

AFRICAN UNION

الاتحاد الأفريقي



UNION AFRICAINE

UNIÃO AFRICANA

Addis Ababa, ETHIOPIA. P. O. Box 3243
7844

Telephone: 011-551 7700 Fax: 011-551

Website: www.africa-union.org

Welcoming Statement by

Albert M. Muchanga

**African Union Commissioner for Economic Development, Trade, Tourism,
Industry and Minerals**

**3rd Edition of the Africa Integration Forum and Commemoration of Africa
Integration Day**

Lusaka, Zambia, 6th July, 2022

**Your Excellency Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of the Republic of
Uganda and African Union Champion on Regional Integration;
Honourable Ministers;
Your Excellency Dr. Monique Nsanzabaganwa; Deputy Chairperson of the
African Union Commission;
Dr. Amany Asfoiur, President of the African Business Council;
Distinguished Pan Africanists;
Netzens;
Members of the Media;
Ladies and Gentlemen.**

I will not make a long statement.

My first task is to appreciate the warm welcome and hospitality accorded to us by the People and Government of the Republic of Zambia since our arrival.

My second task is to welcome you all to the Third Edition of the Africa Integration Forum and Commemoration of Africa Integration Day that are being held in Lusaka this year under the theme: **Deepening Economic Integration in the Era of De-Globalization.**

As we come together this year, several factors confront us. Let me mention a few of them.

First, globalization as we knew it is changing, with the consequent disruption of global supply chains. There is now talk of de-globalization. In this state of play, some countries are consolidating national markets to produce and consume in a new order of self-reliance. Others are doing so at regional level, calling it strategic autonomy.

Second, the future of Africa in this new global environment lies in deeper economic integration, continent-wide. We are stronger working together; and, more resilient. We are weaker; and more vulnerable working alone. We are vulnerable in; among others, strategic, political, diplomatic, security and economic terms. Our spirit should, in this respect, be that of pooling sovereignty to promote collective self-reliance and the good news is that we have the foundation through the Regional Economic Communities and the African Continental Free Trade Area.

Third, we are living in a rapidly changing world. Almost everything we do requires urgency. This calls for energy and agility that generate momentum which must, in turn, grow with a dynamism of its own. As endlessly counselled by Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, late President of the United Republic of Tanzania when he was living with us in this world; and I say it three times: 'we must run, while others walk'.

These are the words and counsel of a strategic leader. They are as applicable today to us as they were during his time. If we make use of this timeless counsel, Africa will be better placed to meet her multiple and complex challenges of uncompetitive, small and fragmented economies; poverty; low- value manufacturing; commodity dependence; aid dependence; low levels of intra-African trade; and, among others; vulnerability to climate changes and external shocks.

On 17th July, 2022, the Fourth Mid-Year Coordination Meeting will be reviewing the status of regional economic integration in Africa.

We can contribute to this Meeting through the forum discussions and commemorative activities that we will be undertaking between now and 8th July, 2022.

We have a wide-ranging programme before us, bringing together governments, civil society, business as well as international, continental and regional inter-governmental organizations.

We need to do more in future to broadly involve African citizens; cross-border traders; schools; colleges; universities; organized labour; and, the media, among several stakeholders of the African economic integration agenda. This will enable us generate a citizen driven African economic integration process.

As I promised, my welcoming statement is very brief.

I will conclude by stating that I greatly appreciate your presence and once more, welcome you all to this year's edition of Africa Integration Forum and Commemoration of Africa Integration Day.

I thank you, earnestly, for your kind attention.