



**UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA**

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

**Seminar on the theme
"Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance"**

Statement

by

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Excellencies

The twenty-fifth of May 1963 was a truly momentous day in Africa. It certainly marked the establishment of the Organization of African Unity but there is much more than symbolism to this date.

It was the culmination of over a century of pan-Africanist struggle to assert the dignity of the African peoples. It showcased the desire of unity by the African people and their desire to overcome the balkanization of the continent. It was a repudiation of negative stereotypes and racist interpretations of African history. Indeed, it underscored the common commitment of Africans to achieve freedom and end decolonization and apartheid on the African continent. The establishment of the OAU was about Africans taking pride in the continent.

It is accordingly quite in order to mark 25 May as a special day on the continent. A golden jubilee is nevertheless a very special milestone. This is attested to by the high turnout of African Heads of State and Government at this occasion. It is also attested to by the presence of Heads of State and Government from all parts of the world. Indeed, the Secretary-General of the United Nations who came for the January Summit is also here with us today.

The special nature of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the OAU is also borne out by the extensive number of activities and events to mark the occasion. African intellectuals have deliberated on the true importance of the theme of the celebrations. Yesterday, we had an intergenerational dialogue with children and youth. Our women have marked the occasion just as our workers, business community, artists and faith based groups have mobilized themselves in celebration.

Today, is however only the beginning of a year-long celebration of the African Renaissance. The purpose of this celebration goes beyond the sheer joy of achieving a major milestone. We are acknowledging the contribution of the African Diaspora to the framing of pan-Africanist ideals. We are commemorating the achievement of the key objectives of our founding fathers, including freedom, decolonization and the end of racial domination. We are celebrating Africa's heroes and heroines who articulated pan-Africanist ideals, led the struggle for independence and where the need arose became focused and unwavering liberation fighters. We are, of course, also marking the economic and social progress that Africa has made since 1963, in spite of all the odds. We are indeed underscoring the transformation of the OAU to the African Union at the turn of the century.

Yet, we must be the first to admit that there is still a lot more to be done. African integration remains incomplete. Development challenges still abound. Peace and security are still very much scarce commodities in parts of the continent. The narrative about Africa is still very much generated from outside. There is need to frame a common vision and roadmap. This is the meaning of an African Renaissance. This, of course, is also what the African Vision 2063 project is about.

However, my role this morning is to use this occasion to elicit reflections from our Panelists and Leaders alike on the achievements and challenges of the past fifty years. It is also an opportunity for us all to assess where Africa stands today especially in the context of mega-trends such as the emergence of new economic powers; recession in the developed world; urbanization, changing demographics; climate change; digitalization and changing security threats. I also hope that taking all these factors into consideration, we shall benefit from some insights into the contents of a vision for Africa's peace and prosperity over the next fifty years.

Mesdames et Messieurs les Chefs d'État et de Gouvernement,

Voici une chance unique de faire aussi la différence en termes de format de notre dialogue. Je vous invite comme a bien dit feu le sage Amadou Hampaté Ba a atteindre un bout commun en empruntent des voies différentes. Je vous propose que les interventions soient réparties en quatre domaines principaux: 1) la meilleur utilisation des opportunités économiques, 2) le besoin d'avoir des stratégies pour l'avenir du continent, 3) les défis de la gouvernance et le besoin de changer le discours sur l'Afrique, et 4) les questions d'inclusion. On est pas loin des thèmes habituelles du Mécanisme Africain de Révision par les Pairs ou de la Proclamation en train d'être discuté au sein de l'Union Africaine. Le moment venu on ouvrira les inscriptions et je compte sur votre choix sur un de les quatre grands piliers.

Excellences j'ai vu une fois le Président Obasanjo couper la parole a un collègue. Il l'a fait avec sa joie habituelle et l'intervenant a sourit. Je ne suis pas sûre que j'aurais la même chance si j'osais le même défi, car je n'ai pas son âge ni sa sagesse et j'ai envie de m'approcher de l'horizon 2063 autant que possible. C'est la raison pour laquelle je me sens conforté par l'aide de la technologie qui limite le temps de parole à trois minutes, après quoi je vous assure que ce n'est pas moi mais une autorité suprême électronique qui coupera le son. Je dis bien le son, car on ne peut pas vous couper la parole, Excellences. Vous symbolisez la parole africaine, avec ou sans technologie. Ceci dit avec cette aide nous aurons le temps d'écouter toutes les voix.

Excellencies, Ladies and gentleman,

As the famous Ghanaian writer Ai Kwey Armah said «The time has come for us to pause for breath. It is not that our remembrance fatigues us, no.

This is no halt brought on by the tiredness of flesh or any weakening of our minds.

In our remembrance this is no stagnant stop but a necessary part of our memory's flow in the telling of the way.

For this time that has come, it is a time to be filled not with hallow sounds loud with emptiness.

We have reached the time when we must speak of consciousness”

Let me now introduce members of the Panel, who are:

Dr. Donald Kaberuka, President of the African Development Bank

(Mega Trends)

Mr. P.J. Patterson, former Prime Minister of Jamaica

(Diaspora)

Dr. Amina Mama, a Nigerian writer, gender expert and academic

(Diversity/Govern ourselves/Conflict)

Tendai Wenyika, Secretary General of the Pan African Youth Union

(Future is Youth)