



**STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE
AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION H.E. DR.
NKOSAZANA DLAMINI ZUMA
TO THE
3RD AU INTERGENERATIONAL DIALOGUE

PAN AFRICAN PARLIAMENT,
SOUTH AFRICA, 22 MAY 2015**



Honourable Bethel Nnaemeka Amadi, the President of the Pan African Parliament

Honourable Buti Manamela, Deputy Minister in the Presidency of the Republic of South Africa,

Honourable Assoumana Malam Issa, Chairperson of the PAP Caucus on Youth,

Honourable Members of this esteemed House

Ms Francine Muyumba, President of the Pan African Youth Union

The Youth of Africa here gathered

Esteemed and invited guests

I am delighted to address and participate in this important gathering of Africa's youth with other generations. We believe that this Intergenerational dialogue is timely, since it happens at the dawn of our celebrating the 52nd anniversary of the birth of the Organization of African Unity, the OAU.

During the 50th anniversary of the OAU/AU in 2013, we had this first Intergenerational dialogue as part of the celebrations, to share our reflections across generations. The young people who attended this event asked us to convene this annually, and this is therefore the 3rd of its kind.

It is common knowledge that the precursor to the birth of the OAU was the first Conference of Independent African States, which was convened under the leadership of Kwame Nkrumah on 15 April 1958. At the time there were only eight African Independent states. Again in December 1958 at the insistence of Nkrumah, about sixty-two African nationalist organizations attended a conference, to discussed plans to harmonize and coordinate strategies for achieving political independence within the shortest period.

On both occasions, Nkrumah's key messages centered around the right to self determination and the need for Africans to carry their own destiny in their own hands. *"Freedom is not something that one people can bestow on another as a gift. Thy claim it as their own and none can keep it from them"* said Nkrumah.

The youth of today stand at a similar cross roads. To use Nkrumah's prism: *"development, peace and empowerment is not something previous generation will bestow upon yourself.. it is for your generation to claim it, you must claim peace, a prosperous Africa and integrated Africa, but not only claim, but you must work to make it happen"*. Today in conflicts it is not old people who are carrying guns, it is young people, so it is in your hands to make the change.

Previous generations took it upon themselves to liberate the continent, and that is why we are here today. What is the *raison d'et* of the current generations, it is to build a prosperous and integrated Africa.

In so doing you must ensure that the world you live behind is a far better world than the one we leave to you.

Whereas we do have a responsibility to create an enabling environment, today's generation of young people is the largest that the world has ever known – and they represent one of the greatest assets that we have. 65 percent of Africa's population is under 35. This is the greatest asset we have to channel the energy, enthusiasm and innovation that young people embody to accelerate progress. With youth come

We must invest in this generation, ensure that they have food, shelter, water and sanitation, but more importantly that they have the education and skills, with a special focus on science, technology, engineering and mathematics. If we make these investments, the youth's energy, vibrancy and optimism can be channeled into innovation and accelerating Agenda 2063.

We of course talk about both young men and women. The Pan African Youth Union has one woman out of twelve on its Executive committee,

this is a travesty. We hope your constitution allows for cooption, so that this is addressed, as well as in your next congress.

The youth of today should not have to wait for someone – somewhere to bring development to them.

A recent blog penned by one Kayode Oladein from Nigeria, titled “*Fellow Africans, the West owes you NOTHING*”. In his offering Oladein says to us:

“... I give you this, you are tough, “smart” and resilient, and you have a survival instinct not seen in any other ... No continent has the potential you have, no people of any continent has been endowed like you. You have it all, fertile land and climate, natural resources and a young population, but you slumber on as though you know not it’s value. Then you complain when others see this value and take advantage.”

This summarises everything about our continent, we indeed slumber as other people take advantage of our resources, this is a wake-up call.

It was similar sentiments that motivated us to reach out to all spheres, sectors and levels of our society, with one simple but very complex question: “What Africa do YOU want by 2063?”?

The compendium of aspirations of Africans here and in the diaspora gave birth to Africa’s Agenda 2063. We are now ceased with the task of finalizing and continuously improving the first ten years implementation plan, which we will present to the 25th Summit of the Heads of State and Government who will convene in June in Sandton.

This dialogue offers an important space for young people to engage, discuss, and influence that Agenda since it will touch on their lives, their communities, their countries and their continent. Since we have declared 2015 as the “Year of Women’s Empowerment and Development towards Africa’s Agenda 2063”, in engaging in this dialogue we ought to pay particular attention to the aspirations of young women and girls.

This does not take away from the aspirations of young men and boys, but young women and girls are often invisible and therefore need special attention.

The youth must lead the way and represent the future in this regard as well, by being examples of non-sexism in their organisations, and challenge patriarchy wherever it rears its head.

Honourable members and delegates;

As our blogger Oladein said, we are a continent endowed with many advantages and resources.

The most important of these resources are the African people, especially the fact that we are the youngest continent, and will continue to be so in the foreseeable future. This youthful energy is Africa's greatest advantage, but we have to ensure that they are healthy, educated, skilled, especially in the areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics. You should be the drivers of Africa's growth, development, innovation and entrepreneurship.

To enable young people to ply their skills anywhere, we must move faster towards harmonizing our vocational and higher education curricula and qualifications, and also open the way for the free movement of people. We should be able to study anywhere, and work anywhere on the continent with your qualifications. Work has started on this, but it is not happening fast enough, you have to agitate for this.

Our development must also of necessity include infrastructure that connects and powers the continent. Your generation in your lifetime should be able to take a speed train from Johannesburg back home to Dakar or to Maputo, Dar es Salaam, Nairobi, Bangui, Kinshasa, Noukchat or Addis Ababa, and any other capital of the continent. We must also ensure that we connect through broadband, ICT, highways and aviation. Our aviation linkages are improving, but we can do better through a single African aviation market.

We should ensure that our future is secure for future generations, by tackling climate change, developing and innovating around renewable energy.

Our landmass is large, we can accommodate the USA, China, Western Europe, India and there will still be space for Japan and others.

Africa's oceanic space is three times its landmass, and yet others exploit this important resource. We therefore need to develop this Blue economy, including maritime transport. Most of our imports and exports are done by sea, and yet in the industry - with so many jobs - we have little presence.

In a similar vein, it is a travesty that Africa who has amongst the largest portion of unused arable land, yet she spends billions on importing food. To reverse this situation, we must do more to modernize African agriculture, and develop agribusinesses. The average age of farmers and agribusiness persons on the continent is 50 years and over, because it is not a modern sector.

During the consultations on Agenda 2063, women told us that we must retire the handheld-hoe to the museum, and provide access to modern technology, land, access to finances and extension services. As part of the first 10-year plan, we are taking this up as a campaign during this year.

Africa must also industrialise, by adding value to its natural resources and beneficiating its mineral resources. To do this, vocational, science, engineering and other skills that we spoke about earlier, are therefore critical. During the recent AU Commission European Commission College to College, it was at the time of the tragedy in the Mediterranean sea with migrants drowning. Some of the European delegates talked about stopping our youth from following the bright lights of Europe. I responded and said that yes they may be following the bright lights, but more specifically they are following the jobs that we are exporting with our raw materials.

Last, but not least, young people must become part of the movement to silence the guns so that every part of our continent becomes peaceful. The youth must refuse to kill fellow citizens.

Since the majority of countries on the continent are indeed peaceful, we must decisively tackle underdevelopment and poverty, otherwise they too will face instability. If we don't deal with these Agenda 2063 priorities, even those stable countries today will be unstable tomorrow.

It is therefore important for young people to participate in political processes in their countries, to register and vote, to be part of political parties and civil society, to stand as parliamentarians and to be part of activities in their communities, as agents for change and transformation. Politics are where lives of people and futures are shaped.

These days, we find young people not registering to vote, let alone voting. This is not only a right, but a responsibility.

As part of re-energizing the Pan African movement and ideals, we also encourage young people in schools, communities and higher education institutions to form AU clubs, to learn and influence your continental organisations, and learn about each other. When you form the AU clubs, you can follow our decisions, and hold your governments accountable for implementing our very good decisions. We have Agenda 2063, but you must help us to ensure implementation. We already have twelve countries that have asked us, along with some RECs, to domesticate Agenda 2063 into their national policies and budgeting.

Honourable members and delegates;

From the oldest of us to the youngest, we are all future generations, and living tomorrow means that we all have to make sure that the future will turn out better than today.

Whilst the gap between generations can sometimes seem larger than ever before, we have more to gain together, in solidarity, than we do apart.

The older generations bring experience and you have the innovation, energy and courage to dream. Together we can build a great Africa.

We must therefore defend spaces and programmes that facilitate for cooperation amongst generations, under-scoring sacrifices that all present generations must make for the next.

Honourable facilitator since I believe that the youth of today are confronted with challenges similar to those faced by our forbearers, allow me to conclude with where I started. Kwame Nkrumah, as the embodiment of Pan Africanism, at the inaugural meeting of the OAU said:

“Nothing will be of avail, except the united act of a united Africa. We have already reached the stage where we must unite or sink”

This must inform all of us, so that never again we have xenophobic attacks, which is deplorable and we applaud the swift action of the government.

I thank you and wish you all a fruitful dialogue.

We look forward to a festival of ideas!!