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REMARKS

BY

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**AT THE OPENING SESSION OF THE EXPERTS' MEETING OF
THE 3RD SESSION OF THE AFRICAN UNION CONFERENCE OF
MINISTERS OF CULTURE**

25th October 2010

ABUJA, NIGERIA

Hon Minister of Culture and Tourism of the Federal Republic of Nigeria

Excellencies Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Distinguished Representatives of Regional and International Cultural Organizations

Cultural Practitioners and Experts

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a great honour and privilege for me to address the opening session of the meeting of cultural experts and practitioners during the 3rd African Union Conference of Ministers of Culture being held here in Abuja, Nigeria.

I wish to start by expressing our profound gratitude to the government and the people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria for the warm hospitality accorded to us, as well as the facilities put at our disposal for the successful undertaking of this important conference.

Also, I wish to use this opportunity to welcome all the cultural experts and practitioners and to express the African Union Commission's appreciation for your presence here today, which is a demonstration of your commitment to collaborate with the Commission in the discussion of pertinent issues geared towards the development, promotion and improvement of the cultural sector in Africa. Your massive and positive response to our invitation, despite your other commitments, has shown that you have taken on board your mandate as the critical continental cultural mass and the importance of your influence and contribution to the cultural decision making process so as to promote the development of this sector in Africa.

Hon. Minister

Excellencies

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

The theme for the 3rd session of the AU Conference of Ministers of Culture is "*Sustainable Financing of the Cultural Development Sector in Africa*". The cultural sector in Africa has not received the required attention and financial resources it deserves from our Governments, in spite of the sector's huge potentials. If and when properly harnessed through targeted financing and development of the creative and cultural industries, the sector will enhance and strengthen the growth of our economies, as well as contribute to reduction of poverty.

Over the next two days, we shall be discussing issues of critical importance to culture – the financing of the cultural development ~~through the Draft Strategy for the Financing of Culture in Africa~~; the Ratification of the Charter for the African Cultural Renaissance; the Feasibility Study for the Establishment of the Pan-African Cultural Institute; and the Implementation Programme for the African Cultural Renaissance Campaign, among others. We shall also be discussing important issues proposed by Member States and listed on the draft agenda. I hope we shall be engaged in deep and informed discussions in the areas of concern outlined above, with the ultimate goal of providing sound recommendations to our Ministers when they meet later this week.

The expectation is that the cultural development sector will get the much required visibility and that appropriate financial and human resources will be allocated to enable it to flourish at national, regional and continental levels.

The implementation of programs such as the African Cultural Renaissance Campaign and ratification and implementation of the Charter for the African Cultural Renaissance will boost the value and preservation of our traditions and culture as well as uplift our self-esteem as Africans, which in turn will contribute to our regional and continental integration and the much desired development of our continent.

I wish you fruitful deliberations.