



**COMMEMORATIVE MESSAGE BY HIS
EXCELLENCY DR. HAGE G. GEINGOB,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA,
ON THE OCCASION OF THE 57TH AFRICA DAY**

MONDAY
MAY 25, 2020
WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA



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THE AFRICA WE WANT

On this noteworthy day, Africa day, Africans from all corners of the globe come together under the banner of Pan-African solidarity, to celebrate a day which symbolizes our victory over the yoke of colonial oppression. Today, we celebrate African pride, unity and determination. Pride in our heritage, culture and determination to continue the struggle of our forefathers to transform Africa into a global powerhouse. As espoused in our blueprint for the future of our continent, Agenda 2063, it is a day on which we express “our Pan-African drive for unity, freedom, progress and collective prosperity”. As we look forward towards a future of boundless opportunities and the promise of a New Africa, we also need to take stock. In order for us to achieve our collective destiny, we must define the meaning of this day, what it represents and its relevance to our collective drive towards economic emancipation.

Fifty-seven years ago, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) was formed in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia with the primary aims of encouraging political and economic integration among member states, as well as eradicating colonialism and neo-colonialism from the African continent.

On that epoch-making occasion on May 25, 1963, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Haile Selassie, Emperor of Ethiopia, and the first President of the OAU stated imposingly, “Today, Africa has emerged from this dark passage. Our Armageddon is past. Africa has been reborn as a free continent and Africans have been reborn as free men. The blood that was shed and the sufferings that were endured are today Africa’s advocates for freedom and unity.” This triumphal announcement of Africa’s political freedom did not signify the end of the journey, but rather the beginning of the first steps towards its total emancipation. More significantly, it marked Africa’s awakening and arrival on the world stage as a member of equal standing among the nations of the world, and altered the course of world history in ways unimaginable hitherto.

Africa had been reborn as a free continent and Africans as free men and women. However, only 32 African countries out of 55 countries had been decolonized. It is why in his foundational speech, the OAU first President went further, to set the organization’s agenda by prioritizing the total freedom of all African countries as a matter of paramount importance for the African continent to achieve total freedom.



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To that end, he made a profoundly prophetic declaration: *“Africa’s victory, although proclaimed, is not yet total, and areas of resistance still remain. Today, we name as our first great task the final liberation of those Africans still dominated by foreign exploitation and control. With the goal in sight, and unqualified triumph within our grasp, let us not now falter or lag or relax. We must make one final supreme effort; now, when the struggle grows weary, when so much has been won that the thrilling sense of achievement has brought us near satiation. Our liberty is meaningless unless all Africans are free. Our brothers in the Rhodesias, in Mozambique, in Angola, in South Africa, cry out in anguish for our support and assistance. We must urge on their behalf their peaceful accession to independence. We must align and identify ourselves with all aspects of their struggle. It would be betrayal were we to pay only lip service to the cause of their liberation and fail to back our words with action”*.



Ensuing from this unequivocal support of independent African countries, throughout the 60s, 70s, 80s and 90s, the cauldrons of liberation burned fervently across the length and width of Africa. The entire continent was subsumed in the heat of the collective quest for political and economic emancipation from colonialism and imperialism.

Another towering founding leader of the OAU, the illustrious first President of Ghana, Osagyefo Kwame Nkrumah solidified this fundamental agenda of ultimate African emancipation as an OAU priority when he emphatically declared, *“Seek ye first the political kingdom and all else shall be added onto you.”* The need for the “political kingdom,” was to permanently safeguard Africa’s freedom and people. Spurred on by the need to achieve the full liberation of our continent, extraordinary personalities such as Haile Selassie of Ethiopia, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Modibo Keita of Mali, Ahmed Sékou Touré of Guinea, Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt, Ahmed Ben Bella of Algeria, Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere of Tanzania, and Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia amongst others, conceived the OAU. An organization premised on Pan Africanism, rooted in the struggles of the people of Africa against the evils of slavery, racism and colonialism. In pursuit of this agenda, the OAU, despite the full-scale onset of the Cold War between the East and the West, succeeded in leaving an indelible footprint of a free and united Africa on the world stage.

Of course, the road toward the formation of the OAU was not without debate. When great minds come together, there are often differences in opinion as to how to solve a problem. These luminaries agreed on the fundamental point of greater unity on the continent. Still, there were diverging views on how best to achieve that objective. One group, led by President Kwame Nkrumah, advocated for immediate continental political union. Another group supported a gradualist approach, starting with regional economic integration and

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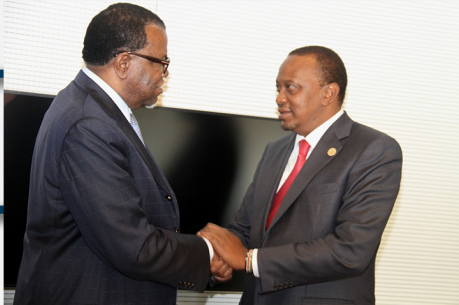
cultural cooperation. From these two diverging views, the Casablanca and Monrovia blocs emerged. President Julius Kambirage Nyerere, who was considered an independent vis-à-vis both groups, but in terms of radicalism much closer to President Kwame Nkrumah, leaned more to the side of the gradualist group. The Casablanca bloc comprising of Mali, Egypt, Morocco, Ghana, Guinea and Algeria was seen as more radical. However, its initial aim did not extend beyond the political independence of the continent, owing to Nkrumah's belief to first seek the political kingdom before all else. Despite the fact that this vision did not articulate what would transpire after the achievement of political independence, the principles of the Casablanca bloc made an invaluable contribution to Africa's decolonization. Member countries of the Casablanca bloc subscribed to the Casablanca Charter on January 7, 1961 in Morocco. The Monrovia group advocating for a gradual and more conservative approach to African Unity emerged from a meeting on May 8-12, 1961, in Liberia.



Eventually, the ideas espoused by the Monrovia bloc consisting mostly of francophone countries (including Senegal and Cameroon) joined by Nigeria, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Ethiopia seemed to prevail, after the two groups united in 1963, to establish a formal continent-wide organization, the OAU. In terms of eradicating colonialism and neo-colonialism on the African continent, we can confidently say that the OAU has been successful. As Namibians, we can attest to the valiant efforts of the OAU, through its Liberation Committee, which made an immense contribution to our struggle for self-determination, freedom and independence. As a free and sovereign nation, we acknowledge the pivotal role played by numerous African leaders who provided political, material and moral support towards the freedom and independence of our country.

Morocco supported Namibia's journey towards freedom, which was midwived by United Nations supervised elections in 1989, leading to independence on March 21, 1990. Morocco has joined the AU, of which it co-founded the predecessor (OAU) in 1963. As Namibians, we thank Morocco for the support in our quest to become a free nation. To date, except for the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR), the rest of the 54 countries on the continent of Africa are free and sovereign. In that vein, we call on the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 690, which established the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) to implement the Settlement Plan for a referendum of self-determination for the people of Western Sahara. These steps are necessary to complete the former OAU's primary mandate of Africa's total decolonization.

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In light of its commitment to freeing Africa, acting at state level, without sacrificing state sovereignty, the OAU was largely transactional in nature. It was able to promote unity and cooperation amongst African States. Unquestionably, the OAU proved naysayers wrong. Having been ridiculed at its inception, many doubted whether the organization would survive institutionally. It survived and achieved remarkable successes. These include fostering unity and solidarity amongst African states, including coordination and cooperation amongst states. The greatest achievement of the OAU was in galvanizing Africans to free themselves from the colonial yoke and to defend their sovereignty. Through the OAU's steadfast leadership and support, many African countries have achieved political freedom and the restoration of dignity and pride amongst African people.

The OAU was born at the time when there was a heightened revolution against capitalism and global imperialism, mainly in the Southern Hemisphere. In this milieu, Africans found solace in the fact that their fight for independence received tremendous support from the Soviet Union, the People's Republic of China, Cuba, socialist and communist movements in South-East Asia, Latin America, the anti-Apartheid movement in the United Kingdom and the Scandinavian countries. As Africa and the rest of the world approached the dawn of a new Century, having emerged from the Cold War Era and faced with post-Cold War realities, a new organization became a necessity. An organization more accurately geared towards dealing with the challenges in a changing and globalizing world. Africa needed a transformational organization that could spearhead its effort towards economic independence and integration.

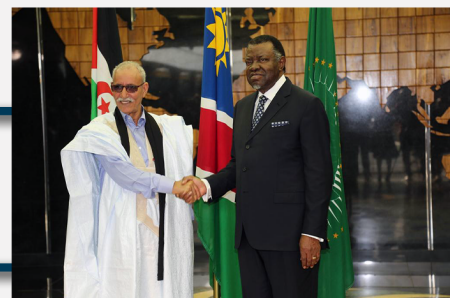
The African Union (AU) was formed and the Constitutive Act was adopted in Lomé, Togo in the year 2000. The metamorphosis of the OAU into the AU ushered in the dawn of a new era for the African continent. While maintaining the core tenets of the OAU mandate such as unity, cohesion and solidarity between African nations as well as defending sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of member states, the AU also placed great emphasis on political and socio-economic integration of the continent.

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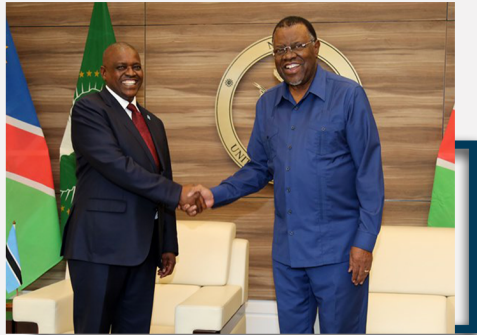
Building on the 1980 Lagos Plan of Action, a product of an erudite African, my friend and competent mentor, Professor Adebayo Adedeji, the Abuja Treaty on the African Economic Community (AEC), was signed at the OAU Summit, June 2-6, 1991, in Abuja. It laid down detailed stages for economic integration by 2025. First, at the level of Regional Economic Communities and later at continental level involving not only free trade but also a common currency. Following the Nyerere model of harmonizing practices in regions, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), including the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA), Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD), East African Community (EAC), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), are recognized as essential building blocks, harmonizing political and economic systems as prerequisites for the attainment of true continent-wide unity in Africa.

RECs have brought many advantages to the people of Africa, including freer movement of people, goods and services, and trade facilitation. Moreover, effective assistance from friendly states in situations of conflict as illustrated in ECOWAS where Nigeria has often come to the aid of fellow members. The AU's has the objective of promoting peace, security, and stability on the continent. We have seen successful SADC interventions to restore order in member states facing potential conflict, of which the Democratic Republic of Congo, Madagascar and Lesotho are perfect examples.

The AU's presence is visible through its various bodies such as the Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC), a consultative civil society body which includes Africans in the diaspora; and the Pan African Parliament, a platform for people from all African states involved in discussions and decision-making on challenges facing the continent. Under the auspices of the AU, we have witnessed the rise of a New Africa, a people-centered Africa that is in pursuit of peace and prosperity. Unlike its predecessor, the AU is able to intervene in the internal affairs of African states and deploy troops in areas of conflict. As a positive result, ascent to power through military coups and unconstitutional means is not recognized anymore. Africans through the African Governance Architecture are the ones taking charge of the drive to silence the guns by democratizing the continent.



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In order to better fulfill its mandate, the AU has placed emphasis on the need for self-financing with the understanding that if Africa aims to achieve its developmental aspirations, Africans should fund such efforts. In this regard, African leaders decided in 2016 that Institutional Reforms of the AU were urgent and necessary, given the AU's expected role in driving the Africa We Want under Agenda 2063. In July 2016, the Assembly of Heads of State and Government mandated President Paul Kagame of Rwanda to lead the reform process. Although several issues regarding modalities remain, the process under President Kagame has been commendable, and Africa is moving closer to the reality of a self-financing AU. Also, the launch of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) under the skillful leadership of President Mahamadou Issoufou of Niger offers excellent opportunities for a continent-wide market, increased intra-African trade and economic integration. Africa's journey has been consequential and the continent is indeed on the march.

As Pan-Africanists, the people of Namibia are ardent supporters of the AU and the vision of The Africa We Want. We shall continue to support the AU reforms and the accomplishment of a peaceful and prosperous Africa. We owe much of the spirit of Pan Africanism within which we celebrate 57 years of African unity to our founding fathers, the extraordinary personalities, who I refer to as the First Wave of African leaders. These leaders ushered their countries into independence following victories against the forces of colonial occupation. Their successes and Pan-Africanist vision also played an instrumental role in molding the minds of younger cohorts within the settler colonies of Southern Africa, from where a later group of First Wave Leaders emerged, such as, Agostinho Neto of Angola, Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia, Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, Eduardo Chivambo Mondlane of Mozambique, Sam Nujoma of Namibia and Nelson Mandela of South Africa.

In the words of one of the great luminaries of our continent, Jomo Kenyatta, "Our children may learn about the heroes of the past. Our task is to make ourselves architects of the future." To the younger generation, the First Wave Leaders are heroes of the past, but in their own eyes, these distinguished individuals were the architects of a rising Africa.

The Second Wave of African Leadership surfaced during the height of the Cold War, when geopolitics divided the world into the East and West confrontation. This was an era characterized by what western scholars refer to as "Big Men", dictatorships, military coups and one-party states that embroiled the continent in bloodshed. This was followed by a transition, where new leaders emerged, who I refer to as the 'Third Wave of African Leadership'. The focus in the Third Wave is to instill strong democratic principles and to strengthen processes, systems and institutions in order to deliver shared economic prosperity. A cardinal principle in the Third Wave of Leadership is inclusivity. Nothing can be achieved in the absence of inclusive governance. I always say that exclusivity spells conflict and inclusivity spells harmony in countries.

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Third Wave Leaders have built upon the foundations of political freedom, unity, peace and development laid down by First Wave extraordinary personalities to establish sound governance architecture. The Third Wave African leaders are not instituting good governance systems and democracy to please anybody or because they are obliged by external stakeholders. On the contrary, by so doing, they are continuing in the ancient African traditions of inclusive, consultative decision-making, which is beneficial to the wellbeing of our societies, and not to please Western countries.

The efforts of Third Wave Leaders are not perfect. However, Africa today is markedly different on each and every governance indicator. Africa continues to make progress and in recent years we witnessed an increase in:

- Regular free and fair elections
- Smooth transition of power between Presidents
- Increased levels of transparency
- Strengthening of democratic governance architectures by refining processes, systems and institutions
- Increased respect of independent institutions i.e. Court decisions after election disputes

We truly have much to celebrate as Africans. In 57 years, we have achieved what some thought would be impossible, a free, democratic Africa, a self-governing Africa, and most importantly, an Africa without incessant civil wars and unrest, focused on the wellbeing its citizens. We stand upon the precipice of a new reality for the people of this continent. From the darkness of colonialism, we have emerged into the light that promises future prosperity. Although we are currently faced with a new unprecedented challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are assured and confident that in the AU, we have a time-tested and proven organization through which we can galvanize continental and international support and solidarity, in the spirit of Pan-Africanism to overcome this new and invisible enemy.



To conclude, I would like to emphasize that Africa must maintain unity of purpose and move forward with a sense of urgency towards the upliftment of the African citizen, both materially and ideologically. We should harness our rich cultural diversity towards reaching our common objective of economic emancipation and social development. Through collective vision, through unity of purpose, we will usher in the New Africa. An Africa where more than 1.2 billion sons and daughters of the soil, can live in peace, unity and harmony. An Africa where we can move freely as brothers and sisters. An Africa where we can all pursue the dream of prosperity. This is our Africa – The Africa We Want.

Long Live African Unity;
Long Live Pan Africanism;
Long Live Africa

Happy Africa Day!

Hage G. Geingob
President of the Republic of Namibia

