

Remarks on Africa Day reception May, 25th, 2016

**By HE MrsSouriya OTMANI, Dean of the Prague African Group and
Ambassador of the Kingdom of Morocco**

Excellencies, Mr Minister of Foreign Affairs, dear colleagues Ambassadors and heads of Missions, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen

On behalf of the Ambassadors and heads of Missions of African countries accredited to the Czech Republic, including the Embassy of Kenya with residence to the Netherlands, it is my pleasure to warmly welcome you all, to the 2016 Africa day Celebration. We value very much the kind support provided the MENA, SubSaharan Countries and Public policy Departments, regarding the organization of this celebration in the Cernin Palace gardens, under the auspices of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic.

As you may have noticed, the Prague African Group is getting larger since the recent reopening of the Sudanese Embassy in Prague. We wish more African countries would be able in the future to open their Embassy in the CR and vice versa, Prague will also be able to increase the number of its diplomatic missions in the African continent.

Excellency, Mr Minister Lubomir Zaoral, we are truly honored to have you here with us and your participation in this celebration, illustrates the growing interest of the Czech Republic towards the African continent and its development. Today's celebration is also an opportunity for all of us to engage and exchange on ways and means for a reinforced cooperation between the Czech Republic and the African countries. No doubt Mr Minister, that the Czech Republic which is a country of art and culture, and which has a real industrial and know how potential can be a privileged partner for cultural and economical cooperation with the whole African continent.

Nevertheless, the level of cooperation between the Czech Republic and African countries is far from the potential that this continent offers and it is our duty, as Ambassadors, to advertise jointly and individually, our continent and draw the attention of our Czech partners to care more about Africa, especially regarding the business opportunities that could benefit to both sides.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, Yes, we all know that Africa remains confronted with various problems of development and with many challenges that should be tackled: poverty, unemployment, inequalities, lack of economic diversification, low industrialization, infrastructure deficit, global warming and some serious security issues, such as terrorist threats, tensions and conflicts. Nevertheless, Africa continues showing a good economic performance, Africa remains a world's region full of potential and Africa is

often described as being the continent of the future for the following reasons:

- the continent covers 20% of the earth surface and it is the 2nd fastest growing region in the world with an annual GDP growth around 5%, mainly thanks to the increase of the domestic demand and spending in infrastructures. Currently, six out of the world's 10 fastest-growing economies are in Africa.

- Africa is nowadays a huge market of over 1.1 billion inhabitants and is expected by 2050 to reach 2.4 billion, the equivalent of 25% of the world's population.

- Africa has a large quantity of natural and mineral resources and also enormous renewable natural resources, such as forests, fisheries, fertile lands, water resources and solar energy.

- sectors such as infrastructure, industry, energy, agriculture, services, textile, telecommunications, IT and many others are very promising ones and offer good opportunities for investments in Africa.

- bearing in mind that Africa has the youngest population of the world, some 200 million people being aged from 15 to 24 years old, the major development priorities of Africa over the next 50 years are: to improve healthcare, to invest in quality education, in food security, and to create job opportunities. That's why we are convinced Mr Minister, that Africa could offer chances for the Czech Republic to diversify its exports and FDI in its sectors of major interest.

Moreover developing business relationships and cooperation in various fields is important for the sustainable development of Africa. Cooperation between European and African countries will certainly lead to a win/win situation, it will avoid exporting Africa's problems to Europe, through migration, and it is a question of security for Europe which is as we all know, experiencing today one of the most significant influxes of migrants and refugees in its history.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, As African countries, we do also know that Africa's future lies in its unity, in using its proper synergies and complementarities. This is the way that will allow our continent to move forward and to overcome all the challenges it faces.

To conclude, let me assure you, Excellency Mr Minister, that the African Ambassadors accredited to your beautiful country, are committed, to fully cooperate with the Czech Government in order to strengthen and move forward in all fields and in every sector, the Czech-African cooperation. Thank you for your attention.

