

Speech for the AU Youth Envoy on Reparations:

Title: Reparations for Africa: A Necessary Step Toward Justice for Africans and People of African Descent

H.E Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson, African Union Commission

H.E Dr Monique Nsanzabaganwa, Deputy Chairperson, African Union Commission

Honorable Samuel Okudzeto Ablakwa, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Ghana

H.E The Representative from the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

Chairperson of the UN Permanent Forum on People of African Descent

Distinguished guests and Young leaders of Africa present,

It brings me a great honor to stand before you today as the African Union Chairperson's Special Envoy on Youth to proffer deep thoughts on a mandate that is not only of historical significance but of urgent relevance to our present and our future. The issue of reparations is a call for justice, a call for acknowledging the immense harm caused by the exploitation of African people and resources during the colonial era.

As I stand before you today, I find myself reflecting on historical events that contributed significantly to some of the present issues that we face today in our Continent. Events like the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885, contributed significantly to reshaping Africa's political and economic landscape in ways that continue to echo throughout our continent today. This conference, held without the participation of a single African representative, divided our continent among European powers, drawing arbitrary borders that ignored ethnic, cultural, and social realities. These decisions were not made with the consent or welfare of African people in mind, but rather for the benefit of Colonial interests.

These events not only marked the formal beginning of Africa's colonization, but also set in motion the systemic exploitation of our land, resources, and especially its Young and Vibrant people. The resulting borders divided communities, disrupted trade routes, and created the foundations for future conflicts. Colonial powers extracted Africa's natural resources like Gold, Diamonds, Oil; while subjecting African people to forced labor, violence, and dehumanization. The socioeconomic benefits of these resources flowed to the West, while Africa was left with lasting scars.

Let's consider some relevant statistics that underscore the long-lasting effects of this historical injustice:

- **\$1 trillion:** Over the course of colonization, Africa lost an estimated \$1 trillion due to the exploitation of its resources, the forced labor of its people, and the destruction of its social and political systems. This figure reflects not just the direct economic costs but the lagged potential for Africa to develop independently.

- **70%** of Africa's wealth was extracted during the colonial period. Natural resources like minerals, agricultural products, and human labor were taken without compensation, leaving many African nations economically dependent and underdeveloped.
- **Over 80%** of African borders drawn during colonialism remain unchanged today. These arbitrary borders have contributed to the fragmentation of African communities and the perpetuation of conflict. More than 70% of African nations have experienced or are currently experiencing some form of conflict, many of which are rooted in these colonial divisions.
- **Development disparities:** Despite accounting for about **16% of the world's population**, Africa has the **lowest share of global GDP**, contributing only around **3.4% to the Global Economy and Trade**. This stark economic disparity can be traced directly back to the exploitative economic systems established during the colonial era.
- **Colonialism's Human Cost:** An estimated **25 million Africans** were killed or displaced through the brutal systems of slavery, forced labor, and conflict instigated by colonial rule. These numbers reflect the human toll of policies designed for economic gain at the expense of African lives.

These statistics are not mere numbers; they represent the people, families, and communities whose lives were irrevocably altered by the decisions made by Colonial Powers. The wealth extracted during colonization has contributed to the continued economic inequalities that we face today. The instability caused by arbitrary borders has fueled decades of conflict, displacement, and loss.

As the AU Youth Envoy, I stand with young Africans today in calling for Reparations. Reparations are not merely an act of financial restitution, but a broader call for justice, acknowledgment, and healing. It is not about dwelling in the past but about creating a future where African nations can thrive without the weight of colonial exploitation holding us back. It is against this backdrop that my Office saw the need to contribute to the theme of the Year of the African Union on “**Justice for Africans and People of African Descent through Reparations**” by ensuring that there is a Youth component included in the Roadmap of implementation to be adopted by the 38th AU Assembly of Heads of State.

I want to specially thank the Focal Point from the Office of the Chairperson on the theme of the Year, H.E the Deputy Chairperson and the Directorate of Citizens and Diaspora Engagement for their support in this process.

As I gear towards the conclusion of my reflections, I want to briefly highlight some of our key inputs in the Roadmap that we hope to implement with the support of the Lead Implementation office on the theme of the Year,

In order to ensure meaningful Youth participation and Ownership in driving the theme of the Year as expressed in **Article 26a of the African Youth Charter**; accordingly, the Office of the Special Envoy on Youth together with relevant stakeholders will:

1. Raise Awareness on the Concept of Reparations through:

- i. Hosting a series of digital and in-person seminars and symposiums, as well as constructive dialogues in Africa and the Diaspora, featuring scholars, advocates, and policymakers;
- ii. Launching an international hashtag to spread awareness, share infographics, historical facts, and testimonials about the need for Reparations;
- iii Leveraging on existing African Union Continental Youth engagement in dialogues and summits (e.g. APRM Youth Symposium), to promote the Reparations Agenda and mobilise youth actors for Reparations and Reparatory Justice;

2.Strengthening the Role of African Creatives, enabling them to use their Art and Cultural Expressions as Powerful Tools for Reparations Advocacy and Awareness through:

3.Providing a “*Seat at the Table*“ for Youth Inputs into Policy Drafts about Reparations through:

- i. ensuring that the youth have a seat at the table in multilateral discussions on Reparations, submitting their own policy recommendations and proposals to the African Union and relevant international bodies;
- iii. Establishing an Ad hoc Youth Working Group focused on supporting the adopted Decisions of the AU Summit on Reparations.

Finally, let us continue in the path of Promoting equity and fairness on the Global front through the following reforms:

- Ensuring Africa’s permanent inclusion in the UN Security Council
- Advocating for Africa’s fair treatment in its dealings with multilateral financial institutions like the World Bank and IMF
- Promoting Restitution of Cultural Artifacts
- Viewing Financial Reparations as one not defined in the form of Aid, but as an intentional compensation component targeted at enhancing socio economic development

May we honor the struggles of those who came before us, empower those who walk with us today, and lay the foundation for a future where Africa stands as a beacon of strength, unity, and prosperity; as we work towards achieving the **AFRICA WE WANT**.

Asanteni Sana.