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Address of the Deputy President of South Africa, Jacob Zuma, on the Occasion of the Signing of the Peace Agreement between the Governments of the DRC and Rwanda, Pretoria, 30 July 2002

President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa and Chairperson of the African Union,
Your Excellency President Bakili Muluzi of Malawi and Chairperson of SADC,
Your Excellency President Joseph Kabila of the Democratic Republic of Congo,
Your Excellency President Paul Kagame of Rwanda,
Your Excellency Amara Essy, Interim Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union,
Your Excellency Ms Lena Fundh, distinguished representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, His Excellency, Mr Kofi Annan,
Honourable Ministers,
Ambassadors and High Commissioners,
Distinguished representatives of international organisations,
Esteemed Guests,
Members of the press,
Comrades, ladies and gentlemen.

We meet here today to participate in the solemn occasion of the signing of a peace agreement between two sister African countries that are very dear to us, the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Republic of Rwanda.

We are especially honoured that our two brothers and leaders, Presidents Joseph Kabila and Paul Kagame, are with us today as we take a giant step forward towards the renaissance of Africa.

We are very pleased and inspired that we also have with us both the Chairperson of the African Union and the Interim Chairperson of the Commission of the Union.

The presence with us of the representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, an African of whom we are immensely proud, Kofi Annan, confirms to us the historical importance of this occasion.

We thank the Ambassadors and High Commissioners who are here, a number of whom represent both their countries and various multilateral organisations.

I speak to you as a South African and an African. I speak for a people made up of many races, colours and origins that have known centuries of war and death. I represent a people who know

the benefits of the dividend of peace, who look forward to a life free of poverty and underdevelopment.

I speak as a member of an African liberation movement that fought for a free and peaceful Africa even before it was formally constituted, 90 years ago. I represent a people who are still in struggle, who count among their heroes and leaders, the immortal Congolese and African patriot, Patrice Lumumba.

Accordingly, I stand here to say to all our African sisters and brothers that, in our millions, we have been comrades-in-arms in the common struggle for liberation. We have shared the immense pain inflicted on all of us by neo-colonialism, racism, dictatorship, genocide and civil war.

I stand on this podium to make the firm commitment to the people of Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo, to the whole of Africa, to the peoples of the world, that this African republic which is honoured to host you, democratic South Africa, will always roar and act as a lion for the renaissance of Africa.

When you, the leaders of the DRC and Rwanda reached an agreement in favour of peace and African solidarity, you gave us cause to feel proud to be African. Through the agreement you will sign today, you made the statement that Africa shall be at peace.

You set the point for the start of Africa's new age when, together, as the African Union was being born, we said there will be no more genocide. We will not allow that another cuts anybody's limbs. We will not agree that the barrel of the gun determines who rules. We will not accept that the principle is compromised, that the people shall govern.

We are here to tell all Africa and the world that regardless and because of our common and troubled past, we have taken the decision that Africa will manage and determine its own rebirth.

Your agreement as Rwandans and Congolese has made the statement that as Africans, we are justified in our conviction that the African Union and its New Partnership for Africa's Development, represent a new and extraordinary beginning for a continent that, for centuries, has known nothing but subjugation, humiliation and immense suffering.

Today, you, representatives of the Congolese and Rwandan people, who need no introduction to the African experience, have gathered in our capital to give our people and ours, the rare gift of hope.

You have come here to give practical expression to the dream of millions of Africans, from the confidence of the Indian and Atlantic Oceans to the Mediterranean, that the sun will always smile on Africa.

There are many who will do their best to ensure that we fail. They will seek to convince us that nothing African can succeed.

Today, thanks to your patriotism as Africans, you have helped all of us to make the statement that these sceptics are wrong, and we are right, regardless of our problems.

Today, the Democratic Republic of Congo says we are right. Rwanda says we are right. Burundi says we are right. Only the other day, Sudan said we are right. Angola says we are right. Sierra Leone says we are right. The Comoros says we are right. Lesotho says we are right.

We know that Africa's problems continue. But we reaffirm that so does Africa's struggle. Together, as Africans, we proclaim – victory is certain!

Africa will win!

God bless you, and God bless Africa!

Thank you.

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