Your Excellency Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma,
Leaders of national, regional and continental organizations
Honorable members of parliament, representatives of governments, international organizations and partners
Business leaders, civil society representatives, media partners,
Members of the Board of Directors, Senior Management and Staff of the African Development Bank
Distinguished delegates, friends, ladies and gentlemen

Welcome to the African Development Bank’s Development Evaluation Week 2018. I would like to express my very sincere gratitude to you for joining the Bank during this most important gathering.

Let me begin by apologizing to Your Excellency Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma for not being present in person to welcome you to the African Development Bank’s home in Abidjan. I very much wished to be present, but had to travel to China for a major international event to help showcase Africa’s investment opportunities and galvanize additional support for the Bank’s initiatives and programs including its Feed Africa Strategy.

I am delighted to note that one of the key discussions during the next two days will focus on developing inclusive agricultural value chains, which is a critical conversation under the Feed Africa Strategy. Though may be in different places and time, the bottom line is that we are working on the same agenda!

Sharing knowledge and continuous learning are very close to my heart and even more so now as the Bank works hand-in-hand with its Regional Member Countries to accelerate Africa’s economic transformation, guided by the High 5s to Light Up and Power Africa; Feed Africa; Integrate Africa; Industrialize Africa; and Improve the quality of life for all Africans.

Learning constructively from past successes, the Bank consider mistakes and experiences critical building blocks and tools for promoting accountability in development work, and key to for more powerful development impact.

Basing new policies, programs and projects on evidence of what has worked and not worked in the past improves their quality and results. In this regard, Independent Development Evaluation (IDEV) has contributed strongly to the accountability and learning agenda of the Bank.

We have certainly come a long way. We have also achieved great milestones following lessons and recommendations from evaluations conducted by IDEV. We strive to become better every day, and increasingly we are making efforts to become more innovative in our learning, in order to achieve the best results for our development initiatives.

In the last few years for example, IDEV and Bank Management have worked together to promote a learning culture, including capitalization workshops on the lessons of evaluations; Bank-wide events such as Development Evaluation Week; tracking Management actions responding to evaluation recommendations; and improving processes for the dissemination of evaluation results.
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am therefore very pleased to welcome you to this year’s African Development Evaluation Week and invite you to contribute to Africa’s learning agenda themed - "Strengthening Development Impact". It will be an exciting few days of deliberations on how we can change Africa’s narrative by pursuing Public-Private Partnerships for infrastructure development; inclusion through agriculture; and partnerships for greater impact. We will hear from experts, but your active participation will be key to a rich dialogue and outcome.

Today, Africa and indeed the Bank, are in the middle of an ambitious transformation agenda.

Since introducing the High 5 priority areas in 2015, we have received an avalanche of suggestions from far and wide. I agree with many experts who note that the best way we can achieve the High 5s is by collectively adopting and developing a new data-driven approach to development. It is for this reason that we are all here for the next two days to reflect on the most efficient and effective utilization of our rich knowledge resources to address our national and collective development priorities.

Monitoring and evaluation are critical tools that organizations use to track progress and facilitate decision-making. Early in my career, I was an evaluator as well and thus appreciate that evaluation provides organizations with an opportunity to closely assess their work so as to make effective decisions regarding design and relevance of their programs, projects, and activities.

When such designs are informed by appropriate evidence from evaluation of previous programs, projects, and activities, there is potential for even more effective and efficient outcomes that produce powerful results for target beneficiaries.

The African Union’s Agenda 2063 advocates for a results-oriented development effort in which targets are set for each of the goals and priority areas, backed by a robust monitoring and evaluation framework; solid stakeholder commitment; and evidence-based decision-making at national, regional and continental levels.

Its proposed M&E framework is expected to reinforce the culture of managing for results; to enhance accountability; and to encourage participation and ownership by enabling different groups to be part of the process of ensuring that the expected results from Agenda 2063 are attained. Particularly, the Agenda 2063 advocates for a paradigm shift towards planning for results at both the national, regional, and continental levels.

The African Development Bank fully supports the call by the African Union for African member States to domesticate the Agenda 2063’s results framework into their national plans and systems to use as a basis for monitoring and evaluating their national development plans.

Ladies and Gentlemen, as the former Chairperson of the African Union, and current Minister in the Presidency of South Africa for Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, Her Excellency Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma is uniquely placed to reflect on The role of evaluation and learning in achieving Africa’s aspirations. I therefore very much look forward to her keynote address.

I wish you successful discussions and productive deliberations in the coming days. Thank you!