



**ARTS, CULTURE AND HERITAGE:**  
Levers for Building the Africa we Want

**STATEMENT BY  
H.E. MOUSSA FAKI MAHAMAT,  
CHAIRPERSON OF THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION  
ON THE OCCASION OF AFRICA DAY AND THE ENTRY INTO FORCE  
OF THE CHARTER FOR AFRICAN CULTURAL RENAISSANCE**

**25 MAY 2021**

## **My dear Citizens of Africa and the Diaspora,**

Today, we celebrate the birth of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), in commemoration of 25 May 1963, when twenty African Heads of State established, with great enthusiasm in Addis Ababa, this Continental Organisation. Its goal was the complete independence of Africa at political and economic levels, and the achievement of its unity.

Fifty-eight years later, the African Union, which took over from the OAU, continues to pursue this ambition with various degrees of success. It is doing so concretely on the ground, as well as based on principles. These principles are those of African renaissance, the spirit of Pan-Africanism, cultural identity and shared values, so dear to the Founding Fathers and defined in the Constitutive Act of the African Union, AU Agenda 2063, and other continental instruments.

These principles and values have an essential role to play in the building of the Africa we want.

Indeed, the African Union recommended that African States delve into their cultural paradigms and ancestral values, for the underpinnings of their growth, within the framework of a changing world. Having for a long time been numbed by the effects of colonialism, Africans should dig deep into their cultural and artistic heritage, which hold the keys to their development.

This is the message that the AU wishes to channel through the theme of the year 2021, focusing on Arts, Culture and Heritage as levers for building the Africa that we want.

**Dear Citizens,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

We sought to symbolically combine the theme of the year with Africa Day in order to proceed with the launching of the entry into force of the Charter for African Cultural Renaissance, which was adopted as far back as 2006, in Khartoum, The Sudan.

One of the objectives of the Charter is to enhance the role of culture in the promotion of peace and good governance. The African Union is fully aware of the role that the arts, audiovisual and cinematographic expressions, along with other creative industries, play in the African integration process, as factors of peace, understanding and conflict prevention, as well as socio-economic growth.

In spite of the cultural domination, which during the slave trade and colonial era, led to the depersonalisation of a proportion of African peoples, falsified their history, systematically disparaged and combatted African values, and attempted to gradually and officially replace their languages with those of the colonisers, African peoples were able to tap into African culture to find the necessary strength for resistance and the liberation of the Continent.

The African Union believes that Africa's unity is based first and foremost on its history. The history of Africa, which is part and parcel of our cultural identity, is key to the development of our Continent.

Furthermore, it is a vector for shaping the African personality, and for the affirmation of African peoples throughout the world. Africa can only assert itself in multilateralism and partnerships with the rest of the world, through the affirmation of its personality or its identity, without complex or undermining of its being, on an equal basis with others.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

For far too long, in Africa, the role of culture in the promotion and formation of Nations has been eclipsed. During this mandate, I intend to rectify this tendency, by focusing more than I have in the past, on African thought and culture. I have said that I would call on academics and sociologists from all cultural spaces to lend their contribution towards building a sound and feasible consensus.

The different reflections on the theme of the year that will be carried out today by eminent African personalities to mark Africa Day, are consistent with these dynamics. Allow me to express my sincere gratitude and assure them that their intellectual contributions will undoubtedly satisfy our desire for an African cultural renaissance.

I wish all Africans, of the Continent and of the Diaspora, a happy anniversary.

God bless Africa