Your Excellency Mr. John Drammani Mahama, President of the Republic of Ghana
Your Excellency Mr. Martin Sajdik, President of the UN Economic and Social Council
Honourable Anyang Nyong’o, Senator for Kisumi County and Secretary General of the Orange Democratic Party of Kenya
Your Excellency Amina Mohamed, Assistant Secretary General and Special Advisor to the UN Secretary General on Post 2015 Development Agenda
Mr. Obeng, Chairman of the National Planning Commission, allow me to kindly state that all protocols observed

This goodwill message is presented on behalf:
Mr. Abdoulie Mar Dieye,
UN Assistant Secretary General, UNDP Assistant Administrator, & Director UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa,

You Excellences, permit me to sincerely thank the Government of Ghana and the rest of our partners in organizing this very important event. This conference brings experts from all over the continent including governments, parliamentarians, the private sector and the CSOs to discuss practical issues of inequality, transforming African economies and promoting human development in Africa.

The choice of the theme of this conference is very topical and timely. African Heads of State and Government, in the pre-AU Summit in January 2014, endorsed the Common African Position on post 2015 development agenda that has eradicating poverty in all its form and rapidly reducing
inequality as its overarching goal and using structural economic transformation as an important pillar of making this happen.

One of UNDP’s most recent publications on inequality entitled “Humanity Divided: Confronting Inequality in Developing Countries,” underscores the imperative of this conference. The report found that income inequality in Africa is high. The continent is the second most unequal in the world after Latin America and the Caribbean. According to the UNDP report, on average, income inequality increased by 11 percent in developing countries between 1990 and 2010. As a result, a significant majority of households in developing countries — more than 75 percent of the population — are living today in societies where income is more unequally distributed than it was in the 1990s.

The report provided evidence, confirmed by many other studies, that beyond a certain threshold inequality harms growth and poverty reduction, the quality of relations in the public and political spheres of life and individuals’ sense of fulfilment and self-worth. Horizontal inequality – between groups – is associated with political instability, contributes to higher rates of violence, erodes social cohesion and undermines the capacity for collective decision-making. Gender-related discrimination and inequalities are particularly high and costly in Africa. Inequality in income is systematically associated with greater inequality in non-income outcomes. For instance, children in the lowest wealth quintile are still up to 3 times more likely to die before their fifth birthday than children in the richest quintile. And despite overall declines in maternal mortality in the majority of developing countries, women in rural areas are still up to three times more likely to die while giving birth than women living in urban centers; and

Distinguished ladies and Gentlemen, from UNDP’s perspective, we will continue to work with governments and other stakeholders across the continent to advance human development. This implies that the Rising Africa should translate in broadly shared improvements in standards of living. The achievement in economic growth and opportunities should translate to ‘expanding capabilities and enlarging the choices people have to live fulfilling lives’ economically, politically, socially, environmentally and culturally. This calls for policy actions that see people as the means and end of any development process.

Your Excellences and Distinguished ladies and Gentlemen, the experience over the past decades shows that many people have been excluded from benefiting from the rising economic fortunes of the continent. The benefits have often been concentrated in a few enclave and limited to
narrow segments of society, thus exacerbating poverty, inequality and fragility. A new, inclusive and people-centred development model is needed to bring about broader prosperity. This should be underpinned by: an integrated economy that nurtures inter-sectoral synergies, linkages and job opportunities; an effective value-addition programme that is supported by enhanced agricultural productivity as well as expanded and quality infrastructure; and an expanding fiscal space for development financing, including efficient implementation of social protection programmes for the marginalized segments of the society. This transformative agenda cannot lead to rapid reduction of inequality if the Africa does not continuously promote capable private and public institutions supported by effective and responsive governance, inclusive participation, voice and accountability. In conclusion, Your Excellences, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, inequalities in Africa are serious impediments to stable and effective governance; promoting structural economic transformation and ensuring sustainable human development. Africa needs a new, inclusive development model that places the wellbeing of the people at the centre of economic growth and development. The poor and vulnerable groups must benefit from the continent’s wealth. Peoples’ voices must be heard on issues that affect them and governments must be responsive, accountable and transparent.

This conference provides a space for key African constituencies, which are concerned with different domains of the inequality and are engaged in shaping possible trajectories for African transformation, to share their visions and aspirations and explore possible common paths to ensure a transformed and equitable Africa. I want to enjoin you all to take advantage of a large spectrum of experts attending this event to propose practical strategies for realizing the African Union’s vision of a “Peaceful and Prosperous Continent”.

Thank you,

Merci