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2nd PIDA Week

Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, 23th November 2016

DRAFT OPENING REMARKS BY

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AUC COMMISSIONER FOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENERGY

- **Honorable Minister,**
- **Dr. Akinwumi Adesina, President of the African Development Bank,**
- **Dr. Ibrahim Assane Mayaki, Chief Executive Officer of NPCA,**
- **Distinguished participants,**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen,**
- **All protocol observed.**

First of all, on behalf of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, I have the pleasure to express my sincere appreciation to the people and the Government of Cote d'Ivoire for the warm hospitality extended to us since our arrival in this beautiful city of Abidjan as well as welcoming you all at this second PIDA Week.

I would also like to reiterate our deep gratitude to the African Development Bank for hosting once again this important gathering and for having institutionalized the PIDA Week as a major Bank's annual event.

As part of the implementation of the PIDA Priority Action Plan, the PIDA Week offers a valuable opportunity for public decision makers, private sector, civil society, academia to exchange views towards sound realization of the projects on the ground.

This time PIDA week is placed under the theme “**Creating Jobs through Regional Infrastructure Development**”. This is an appeal to all stakeholders to joint effort for addressing the need to always take into account job creation particularly for the youth all along the project cycle from construction or even before, to operation and maintenance of the PIDA PAP projects..

Honourable Ministers,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The final objective of building connected and integrated infrastructure networks of transport, energy and ICT as well as trans-boundary water resources, beyond the establishment of the African Economic Community, is, indeed, to boost socio-economic development on the continent. Without any doubt, we can consider that jobs creation is a key driver for the attainment of this objective with more industrialization and provision of services.

Africa has the fastest growing demographics in the world. This could be an asset for change, progress and dynamism, but also a threat for stability issues in the continent. One of the major challenges for the African continent in the upcoming years and decades will be to absorb

the growing young population by sustainably creating new jobs for both skilled and unskilled people.

PIDA should play an important role in narrowing the gap between jobs creation and unemployment. To that end, public decision makers and private sector management are urged to actively undertake training and skills acquisition in infrastructure development particularly in building roads, rail systems, power generation and power transmission systems in order to enable young Africans to be well prepared for the implementation of complex programmes such as PIDA.

In the parallel sessions, this dimension should be highlighted based on the findings on projects both under construction and under operation. In addition, participants could discuss, within the thematic parallel sessions, on a tracking mechanism for jobs creation all along the project cycle in order to monitor the impact of PIDA PAP in this area. By doing so, we will better communicate on how PIDA PAP is enhancing the well-being of our people beyond the physical assets.

Honourable Ministers,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Obliviously, we can only achieve this target if important resources are timely mobilized for the projects. As of now, the level of implementation remains low whereas PIDA PAP is at mid-term.

In this regard, I would like to recall key recommendations from the inaugural PIDA Week held last year in Abidjan:

- Scaling-up capacity for project preparation – The continent needs as a matter of urgency, to scale-up capacity for project preparation in terms of resources, skills and development of viable project pipelines. This should start by strengthening existing preparation facilities with a focus on regional and continental projects such as the NEPAD Infrastructure Project preparation Facility (NEPAD-IPPF) into larger, better resourced Facilities including increased mobilizing preparation financing from African countries.
- Strengthening collaboration on co-financing – Regional projects such as power interconnectors and major highways are large, requiring larger preparation capital. There is a need of commitment from project sponsors (Governments) to share and mitigate project risks.
- Strengthening linkages with potential financiers– Enhanced linkages and engagement with potential financiers at the early stages of the project cycle as well as at downstream level is required to ensure

better financing prospects for prepared projects.

- Coordinated approach to creating enabling environment- Creating the necessary enabling environment (institutions, regulatory frameworks, sector reforms, completion laws, standards, transparent procurement, etc) in a more coordinated, holistic and integrated manner across countries and regions as the basis for creating larger and more viable regional markets for infrastructure services (e.g. power trade, etc) which are more predictable and attractive to investors.

Finally, I would like thank the organizers and the sponsors for all arrangements made that will allow us fruitful discussions and deliberations.

Thank you for your kind attention.