**15412, Chinedu Madichie**

Good Afternoon Ladies and Gentlemen,

On June 23, the United Kingdom will make a momentous decision regarding whether they remain in the European Union or exit it. The Brexit, as it is called, will be decided upon by vote of citizens over the age of 18 throughout Britain and the Commonwealth of Nations, an intergovernmental group of 53 member states. "Brexit" is an abbreviated term that refers to Britain's possible withdrawal from the 28-nation European Union. It is an adaptation of "Grexit," a reference to a possible Greek exit from the eurozone.

The date was set by British Prime Minister David Cameron. To appease the Conservative Party and undermine EU opponents, Prime Minister Cameron promised to hold a referendum on the issue if he was reelected in 2015. Conservatives, now in the majority, have been split on the question of EU membership for some 40 years. Grassroots Conservatives generally favor leaving the EU. Voters will be asked, "Should the UK remain a member of the EU or leave the EU?" The question was recommended by Britain's Electoral Commission and accepted by the government and parliament.

Proponents of a British exit believe it would free Britain from rules that are adverse to job creation and allow the country to choose its laws and trading partners. EU advocates contend Britain should maintain its membership in a bloc of like-minded countries, a move they say would help sustain the country's global influence and military and economic security. Both sides of this discussion believe their choice would be best for the United Kingdom. One side favoring the independent decisions possible for them and the freedom not to have to agree with the EU on decisions that would affect them negatively, and the other side favoring the benefits of being united with countries around them for safety and influence.

It is a given that this will greatly affect the people and the country of the United Kingdom. But, what you may not realize is what impact the Brexit will have on Africa. One way that it will affect Africa is how it affects its citizens in how we travel to, from and between Africa and the United Kingdom.

The African Diaspora goes back as far as the 8th century when African children and adults were taken for the slave trade. That type of diaspora ended in the 20th century when the Arab slave trade ended. Now Africans travel for a wide variety of reasons. If the UK decides to leave the EU then EU citizens currently in the UK will be required to apply for UK visas or permits. This could drastically change the entire process for how Africans immigrate to the UK or how they manage having dual citizenship between the UK, EU and Africa. This will affect both personal and professional lives. It will affect how people travel back and forth for personal reasons and for school. It will affect how people travel to the EU countries and to the UK for work, regardless of whether they go for short term visas, long term visas, or whether they plan to become either UK citizens or carry dual citizenship.

In comparison, South Africa is an emerging economy with large groups living in poverty. This makes the EU the most important development partner by providing large amounts of external assistance funds. <http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/countries/south-africa/>. South Africa is the EU’s largest trade partner in Africa which means the effects of this vote will travel in both directions and affect both countries. The EU and South Africa have been trade partners since 2007 so that makes this decision important to both countries.

It also means that regardless of the way the vote goes it will have far reaching effects for both The EU and South Africa. Of course, the flip side is that countries who didn’t currently have trade with South Africa or the UK, could now come forward and sign trade treaties. If the UK pulls out of the EU then they would have to negotiate with each country more closely than if it were only one country.

Regardless of how the vote goes, this will affect South Africa economically, politically, and socially. Socially it will affect us by determining how we interact with the countries and people of the EU and the UK since immigration and even travel will be affected.

It will affect us economically in how workers travel back and forth, whether it’s for short term jobs or long term careers. But, it will also affect us economically in how we handle trade with the countries around us. It will not only affect South Africa, but Nigeria and other countries in Africa.

And, last, but not least, it will affect us politically in how we handle any communication between the UK and Africa on any subject. When countries belong to a unified group of nations they can communicate to any or all of them in a similar way, but when one country goes completely independent that communication can become unpredictable because there are then no checks and balances so that all countries work together for a similar good.

For purposes of this discussion I encourage all of you here today to consider how this decision will affect our lives individually, how it will affect us as nations and how it will affect the world we live in. Then, decide for yourselves what you want our world to look like and be prepared to make the necessary adjustments once that decision is made. Because on an international level we must all be willing to compromise for the betterment of all so that we can help our world to move forward in a positive direction, and so we can be prepared for any outcome.

Decisions on an international level can catch us off guard if we are not careful. We need to be ever watchful so we know what is happening and then make the best decisions for us and for our nations.

Thank you