

Address by H.E. Park Geun-hye
President of the Republic of Korea
at the African Union

- Mutually Beneficial Partners for a New Future of Africa -

Addis Ababa, May 27th 2016

Madame Chairperson Zuma,
Prime Minister Hailemariam,
Members of the diplomatic corps in Ethiopia,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am most delighted to be the first president of the Republic of Korea to address the African Union which embodies the aspirations of one billion Africans for peace, harmony and prosperity.

As I stand here in this particular hall,
I am reminded of Madiba's indomitable faith in human dignity, equality and freedom.

The Republic of Korea is a country that is deeply empathetic to the convictions of Madiba Mandela, who refused to despair or surrender no matter what tribulations came his way.

Like many African states, a century ago, Korea had to endure the agony of colonial rule. And no more than 65 years ago, Korea witnessed the horrors of a fratricidal war which drove the entire nation to ruin.

Just half a century ago, Korea remained plagued by starvation and despair.

Nonetheless, the Korean people refused to let go of their dreams and hopes, and with unflinching conviction delivered the Miracle on the Han River.

Yet, such a feat was not achieved by the strength of Koreans alone. Without the assistance, understanding and partnership of the community of nations including Africa, we would not have been able to prevail, or at least, the struggle would have been far more arduous.

Just as Korea has experienced the ordeals of history as well as achievements, I can sense the hopes and yearnings to leap forward that are spreading across the African continent and I understand deep in my heart how significant this is.

Indeed it is a pleasure that Korea can now offer help and join Africa forge a new path towards the future, together with our friends who likewise helped Korea triumph over adversity.

Africa has set sail on a voyage towards a grand dream of ushering in a new future.

The "Agenda 2063" that envisions an "Integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa" presents a blueprint for such an African dream.

The vision of Agenda 2063 is based on the same spirit that lies in the Sustainable Development Goals, which were adopted at the United Nations last year by world leaders as a common task of humanity, as well as in Korea's vision for an "era of global happiness."

Your vision is one that all members of the global community aspire to and a dream that Korea wishes to make into reality.

Just as Korea set forth on the Saemaul Undong with indomitable determination and achieved economic development and democracy with our blood and sweat, I firmly believe that the countries of Africa will also prevail in attaining their ambitious goals and aspirations.

And for Africa's success in its long voyage towards achieving Agenda 2063, the one thing Africa will need the most is a trustworthy companion.

Korea was able to accomplish what it has today thanks to the understanding and cooperation rendered by members of the global community, including Africa.

Ethiopia, which hosts the African Union, dispatched troops during the Korean War and her troops shed their blood to help defend Korea's freedom and democracy.

It is my hope that Korea, a country that cherishes such experiences, may become Africa's companion as we walk together towards the future.

The paths that Korea and Africa have taken thus far might have been different, but the path ahead to progress and prosperity can be travelled together.

To this end, Korea is committed to sharing its cumulative experiences, knowledge and mind-set to build a collaborative partnership for mutual growth and prosperity.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In Africa's journey towards achieving Agenda 2063, there are various challenges that need to be addressed .

Some challenges may stem from within, while others may originate from the external environment.

In the inter-connected world of today, no country can be free from problems in other parts of the globe, be it terrorism, refugees, climate change or natural disasters.

Korea's problems are indeed Africa's problems and Africa's problems are yet again Korea's problems.

In this age, unless we are peaceful and prosperous together, one's own peace and prosperity may not be guaranteed.

Today, I would like to present a new initiative called the "Blueprint for Comprehensive Cooperation with Africa" and share with you what Korea aspires to do together with Africa in its journey towards realizing Agenda 2063.

First, Korea will share various development experiences learned from our own trials and errors over the last half century.

Let me start by underscoring the importance of education.

Madiba once said, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

I believe that Africa's greatest potential lies in its people, especially its youth and women.

The creative and passionate young minds of Africa and girls with dreams growing up in a healthy environment will open a new future for Africa.

In this regard, I will pursue a "plan for two-way exchanges of 10,000 youths" as a way to expand job opportunities for young Africans.

Over the next 5 years, 6,000 talented Africans will be offered education and training opportunities in either Korea or Africa and 4,000 Korean volunteers will be sent to Africa.

Furthermore, we plan to share our experience in creative innovation by establishing technology innovation centers in Africa which leverage our strengths in ICT and science and technology.

Under the "Science, Technology and Innovation for Better Life" initiative I announced at UNESCO last December, Korea will deliver vocational skills and ICT education to assist in cultivating a skilled workforce.

Enhancing the happiness and capacity of women is a matter of critical importance in shaping the future of Africa.

Nobel Peace Laureate Madam Wangari Maathai of Kenya gave women a chance to work and learn through the Green Belt Movement.

Through the "Better Life for Girls" initiative, I too hope to foster a fertile environment in which girls in Africa can stand on their own feet.

Jointly with the AU, which designated 2016 as the "African Year of Human Rights with Particular Focus on the Rights of Women", Korea will seek close cooperation in the areas of education, health and capacity building for these girls to blossom.

Two years ago, Korea promptly dispatched its medical team to Sierra Leon in the fight against Ebola.

In addition, "Schistosomiasis Eradication Project in Sudan" launched in 2009 is garnering tremendous support from both the Sudanese government and local residents. Phase one and two of this project were successfully completed, with phase three now underway.

Based on such experience, Korea will continue its work to contribute to promoting health and building stronger capacity to combat infectious diseases in Africa.

Furthermore, in responding to climate change issues such as land degradation, water shortage and food scarcity that confront many African states, Korea plans

to take joint action with Africa through the Green Climate Fund and the Global Green Growth Institute based in Korea.

What Korea genuinely wishes to share with Africa, above all else, is the ‘we can do it’ attitude and a spirit of challenge.

The Saemaul Undong which paved the way for Korea's modernization was not merely a development campaign but a revolution of the mind that inspired people to stand on their own.

Under the slogan of diligence, self-help and cooperation, farmers gained a sense of ownership and took the initiative to develop their own villages. Such efforts were matched with incentives from the government.

The Saemaul Undong which was driven by rural communities has had far-reaching impact on the economic growth and social development of Korea.

I was able to discover similarities with Saemaul Undong in Africa’s spirit of ‘Ubuntu’,

In the years ahead, Korea will stand by your side so that Saemaul Undong, custom-tailored to the specific needs of Africa, will contribute to progress for farm villages, small and large, and eventually lead to the development of each country in Africa.

In addition, we will pursue a new model of development cooperation that will allow us to speak heart to heart and sympathize with the people of Africa.

"Korea Aid", a mobile comprehensive development cooperation project which will be launched during my tour of Africa, is part of the process to realize such efforts.

Trucks equipped with health, food and cultural functions will make their way to many regions to deliver various services as well as introduce culture, thereby bringing together Korea and Africa heart to heart.

Second, Korea hopes to build a ‘Mutually Beneficial and Future-Oriented Economic Cooperation’ with Africa.

Korea has already forged win-win partnerships for economic cooperation in many quarters of the world, with numerous examples of success.

In Vietnam, one of the world's largest mobile phone manufacturing plants run by a Korean electronics company, exports 32 billion dollars' worth of products every year, which is equivalent to approximately 20% of Vietnam's total exports.

There are many more such success stories of win-win partnerships being written by businesses who have ventured into various parts of the globe including Eastern Europe and Southeast Asia.

Currently, a number of Korean companies have set foot in Africa to promote mutually beneficial economic cooperation by creating jobs and transferring technologies.

If Africa's abundant human and natural resources are combined with Korea's technology and capital, tremendous synergies can be produced, benefitting the African economy in real terms.

The 'mobile money service' which has recently been spreading throughout Africa is testament to the fact that Africa is not limiting itself to traditional industries.

If we could bring together Africa's creative talent and Korea's strengths in a wide range of new growth industries such as ICT, medicine, environment and science and technology, I believe we will be able to usher in an African era of renaissance.

Accompanying me on my tour are many Korean firms who will be holding business forums and one-on-one business consultations. I hope these efforts will bring rise to tides of mutually beneficial cooperation that sweep across the continent.

Third, Korea will work enthusiastically with the international community to build sustainable peace and stability in Africa.

Korea faces security threats from the confrontational situation with North Korea. That is why we realize, more than anyone, that peace and security are indispensable prerequisites to economic development.

To help protect the peace in Africa, Korea has dispatched a UN peace keeping force to Somalia in 1993, and subsequently to Western Sahara, Angola and most recently South Sudan where an engineering unit with over 290 service members is now stationed.

At the Leader's Summit on Peacekeeping held in September last year on the occasion of the UN General Assembly, I announced our plan to provide a level two medical facility to the AU in an effort to enhance Africa's peace keeping capabilities.

We are currently holding discussions with the AU and the UN about building this facility in Mali and we will increase our financial contributions to the AU Peace Fund.

Moreover, we will continue the fight against piracy in Africa as well as pursue an expansion of our PKO deployments.

The peace and sustainable development of the global community is being challenged by not only traditional security threats such as conflicts and civil wars, but also by the spread of terrorism and violent extremism.

Since no country is free from the scourge of terrorism, a global response is necessary.

I hope that Africa and Korea will be able to work together more closely in combatting terrorism and violent extremism through cooperation in information sharing, among others.

At the moment, Korea faces a serious security threat caused by North Korea's nuclear program. I would like to thank many African nations for strongly condemning the North's provocations and joining the collective global efforts for the denuclearization of North Korea.

Since Africa has experienced the process of crafting an agreement on the "African Nuclear-Weapon Free Zone", I ask for your cooperation in urging North Korea to give up its nuclear program.

Lastly, I will further reinforce and broaden the existing institutional foundations that link Korea and Africa in order to build a stronger partnership with Africa.

The "Korea-Africa Forum", a meeting between Foreign Ministers, has become a venue for communication that fosters mutual trust.

At the fourth forum to be held in Addis Ababa this year, I hope we can all achieve satisfactory outcomes.

Just days ago, on the 25th of May, it was decided that the 2018 African Development Bank Annual Meetings will be held in Korea. On this occasion, we plan to host the biennial “Korea-Africa Economic Cooperation Conference” to make the most of this opportunity to intensify bilateral economic cooperation between Korea and Africa.

Furthermore, Korea and the AU will launch a policy consultative group which I hope will act as a basis for expanding the scope of mutual understanding and cooperation.

Efforts within Korea to lay the groundwork for institutional cooperation with Africa are also gaining traction.

The “Forum for a New Era with Africa” launched in 2013 by the Members of the Korean National Assembly provides a regular public setting to openly discuss the pending issues of Africa.

The “Korea-Africa Center”, which was launched early last year with support from our government, is increasing exchanges in not only political and economic but also academic and cultural sectors.

I hope that these institutional frameworks will grow into durable bridges connecting Korea and Africa, thus enabling us to go together toward a future of peace and prosperity.

Distinguished guests,

Today’s world is going through a change that is fundamentally different from what we have seen in the past.

There is a saying “global is local, local is global”. In this era when globalization and localization are deeply intertwined, sharing and cooperation are of utmost importance.

Korea hopes to walk alongside Africa looking in the same direction.

Although it may take time, if we go together, we will reach our goal of peace, prosperity and integration which we all dream of.

And in this process, Korea will embrace and nurture the spirit of mutual benefit by turning our ear to the voice of Africa and sharing in Africa’s pains and its dreams.

Ethiopia's poet laureate Tsegaye Gabre-Medhin wrote,
"Let us make Africa the tree of life."

As a mutually beneficial partner seeking to make Africa the tree of life and as a trustworthy friend, Korea will accompany you on your journey.
Let us move forward hand in hand.

Thank you.