



## **H.E. Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma**

Former Chairperson of African Union Commission

H.E. Dr. Nkosazana Clarice Dlamini Zuma is the First Female Chairperson of the African Union Commission. She is an undisputable trailblazer in the upliftment and empowerment of women across the African continent. Her career as a struggle activist and politician is testimony to her indestructible and courageous spirit. She was born on 27 January 1949 in KwaZulu-Natal, a time when black women's career expectations did not go beyond domestic work. She, however, was not to be limited.

She completed her high school studies at Amanzimtoti Training College in 1967. After a four-year gap, she started her studies in Zoology and Botany at the University of Zululand in 1971. She obtained her BSc degree and started her medical studies at the University of Natal, where her involvement with the struggle began.

Dr Dlamini Zuma became an active underground member of the ANC. She was also a member of the South African Students Organisation and was elected as its deputy president in 1976. During the same year, she fled into exile, completing medical studies at the University of Bristol in the UK in 1978. After the 1994 elections, Dr Dlamini Zuma was appointed as Minister of Health in the cabinet of then President Nelson Mandela.

During her tenure, she de-segregated the health system and championed the radical health reforms which introduced access to free basic healthcare. In 1999, then President Thabo Mbeki appointed Dr Dlamini Zuma as Minister of Foreign Affairs. In this role, she actively championed South Africa's foreign policy which centered on the promotion of human rights, stability, peace, collective development and advancement of this continent. It was during her tenure as Minister of Foreign Affairs that peace and stability was achieved in Burundi and the DRC for example, and it was during her time that the African Union was launched in 2002. In 2009, she was appointed Minister of Home Affairs and brought about radical change in the department, which subsequently achieved a clean audit for the first time in many years in 2011. In July 2012, H.E Dr Dlamini Zuma was elected Chairperson of the African Union Commission by the Heads of State in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. She is the first woman to lead the continental organization, including its predecessor, the Organization of African Unity. This was a major achievement in the sense that for the first time since the formation of the Organisation for African Unity, which became the African Union, a woman and indeed a candidate of the southern region was successfully elected to this high post.

Her Excellency Dr Dlamini Zuma finished her term at the African Union Commission in 2016 and is doing exceptional life's work for the people of South Africa and the development and consolidation of democracy in the quest to create a better life for all Africans.