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***Speech***

***By***

***H.E. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni  
President of the Republic of Uganda***

***At the***

***MELES ZENAWI FOUNDATION***

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Your Excellency, The Rt. Hon. Prime Minister of Ethiopia;

Your Excellencies Heads of State;

The Former First lady, Mrs. Azeb Mesfin;

Distinguished Invited guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

The late Meles Zenawi belonged to what one American journalist, Margaret of the Times Magazine, described as the “new breed” of African leaders. These were independent-minded, courageous, with a background of fighting resistance wars, very aggressive in development programmes, patriotic, pan-Africanist, confident and determined to transform Africa from a Third world to a First world status to use the words of Lee Kuan Yew, the former Prime Minister of Singapore.

Sometimes that aggressiveness was misplaced like in the matter of the Ethiopian-Eritrean war or the fighting between Ugandan and Rwandan troops in Kisangani, DRC. However, the “new breed” generally recovered from those setbacks and started their respective countries on the journey of irreversible socio-economic transformation. They also contributed to regional peace like, for instance, the actions that were taken by Ethiopia in Somalia to check the Al-Shabaab.

This “new breed” of African leaders knew that you could not achieve socio-economic transformation unless you handled the strategic bottlenecks that crippled Africa in the previous 50 years of independence. Since I was included among the “new breed” of leaders by Margaret and although we never met formally to adopt a common programme, in the informal consultations we had quite often, the following strategic bottlenecks would be talked about:

1. Ideological disorientation typified by political actors in Africa taking sectarian positions – religious, ethnic, gender, etc. These leaders, while recognizing the diversity of Africa, poured scorn on sectarianism.
2. We had long ago realized the importance of creating strong State structures, where possible ideologically based, such as the Army. It is no accident that some of the most effective military organizations in Africa are in countries where this “new breed” of leaders have had influence.
3. On strategic bottleneck number three, the stifling of the Private Sector, I did not fully agree with Meles. He had a lot of trust in the government parastatals while I did not. We decided not to be dogmatic about this. The Ugandans say: “*Oyorora zoon*”

*tomanya erahigye*” – meaning that when the dog puppies (*ebibwaana*) are young, you feed all of them equally because you do not know which dog (when puppies mature) will be a better hunter. Where the parastatals work, no problem. Where they do not work well, then, we rely on the Private Sector. That must be the reason the late Deng Hsiao Ping said: “It does not matter whether a cat is black or white, as long as it can catch mice”.

4. Strategic bottleneck number four concerned populations which were not educated, were not skilled and were not healthy. Such populations could not power socio-economic transformation.
5. Inadequate infrastructure – electricity, the railways, the roads, etc. Without these, the production costs in a given country remain high. With high production costs, businesses cannot make profits



and, therefore, the country remains uncompetitive in attracting businesses.

6. Small internal markets in the respective countries on account of the colonial balkanization. While many African societies, including Ethiopia, had kings, I have been telling Ugandans that there are two modern kings: the consumer and the entrepreneur. Without these, a country cannot develop. Working with African leaders, we have been addressing this issue through economic integration in the form of ECOWAS, COMESA, SADC, ECCAS, etc. If you produce an item but you do not get enough buyers, that business is not sustainable.
  
7. Lack of industrialization and exporting raw materials instead of exporting finished products.

8. Undeveloped services' sector.
9. Under-developed agriculture.
10. Lack of democracy.

Meles led in executing elements of this 10 Points Programme. I will just pick one of the 10 points – infrastructure development. By the time Meles and his colleagues came into Government, Ethiopia was generating about 300 MW. Today, Ethiopia is generating about 2,100 MW. Ethiopia under Meles, had to take the correct but lonely road of using her own funds to build electricity dams. The huge mistake Africa made in the last 50 years, since independence, is exemplified by the neglect of electricity. There is a measurement known as kilowatt hour (kWh) per capita. The USA has a kWh per capita of 12,914 while some of the African countries have a kWh per capita that is as low as 12. There is no example that is more dramatic in terms of highlighting the conceptual

disorientation of Africa in the last 50 years than this. In aggregate terms, the USA, with a population of about 316 million people and a land area of about 3 million square miles, produces 1.05 million MW, while Africa with a population of one billion people and a land area of about 11.7 square miles produces just 106,300 MW; 42,000 of which are in South Africa.

Meles was not part of this blindness. May his soul rest in Eternal Peace and the memory of his contribution be immortal. Long live patriotism. Long live Pan-Africanism.

I thank you.