

**MESSAGE ON PAN-AFRICANISM ON THE OCCASION OF THE FIFTIETH
ANNIVERSARY OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY/AFRICAN UNION
ADDIS ABABA, 25 MAY 2013**

Dear pan-Africanist friends, heirs and heiresses of the ideals of His Majesty, Emperor Haile Selassie, heirs and heiresses of the ideals of the great Osagyefo Kwame Nkrumah, of Gamal Abdel Nasser, of Julius Nyerere, of Ahmed Sékou Touré, of Samora Machel, of Amilcar Cabral, of Augustino Neto, of Ben Bella, of Marcus Garvey, of William Tubman, of Booker Washington, of William Dubois, of George Padmore, of Patrice Lumumba, of Thomas Sankara and many others...

Dear sisters and brothers, militants of the African Renaissance, living in all four corners of our continent, but also overseas, from the geographically dispersed land we all belong to, I speak to you. I salute you as my brothers and sisters dispersed by the vicissitudes of history. Painful separation between brothers, between sisters, between parents and children of a common destiny though!

It is now fifty years since the Organization of African Unity, and now the African Union, was born on the African land of Ethiopia. This beautiful, generous and free land which has hosted the headquarters of the organization for half a century already. Fifty years already! Fifty years together: what a span of life in an environment where planned obsolescence has become a formula which governs all works of human design and construction! The Union of Africa, our mothers and our founding fathers, dreamt of it and their dream each day that the sun rose is becoming reality, but certainly not at the desired pace. They dreamt and fought for their dream to come true. Some, for this cause, even made the ultimate sacrifice, by giving their precious possession, their lives.

These are what we commemorate today. We do so because all human societies have always embedded in the course of their history, benchmarks, time and places references, the need to draw strength from the starting block in a bid to define a new cycle. So, we celebrate this year, this 25 May, not only a significant sequence of our age old history seething with many and varied adventures, the fiftieth anniversary, a highly symbolic act, but also, is it not worthwhile to push, at this stage, a moment of fervour and solemnity into the tumultuous course of history to deploy new energy?

In so doing, we become the craftspeople of a future which we dare to constantly invent, model like a silversmith, cutting, chiselling, a work of art to give it the shape, the form, the contours of the form of beauty and functionality we would like for it.

The celebration of the 50 years of existence of the OAU/AU has been placed under the theme "Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance"; which offers an opportunity to reflect, not only on its achievements and prospects, but also on the challenges the continent continues to face in the area of integration and socio-economic

development, an opportunity to strengthen our goal of achieving a union of peoples, to develop the strategies underway in the approach to inform and educate our citizens on the vision of African Unity and Pan-Africanism. It is in this perspective that I wanted to share with you, through these words, thoughts that inspire me on this auspicious day of reunion.

Dear sisters and brothers, dear youth activists, dear workers, dear peasants, dear men and women workers, dear African men and women in the cities and countryside, on the continent and the Diaspora, the OAU/AU is 50 years old today! It is certainly a long time since the birth of pan-Africanism, a precursor or inspirational school of thought! A long time since the days when Henry Sylvester Williams, lawyer and writer from Trinidad, for the first time, dropped this word at a conference in London in reference to the essence of an ideology related to the awareness of a common origin of blacks in the Caribbean and the United States, an ideology to guide common struggles, individual and collective, against racial segregation. Williams was then rebelling against the expropriation by Europeans of land owned by black South Africans and calling for the right of blacks to self-determination. William Du Bois, later, also called for a union of all the peoples of Africa so as to constitute a stronger force within the context of an International Code. And all of this to serve in claiming rights to gradual autonomy and independence of a community, that to which we belong, that of many African descendants that we strive for.

It is also a long time, since the founding fathers and mothers of the OAU, those I call the "the Dawn breakers", echoing the aspirations of our peoples, raised the profile of our continental organization in May 1963. At the time, they already emphasized the inevitable need for us to pull together. One of them, Dr Nkrumah, insightfully said:

If we do not approach the problems in Africa with a common front and a common purpose, we shall be haggling and wrangling among ourselves until we are colonized again and become the tolls of a far greater colonialism than we suffered hitherto.

It should be recalled here that, at the advent of our organization, our founding fathers and mothers emphasized the need to free the continent from the yoke of colonialism. Their determination, the strength of their commitment have served as leaven and a lever to buttress the struggles that have been waged toe to toe so that today, across all of Africa or almost, we are enjoying our independence, our full rights to self-determination and sovereignty.

However, as visionaries, they also developed a plan of action, a guide whose approach strategy informs us today, especially with these recommendations for the establishment of the organs.

- 1) *a commission to draw up a constitution for a union government of African States;*

- 2) *a commission to develop a continent-wide plan which will organize a unified and common economic and industrial programme for Africa, this programme should include proposals on the creation of:*
 - a) *a common market for Africa;*
 - b) *an African currency;*
 - c) *an African monetary zone;*
 - d) *an African Central Bank;*
 - e) *a continental telecommunications system.*
- 3) *A commission to develop a comprehensive plan for a common foreign policy and diplomacy;*
- 4) *A commission to submit plans for common defence systems;*
- 5) *A commission to make proposals on the establishment of a common African citizenship.*

Since that memorable day, much has happened. In my opinion, this is not the place to draw up a list of the victories won, be they brilliant or mixed, or to dwell on picking out the successes that our organization has garnered, nor to indulge in endless complaints, as is customary once mention is made of shortcomings and failures. We know that we have come a long way: from several centuries of slavery, decades of colonization, and as Aimé Césaire, the poet, said, the steps we take are not necessarily giant ones: "...a step, another step, another step and take every step won!"

My sisters and brothers, fathers and mothers, it is also the urgent need to take new steps, as each generation has the duty to continue the march forward, that impels me to intrude, to pick our brains.

1) PAN-AFRICANISM AND THE AFRICAN RENAISSANCE begin with the conviction that the African utopia is feasible

African Renaissance which we hope to see and which we fully support is closely linked to the political and ideological vision that we hold of our continent. It places, at the centre of our thoughts and actions, the issue of the match between the ideological and political constructs we develop and the aspirations of the peoples of Africa.

It is obvious that every country, every people, in its own way and following their own codes, have revisited the colonial situation they inherited from the dark period of our history and have made a list of shortcomings and tried to substitute, with varying degrees of success, what seemed to fit into the *continuum* of an era of exploitation, a form of appropriate governance suited to the realities of the moment. In this connection, looms an observation: that, in general, our phoenix-like destiny until now has guided us. And questions also remain: what have we done about the aspirations of our peoples on the move? Where have we placed the happiness of our people?

And, it is the unsatisfactory responses to these legitimate questions that dictate to us the need for the Renaissance.

We must be born again! Revive ourselves and this should not be an empty slogan. How then can we revive ourselves in politics as well? How do we revive ourselves psychologically? How do we rid ourselves of our demeaning complexes and paralyzing flaws? What are the avenues to explore, the direction to propose, which is compatible with our modes of managing our traditional societies, and with the proposals the world is suggesting to us? Aimé Césaire, the poet, in paraphrasing one of our heroes who was celebrating the independence of the Congo said:

“Congo, our mother

Kongo and especially our children,

child of our watches, our suffering, our struggles.

Comrades and brothers in arms, each of our injury becomes udder!

That our every thought, our every hope is to brewing branch new, air!

For Kongo! Hold. I rise above my head;

I back on my shoulder.

Three times I spits in his face

I laid down and asks you: Verily, you know that child? And you answer all; Kongo is our king!”

Beautiful soaring lyric which I cannot afford to analyze here! But I am bound to ask myself these burning questions: Where do we place Africa? Where do we place it in our dreams, our actions, our thoughts? Where have we placed this treasure bequeathed by our parents, our ancestors, and which we all as leaders, young and old, women and men attentive to the happiness of us all, are bound to protect, since we enjoy use thereof?

The African Renaissance will be our ability to realize the utopia that our people dictate to us. It will be in the strength to think and act in a way to build a society in which every citizen deserves freedom, dignity and respect; a society in which woman and man have equal rights and responsibilities; a society in which every child enjoys the conditions for his school education, conditions for health protection; a society in which every youth enjoys the conditions of a decent job so as not to be tempted to embark on the adventure of migration; a society in which every citizen participates in the search for solutions to common problems; a productive society in which the

marginal productivity of each individual is optimized; a society in which, for purposes of reserving human dignity, there is neither beggars nor prostitutes; a society of solidarity in which each member gives a listening ear to the other; a society in which every free and worthy man and woman has a roof to shelter him/her, has sufficient food daily, enjoys conditions for intellectual and cultural development, lives in peace, and sees the usefulness of simultaneously preserving both his integrity and otherness.

That achievement, we are all capable of, beyond all constitutional or non-constitutional organic constructs, as well as the possible and diverse political orientations and choices. The political game which should be a rallying factor, unfortunately, tends to become a race for sectarian, ethnic and, worst of all, clan positioning which disregards the nationalist pan-Africanist sentiment. My most fervent wish is that this territorial balkanization we have been subjected to (proof of which are the numerous civil wars that demonstrate that family stories are not yet to be rewritten) does not predispose us to a balkanization of the will to grow together.

Africa has always been marked by the fate of the phoenix. She has resisted all lethal assaults of adversity; she has always been reborn from her ashes by drawing from her own resources to trigger resilience and transformation.

PAN-AFRICANISM AND THE AFRICAN RENAISSANCE impose on us a new approach to our economy

Among the “Dawnbreakers”, one of them, even said: *“The resources are there. It is for us to marshal them in the active service of our people. Unless we do this by our concerned efforts, within the framework of our combined planning, we shall not progress at the tempo demanded by today’s events and the mood of our people. The symptoms of our troubles will grow, and the troubles themselves become chronic. It will then be too late even for pan-African unity to secure for us stability and tranquillity in our labours for a continent of social justice and material well-being.*

Our continent certainly exceeds all the others in potential hydroelectric power, which some experts assess as 42% of the world’s total. What need is there for us to remain hewers of wood and drawers of water for the industrialised areas of the world?

It is said, of course, that we have no capital, no industrial skill, no communications and no internal markets, and that we cannot even agree among ourselves how best to utilise our resources for our own social needs. Yet all stock exchanges in the world are pre-occupied with Africa’s gold, diamonds, uranium, platinum, copper and

iron ore. Our capital flowing in torrents to irrigate the entire economic system of the West ... And we're sitting here talking about regionalism, gradual progression from one stage after another. Are you afraid to tackle the bull by the horns?"

Of course, times have changed. It is a dialectical principle that times change. These modern times have thrown us into a globalized world. And it will be difficult to extricate ourselves from the market economy, even if we recognize that it has a largely inhuman face, and that the structural, financial and, indeed, social crises have laid it bare before the entire world. Should we stop and gape in amazement at the unstoppable forward march of the world? Long ago, our community-based structures for autarkic economy of subsistence and barter were shattered and replaced by a brand of development. The global trend compelled us to do so. Debt rocked and suffocated us for several decades. I do not intend to revisit that issue here or to get lost in its maze or in the maze of its implications and notorious consequences, which are no longer secret to anyone. The economic dependence on foreign capital has undermined us, just like its accompanying programmes.

I would be easy for me to stand up against the forecasters who, from their watchtowers and observatories, closely scrutinize Africa, watching her every move, producing catastrophic or laudatory predictions like in horoscopes and tarots. But the benefits of globalization in our economy must also be acknowledged. The past decades have propelled us into steady development, a reorientation and diversification of our trading zones. Investment is on the rise, buttressed by the establishment of various private investment funds and sovereign wealth funds. Some of our leading countries, such as Nigeria, South Africa and many others, have recorded commendable growth rates. The continent's economic growth rate, which was 5.5% on average since 2000, is projected to reach 6.2% in 2013, which is two times higher than the population growth rate.

Six of the ten fastest growing countries in the world are in Africa, including Nigeria (7.4%) and Côte d'Ivoire (8.5%). Per capita wealth increased by 3.5% annually for a decade. *"Eight African lions recorded per capita incomes of 10,000 dollars (7,832 Euros) which are higher than for the BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India and China). Inflation has been tamed at 8%. The trade balance recorded a surplus of 4% of gross domestic product (GDP). The deficit and debt have been limited to 2% and 33% of GDP ... International investment doubled in 2000 and increased by 30% per year"*. This is a real economic revolution that we must preserve each step of the way, protecting each step won by further diversifying our economy sectors, gaining more control over the exploitation of our mineral resources, mastering new technologies, creating infrastructure that opens up our economies and eases trade between us, accelerating and strengthening regional and sub-regional integration policies for the benefit of our economies. To ensure the continuation of this growth trend, it is necessary to make provision for stability in the continent. Peace is and remains a

primordial condition. Peace is not just a state of no war. It is more the presence of justice; it is also and more so to ensure that people are able to feed themselves, heal themselves and provide for themselves shelter, clothing, education, etc. ... Our growing demography is characterized by an increasingly youthful population; it requires us to make better plans for our resources and the urbanization of our cities which have become important consumption centres; it also requires us to strengthen our achievements, create within our continent a real market for "producing what we consume, consuming what we produce", etc. Life, survival can only be possible if there is an obligation on the part of each and every one protect the other, to nurture the humanity in the other, instead of destroying it.

That is why we must ensure that the imperatives of development which call for the mobilization of capital should have as barometer the duty to ensure that we ourselves do not to create bottlenecks in the unbridled race of *developmentalism*, suggested and sometimes orchestrated in foreign offices driven by interests foreign to ours.

It is rather paradoxical that, though being the continent which provides the world with most raw materials, we do not have control over processing units, over the technologies they generate, to stimulate the wellbeing of enjoying their benefits like the others who re-sell the finished products to us at prices well beyond our means. By coming together, we can generate on a regional or continental scale, more advanced technological research units, large heavy steel factories, food processing units, etc.

PAN-AFRICANISM AND RENAISSANCE are also the levers of a revolution of conscience, a cultural revolution

Renaissance is for us the inevitable movement of the challenges to existence, to life. And our ideological premise, Pan-Africanism, is to unite us. It is the unity of all the people of this continent from north to south, east to west, the unity of the strong arms of men and women, the sharing of intelligence, our know-how and our creative will...to exist in our own consciences, to exist as History, memory, culture, strength of proposal, strategies and prospects.

The Pan-Africanism that we are celebrating today is not just a movement of the heart, an emotional movement, and may I say, driven by the gregarious and identity instinct of belonging to the same geographical community and destiny. It is more than that; it should be seen also as a philosophy of life. It means being ourselves, seeing ourselves as benchmarks, being in the centre of ourselves, refusing to constantly distance ourselves; it is means coming back to ourselves, while the others make us live and focus their glance on us. No one, among our young inventive militants, men and women alike, would talk about *Africentricity*.

Emile Cioran from the depth of his legendary wisdom said this Every civilization believes that its way of life is the only one good and the only one conceivable; that it

must convert the world into the way of like or impose that way on the world. It is equivalent to a kind of alterocide; in fact an elegant imperialism, but which ceases to be so as soon as it is accompanied by military adventure. An empire is not only founded by whims. The subjects are subjected so that they model themselves on you, your beliefs and habits. Then comes the perverse imperative of making them slaves to contemplate in them the flattering or caricatural semblance of oneself.

There is no longer doubt that societies which were really colonized end up gulping up the patterns, hierarchical diagrams and models, and the representations defined by the colonial master. They therefore organize their systems of representation from a system dedicated to an exclusion and dehumanization mission. Our educational systems mostly do not enable these ill-gotten acquisitions to be questioned. We end up being double victims of the same supposedly civilizing mission which we sublimate, ignoring our cultures and values that form the basis of our own History, our own technologies, our sciences and endogenous know-how.

This is why, in the wake of our movement for the recapitalization of conscience and positive values, we must try to make significant breaks, undo the thick fabric of prejudices that surrounds us, build our collective subjectivity as Africans, be quite simply what we are, without constantly soliciting the glance of others on us. The education of our youth in the values of dignity, courage, integrity, solidarity, firmness, selflessness, probity, excellence, creativity, inventiveness, innovation, love of work, should be our battle cry!

Some would think that the mental structures and beliefs in our traditional societies are, in some respects, forces that block or inhibit the emergence of real modern societies. It could be observed that arrogance of a viewpoint ignores the pluralistic and rich nature of our cultures. How could one therefore define him/herself with pride, if one makes a clean sweep of our memory in a permanently evolving world? The view of the past enables our dignity to be redefined and the individual and collective conscience remodelled, in order to better confront the increasingly alienating effects of an international community of increasingly acute interdependence. We need to regain ownership of our own History, writing it ourselves. When it is written by the victors, it is done to serve them. How could we not question our cultures, arts, philosophies, ways of thinking to find in them anchors of our identity; how could we not elaborate a new epistemology in the process of acquiring knowledge about ourselves?

The time has come to rise up against the one-way thought of the unidimensional societies which tend to be crystalized in dogmas, preconceptions and prejudices. The hour is urgent when the creative genius of the African people must be liberated, when we will be proud and worthy of being ourselves! And the world will be richer from the pluralism of its components!

We have set up, on a pedestal, the acculturated elite that has gradually become like a foam above a boiling liquid, or may I say, a cream swimming almost weightless, a small intellectual bourgeoisie or middle class, completely disconnected from the masses, an overvalued elite who often do not find answers to our real problems for lack of nationalistic commitment. How could we not generate within ourselves a chronic pessimism as soon as the prowess is limited to the reproduction of patterns foreign to our cultures, alien to our values and philosophies; a culture of unconscious mimicry and cowardice, confusion of identity, self-denial and self-contempt, a culture of disqualification and self-hatred?

Dear brothers and sisters, my remarks could never be exhaustive if I should identify all the challenges, issues that we should better know, better control in order to better organize ourselves to face them and effectively commit ourselves to the service of ourselves.

We should have big dreams and know how to keep them from a concerted prospective vision. Concerted yes ! If we often recoil in the face of hindrances, the obstacles put on our way, it is not only because, rather than regarding barriers as challenges to be addressed, we turn them into insurmountable obstacles. It is also because we stand alone in the face of adversity. It is through the conjugation of our forces, the pooling of our resources and the conjunction of our common interests that we could address the challenges. Our History is replete with memorable moments of undeniable success every time we came together to claim, propose, fight, peacefully implement decisions taken together; every time we managed to take a step forward, to overcome ourselves and cut through the thick canopy of obstacles, an oasis for the happiness of our peoples.

Let us act in such a way that this event of the fiftieth anniversary we are celebrating would be the advent of a new vision for Africa, and for Africa in the world. And beyond, we must take here and now the oath committing ourselves to build this Africa where prosperity and peace reign, an Africa respected on the international scene.

Long live African Renaissance!
Long live Pan-Africanism !
Long live Africa!
I wish you all a happy celebration!

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