

**PANAFRICAN PARLIAMENT**

FIFTH PARLIAMENT

FOURTH SESSION

28 and 29 JUNE 2022

MIDRAND, SOUTH AFRICA

**SPEECH OF H.E. MOUSSA FAKI MAHAMAT**

**CHAIRPERSON OF THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION**

**Excellency Naledi Pandor, Minister of International Relations and Cooperation**

**Honourable PanAfrican Parliamentarians,**

**Ambassador Bankole Adeoye, Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, of the African Union Commission,**

**Members of the Diplomatic Corps,**

**Invited Guests,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is with great pleasure and a poignant sense of solemnity that I take the floor today in this high forum of African Parliamentarianism. In this hemicycle where the voice of the African peoples is expressed freely, I greet you in a brotherly manner and warmly.

Your presence in large numbers at this session, whose importance is known to everyone, in itself proves the serious nature of the moment and reflects the huge expectations and hopes pinned on the session which opens this morning.

Established under Article 2 of the Protocol on the African Economic Community, adopted in Sirte, Libya, on 2 March 2001, the PanAfrican Parliament, despite the high hopes it has raised, has remained in search of its true anchorage and efficient functionality.

The Constitutive Act of the African Union gave it a privileged place in the institutional architecture of our Union. I recognise, however, that despite the declared will of our Heads of State to place it in Third place after the Assembly of Heads of State and Government and the Executive Council, the PanAfrican Parliament has remained essentially an advisory body, rather kept away from the exigencies of an active and law-making institution. The full participation of the African peoples in the development and economic integration of the Continent, through it, has remained below expectations. Honourable PanAfrican Parliamentarians, we and our Governments have a long way to go so that you can, as reason and wisdom would have it, find yourselves in the best possible encouraging conditions to accomplish your noble mission.

I do not need to stress that this noble mission is the one that dictates the ethics and moral virtues that must inspire your actions, your behaviour and your political strategies. It is well known and recognised that Parliaments throughout the world are important fora for

debate and confrontation of ideas. These debates can, here and there, from time to time, take on a more or less heated character. Debate and not fight, is the hallmark of Parliamentary life.

In some circumstances, the most established social codes and standards of behaviour can be called into question suddenly, brutally and unexpectedly. It is worthwhile to remind everyone of the duty of moderation, balance, a sense of proportion, self-control, which must, at all times, be the prerogative of the personalities of such an honourable and prestigious institution.

The unfortunate events that took place in this hemicycle on 27 May and 30 June 2021, during the aborted elections of the Bureau of the PanAfrican Parliament, tarnished the image of this institution and that of the entire Continent. The unbearable scenes broadcast on television channels and social networks have afflicted African citizens who are dumbfounded by such a debasement of the Parliament. These acts of transgression and dishonour have been condemned across the Continent.

In my capacity as the Legal Representative of the Union and guarantor of the proper functioning of all its organs and institutions, I then requested, as a matter of urgency, the suspension of Parliamentary activities until further notice. Of course, in this kind of situation, it is always appropriate to put things in perspective and to establish the responsibilities of all parties.

Obviously, not all Parliamentarians participated in the brawls of 27 May and 30 June 2021. Many of you have condemned and disassociated yourselves from these events. This is to be commended. This is the place to recall that this Parliament includes high-level personalities who are part of the cream of the African political elite: Speakers of National Assemblies, Presidents of the Senate, former Prime Ministers, former Ministers, Chairmen of National Parliamentary Groups and many others. The scenes recalled above must have broken their hearts.

**Honourable Members, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The time has come to turn these sad and dark pages of the history of the PanAfrican Parliament once and for all and to start afresh. The time has come to revive the noble behaviour that has long characterised PanAfrican Parliamentarians and that has been a source of pride for the African Union. It is high time finally for fraternal dialogue, in a peaceful climate, to prevail over confrontation.

The resumption of Parliamentary activities, so desired by the overwhelming majority of you, obviously requires the election of a new Bureau. Much has already been written about this election. The five Regional Caucuses have expressed themselves at length during the consultations held, here, in Midrand for the Southern African Caucus and in Addis Ababa for the Central, North, East and West African Caucuses. The positions of the various parties are well known, particularly on the principle of rotation. The legal debate on this issue is healthy and useful.

I would like to be clear and frank with you all.

It is indeed regrettable that the Protocol establishing the rotation has not yet entered into force, due to the lack of a sufficient number of ratifications. This is not without effect from a strictly legal point of view. Obviously.

It is also undeniable that rotation is a fundamental principle of equity and justice. It governs most of our institutions.

You all know how the Assembly of Heads of State and Government had to cancel and re-run the election for the post of Executive Director of AUDA NEPAD for the simple fact that all the leading candidates were from the Region of the outgoing Director.

So, I ask you clearly, what is to be promoted? The legal formalism resulting from the delays in the ratification of a text or the commitment to a founding principle? What should we uphold? Form or substance in this controversy?

At this turning point in the history of our Continent, it seems to me more relevant to stick to the essentials. And the essential thing is to gather around our convergences by minimising our differences, the essential thing is to align ourselves behind our ideals of solidarity, sharing and harmony in order to better prepare ourselves to face together the huge challenges facing our Continent: Health challenge with the COVID-19 pandemic and its serious economic and social consequences; Security challenge with the continuous progression of Terrorism and its trail of deaths and shattered lives; Climatic challenge with the terrible drought and the multiple floods that are affecting some parts of the Continent, causing desolation and despair; Food challenge with the already visible consequences of the war in Ukraine; Political and Democratic challenge, unprecedented situation in the Continent, four Member States have been suspended.

These multiple challenges are of the utmost challenges to the conscience of the Representatives of the African peoples, who you are. Faced with these herculean challenges

and the need for a general mobilisation, the African Union cannot afford the luxury of a crisis that persists within one of its key organs.

The PanAfrican Parliament needs to be battle ready to become resolutely involved in advocacy for the Continent.

Decisions 1128 and 1148 adopted by the Executive Council and approved by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government prescribe that elections of the Bureau of the PanAfrican Parliament be held on a rotational basis to allow those from the two Regions that have not yet chaired the Bureau to do so. These decisions do not aim at erasing the legal texts in force within the Parliament. Their sole and ultimate objective is to unblock a situation that has become untenable. They must be respected and implemented. An exceptional situation requires an exceptional solution. It is a question of the ultimate responsibility of the supreme organ of the Union, the Assembly of Heads of State and Government. It is only a great honour to apply it

**Honourable Members, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

In so doing there will be no winners or losers. It will be a collective victory, the victory of reason, of transcending oneself and of fair play, the victory of the Africa we want. Africa will not be built by Manichean majorities. Nor by Pyrrhic victories. Even less by the cry of "after me, the chaos".

Africa will triumph by transcending what Mandela called the frailties of the human being, which are selfishness, the inability to forgive and the spirit of revenge.

Let us together honour his memory, especially here in South Africa.

Honourable PanAfrican Parliamentarians, I, therefore, call upon you to go massively to the polls tomorrow, 29 June 2022, to fulfill your electoral duty and thus open a new page in the life of your institution and in the forward march of our Continental Organisation towards the triumph of the ideals of PanAfricanism so dear to our Founding Fathers.

I thank you for your kind attention