

Climate Change, Pan Africanism, and the African Renaissance*

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Your Excellency, Commissioner Tumusiime Rhoda Peace,
Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very happy to be with you this morning at the opening of this very important symposium. I owe this happiness to the organizers. Therefore, please allow me to start by thanking Her Excellency Commissioner Tumusiime Rhoda Peace and all her work colleagues.

This symposium is very important for a number of reasons.

We are in our year of celebration of the 50th anniversary of the then Organization of African Unity and now African Union. The Organization of African Unity was created in 1963. Much of Africa was then under colonial rule. The whole of Africa is now free from colonialism, thanks in a large part to the push from the Organization of African Unity. Now that we, Africans, are all free, we must unite to hasten our economic development. We need to catch up with those countries that had been developing their economies while all our efforts had been focused initially at escaping from being carted off by them to the Carribean and to the Americas as slaves, and latterly at chasing them out from continuing as our colonial masters.

As you know, all humans spread out to the whole world from Africa. It was thus natural that we, Africans, welcomed all humans back home when they returned to Africa. But it was not natural that they came back to enslave us and then colonize us so as to use our labour and our natural resources for their economic development. Nevertheless, it still remains a fact that they are our relatives. We should thus simply forget the past injustices of slavery and colonialism that they imposed upon us. What we must not forget are the incapacitating impacts of slavery and colonialism that have left us economically far behind all parts of the world. The path of economic development that the now richer countries chose has also placed a major impediment

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on our possible path to our future economic development. In their attempts to generate the energy required for their economic development and for their subsequent comfort, they have burnt much coal, petroleum and natural gas dug out of the Earth. The greenhouse gases they thus emitted have resulted in increasing global warming and the consequent climate change. Global warming affects the whole world. But Africa, through the middle of which the equator passes, has to begin with been the hottest of the continents. This makes us the most vulnerable to global warming and to the consequent climate change.

To be fair, the countries that enslaved and colonized us so as to develop their economies did not initially know that they were causing global warming and climate change. Therefore, we can forget their misdemeanor in starting global warming. However, now that they know better than we do, they should join hands with us and with the rest of the world to stop exacerbating this bane of global warming that they set going. If they refuse to join hands with us, however, they become deliberate destroyers of life on Earth and we must hold them responsible for their evil deeds and condemn them for being criminals.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen

How do we hold them responsible for being criminals and how do we develop our economies so as to catch up with them without repeating the evil deeds that they have been doing?

We must first maximize our strength. We thus have no choice but to unite Africa into a single economic and political unit. We must not allow the African Union to continue for a long time only as an intention. It must very soon become a complete reality. Africa must be administered as a federation of all our states. Our federating states must be fully interconnected by a network of roads, railway lines and airlines. It is only then that we can meaningfully hurry up in unity to catch up in economic development with the richest countries of this Earth.

Africa is a huge continent. Therefore, I know that the infrastructures that can interconnect us into an effective federation will take time to build. But we must start building them and keep pushing on however long it takes us.

Excellences,
Ladies and Gentlemen

I am not calling for a Federation of African States as a precondition for economic development in Africa. While we work towards a Federation of African States, we must do all that is possible to develop the economies of our respective countries. In fact, we have been effectively doing so in the last few years and Africa is now one of the parts of the world whose economic development has been the fastest. And so it should be because Africa is still the poorest part of the world despite its generous natural resources endowment.

Equally importantly, Africa has shown its determination to avoid the mistakes that have inadvertently been made by the industrialized countries. These mistakes massively polluted the Earth's atmosphere with greenhouse gases and thus caused the global warming and climate change that is threatening the whole of the biosphere. In January 2012, African ministers met in Addis Ababa to take an African common position as an input into the Rio+20 Global Summit on Sustainable Development. The African common position that emerged defined Africa's path towards economic development as one which will minimize atmospheric pollution with greenhouse gases. In other words, Africa's accelerating economic growth will be achieved along a green trajectory. Avoiding mistakes is essential for Africa because it is in a hurry to grow its economy at a fast rate and it will thus find it supportive of its efforts not to have to correct mistakes after they have been made but to avoid them in the first place.

If Africa leads its economic growth by avoiding foreseeable mistakes, its chances of catching up with the industrialized countries increase. Therefore, Africa needs to strengthen its research and development capacity to foresee and avoid mistakes.

The most important input into both research and development and economic growth is trained human resource. Each African country must thus give all the attention it can to education at all levels.

Gender equality is also essential for a speedy economic growth. A country that does not respect gender equality and thus fails to give due attention to educating and fruitfully deploying not only its males but also its females automatically reduces its competent labour force by half. This is

because females constitute half of any population. This fact means that a country that educates and deploys only its male labour force cuts its speed of development by half and that it will never grow as rich as a country that enforces gender equality. Since men love their mothers, wives and daughters, the lack of gender equality also undermines the productivity of the trained male labour force since men will need to support not only themselves, but also their mothers, wives and daughters. Therefore, each of our African countries needs to double its productivity by giving its male and female citizens equal rights in both educational and employment opportunities as well as in all other aspects of social, political and economic standing, including in access to land and in the right to inheriting and owning all types of property.

It should also be noted that gender equality doubles the capacity of our respective countries to act responsibly and reduce greenhouse gas emissions as well as to adapt to climate change. Conversely, gender inequality doubles our vulnerability to the mostly negative impacts of climate change.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen

We, Africans, have always accepted all human beings as equal. I pointed out earlier how our African welcoming of outsiders exposed us in the past, at least in part, to slavery and colonialism. Now that we are free, we must be careful not to be so embittered that we see those who are not members of our respective extended families, our respective clans, our respective tribes, our respective nations, or even our continent as potentially harmful. Such a disaggregative view would keep Africa splintered into ineffective small and warring units in this era of global economic competition where the biggest win. We must thus consciously cultivate our strength by using Pan Africanism as a cohesive glue and consequently as an insurance against our big competitors, both actual and potential, who want us to remain weak and thus ineffective. This means that we need to continue reviving our Pan Africanism until Mother Africa becomes a federation of all its states. It will be then that our old Pan Africanism will become our new source of strength. It will be then that we will become a united and thus strong people who can move freely anywhere in Mother Africa to keep bolstering our joint strength. It will be then that Mother Africa will totally shed off its historical garbage of shame. It will be then that Mother

Africa will be born again. It will be then that we will be sure of welcoming friends and keeping out foes. It will be then that we will rightly savour the sweet Renaissance of Mother Africa which will continue invincible to the inevitable competition from the mighty, and to the impacts of climate change.

Now, though, let me leave Mother Africa's Renaissance in your hands and thank you all for accepting to lift this heavy load and push on fast. Thank you for hearing me through.