culture and Heritage. This is a bold and formidable opportunity for the continent. A full bouquet of events will mark

the year 2021 and I would like to see full involvement and engagement of our youth to champion arts, culture and heritage issues in 2021 including through the celebration of the African World Heritage Day on 5th May and the Africa Day on 25th May as well as continental commemoration days on arts, culture and heritage.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our journey toward 2021 will soon start, let's walk together to improve our footprint for a better Africa rooted in its cultural wealth and diversity. I once again wish you all a Happy African World Heritage Day!

I thank you