

AFRICAN UNION

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Statement by

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Delivered at the

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

Held In

Lusaka, Zambia

On

8th July, 2022

- **Former President of Niger, and the Champion of the Afcfta Your Excellency Mahamadou Issifou**
- **Excellencies, Heads of State**
- **Wamkele Mene, Secretary General of the Afcfta**
- **Captains of Industry and Private sector Champions of the Afcfta Hub and Caravan Ecosystem**
- **All Global and African political and business leaders who are guests of this year's BOMA.**

It gives me great pleasure to address you during this auspicious occasion of the 2022 Boma of Africa, which has been convened under the theme **“How far with the African Century? – The Global Shifts Impacting Africa’s Rise”**. The African Union is proud to have organized this year’s BOMA as has been the tradition for the past three years in collaboration with the Afcfta and Africa CDC.

Your Excellences, ladies and gentlemen,

Before I go further, I thought it would be wise to explore the notion a BOMA. As many of you know, the word BOMA refers to a safe enclosure that was meant to protect whoever was inside it. This also means that the Boma was a safe place where the inhabitants were free to discuss and strategize on various progressive aspects of their being. In this regard, it is my sincere hope that this 2022 edition of the Boma of Africa will live to this high billing to provide us with a safe place to discuss Africa’s progress and future in line with the theme. At this juncture, let me thank H.E. Olusegun Obasanjo in his capacity as Chairperson for the High-Level Patrons Committee for this Boma as well as the Afrochampions for not only inviting me and the AUC to be part of it but also for joining the Commemoration of the African Integration.

Your excellences, distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen,

This century was indeed dubbed the African century rightly so for a number of reasons. You will recall that for the last decade, Africa dominated the list of the top-10 fastest-growing economies in the world, which resulted in the continent doubling its Gross

Domestic Product (GDP) within a period of 12 years. In the same vein, statistics showed that between 2000 and 2010, Africa's middle class grew by almost 10% from 25 to 34% of Africa's total population, outpacing the 2.6% growth rate of the total population.

The narrative about the rising middle class as well as an increase in household expenditure has also been buttressed by the African Youth dividend. Declining mortality, high and slowly declining fertility, and the youthful age structure are driving Africa's rapid population growth. Africa's working-age population (aged between 15–64) was estimated to be 750 million in 2019 and is forecast to exceed 1 billion before 2030 and to reach 1.1 billion by 2035, with young Africans (aged between 15–24) entering the labor force at a rate of about 20 million each year. The boom in Africa's young population has therefore supported the African century narrative.

Distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen

This progress was rudely interrupted in 2019 with the advent of Covid-19. Africa's vulnerability to exogenous shocks came to bare. The lessons learned from growing protectionism, disruption of supply chains, the drastic drop in demand, and paralysis in the informal sector as a result of the pandemic, all pointed to the need to accelerate Africa's industrialization and regional integration. The World Bank forecasted a 5.2 percent contraction in global GDP in 2020, and 2.7 percent for Africa. The IMF forecasted a 4% GDP growth that remains up to this day. This is far less than the required 8% economic growth rate required to double the average income in a decade, pointing to an important lesson that whilst we grew, we did not transform our economies. This pandemic therefore has cautioned our growth model that was reliant, heavily if I may add, on selling raw commodities.

Distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen

In the midst of managing the impact of Covid-19, the Russia-Ukraine conflict flared up to further impact the economic challenges on the ground. The immediate aftermath of the conflict has brought on a shortage of food and energy. As the basic laws of economics dictate this has led to rising prices of both food and energy leading to spilling inflation.

The two crises only made matters worse, with climate change that continues to affect our production systems. Africa contributes less than 4% of global greenhouse gas emissions but is one of the most vulnerable regions to climate variability and change. Africa's primary growth sectors including service sectors such as tourism, real estate, banking and transport; energy; Industry; Agriculture and the blue economy are all climate sensitive. Without proper climate-proofing, they continue to suffer and slow the economic growth and development for the continent.

Your Excellences, ladies and gentlemen,

All the factors numerated above are global shifts that are impacting our rise, thereby putting in jeopardy many of the gains we so far registered in the last decade. Where then do we go from here? There are temptations to go back to the old ways of doing things, with our economies still depending on the production and export of primary commodities, our youths and young women still attempting the dangerous sea voyages across the Mediterranean. But we must resist. Resist through our bold actions.

It is in this regard that this Boma therefore becomes absolutely important. Its focus on showcasing major projects and initiatives that are shaping Africa's emergence as a global force in accordance with the African Union's Agenda 2063, deliberating on priorities such as key trends in technology, supply chains, global development, geopolitics, climate, critical geomaterials, and global health is very befitting.

At the African Union Commission, we are involved in a similar exercise. We are in the process of evaluating the performance of the 14 projects that were designated in the First 10 years implementation plan of the Agenda 2063. We will also be looking forward to what we will be doing in the next 10 years. I therefore look forward to the outcomes of this Boma as I see them feeding into this exercise as well as our various programming.

Your Excellences, ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me to conclude by once again thanking the organizers for this opportunity for us to talk action for the benefit of our continent and also to call upon us all to not forget that our

ultimate goal is a peaceful and prosperous Africa driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in global arena, where the African people achieve shared prosperity and well-being, realize their unity of purpose through integration, with women and youth achieving their full potential, and with freedom from fear, disease and want.

With these words, it is my distinct honour to officially declare the 2022 BOMA of Africa officially open.