

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY
DR SAM NUJOMA PRESIDENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA
AT THE OAU/AU HEADS OF STATE
AND GOVERNMENT SUMMIT**

9-12 JULY 2002

**DURBAN
SOUTH AFRICA**

**Your Majesties,
Your Excellencies, Heads of State and
Government,
Honourable Ministers,
Your Excellency, Secretary General of the
Organisation of African Unity,
Your Excellency, Secretary General of the
United Nations Organisation,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**From the outset, I wish to express my
gratitude to His Excellency President Thabo
Mbeki and the people of the Republic of
South Africa for the warm welcome and
traditional African hospitality accorded to
us and the splendid facilities, which they
have put at our disposal for the Summit.**

**It is with great pride and an overwhelming
sense of history that I address this last
Summit Session of Heads of State and
Government of the Organisation of African
Unity (OAU). We have gathered in Durban
with the main purpose of transforming the
OAU into the African Union. In this
regard, we have every reason to rejoice at
the completion of an important milestone.**

Thus the first priority of the Founders of the OAU was to render all necessary political, moral and material assistance to our National Liberation Movements to enable them to wage successfully the war of liberation and independence of our countries and peoples.

We can recall with gratitude that the first decision that those pioneers took was the establishment of the Co-ordinating Committee for the Liberation of Africa. That far-sighted decision was put in action when Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, the Late President of the United Republic of Tanzania, provided the Headquarters and personnel for the OAU Liberation Committee in Dar-es-Salaam. Likewise, Egypt, Algeria, Ghana, Guinea (Conakry), Ethiopia, Libya, Nigeria, Republic of the Congo and later Zambia, Angola, Mozambique and Zimbabwe provided military training to African Freedom Fighters to carry out the heroic armed liberation struggle that finally shook the foundations of colonialism and brought

about the achievement of freedom and independence to the rest of our continent.

We can, therefore, state with pride and satisfaction that the first major objective of the OAU, namely, the liberation of Africa has been crowned with a resounding victory. For this reason, it is proper and fitting, on this occasion, to pay a well – deserved tribute to the Founders of OAU for their sterling vision that rallied the African masses behind the liberation struggle.

I recall the historic clarion call made by the former Honourable Prime Minister, Ahmed Ben Bella, of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria during the OAU founding Summit in 1963, when he said; "Let us prepare to die a little for the liberation of our continent". He called for the creation of a blood bank. That struggle imposed enormous costs and sacrifices on the people of Africa, especially later on the people of the then Frontline States, who had to endure decades of military attacks

against their countries and destruction of economic infrastructures by the racist and apartheid regimes.

Countries, such as Zambia which was virtually encircled by the forces of colonialism and racism in Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), Angola, Southwest Africa (now Namibia), Mozambique and South Africa, faced constant enemy attacks.

The leaders of independent African States countered such a war of aggression and brutal acts of destabilisation with determination and collective resolve. They took measures such as the construction of alternative transport routes, namely the TANZARA Railway from Dar-es-Salaam to Zambia, the Dar-es-Salaam Capri Mposi Highway and the oil pipeline from Dar-es-Salaam to Ndola that enabled Zambia to weather the storm of economic strangulation. African leaders and masses of our people remained steadfast and faithful to the cause of Africa's freedom and human dignity. They demonstrated

unrelenting courage in defying all odds. Their heroism stood tall in the face of enormous pressure of economic sabotage and military intimidation.

In this context, I would like to pay homage to Dr Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia and to the memories of the late Mwalimu Julius Nyerere of Tanzania and the late Agostinho Neto of Angola for their foresight, courage and dedication that they bequeathed to the current and future generations of African leaders, particularly the African youth.

I also wish to make a special mention of the Frontline States and Nigeria that worked together as a united special front in pursuit of decolonisation. Together, they played such a pivotal role in the realisation of the independence of Zimbabwe and Namibia and the demise of apartheid and democratisation of South Africa.

**Your Majesties,
Your Excellencies,
Delegates,
Friends,**

The detractors of the OAU are never tired of making disparaging remarks about its achievements and shining record. They refer to the OAU as a useless talking shop. But such a negative judgement is shortsighted and malicious. The birth of Angola, Mozambique, Guinea Bissau, Cape Verde, Zimbabwe and Namibia as sovereign States and the democratisation of South Africa is a monumental testimony to its success. Indeed, the fact that we are meeting here in Durban today is no small measure in this regard. It is in fact a testimony to OAU's triumph and a tribute to its fight and devotion to the total liberation of Africa. This proud heritage is an inspiration to all Africans, those on the Continent and those in Diaspora.

The task facing the African Union, that we are here to establish, is the fight to overcome the situation of Africa's poverty, underdevelopment and marginalisation in the global community. We must wage this struggle for economic growth and social development with vigour and determination just as the OAU did in respect of Africa's political freedom. In this rather titanic struggle, we must forge unity of purpose, strengthen our continental institutions, such as the African Economic Commission and the African Development Bank, to be able to effectively serve Africa's economic development. In the same vein, we must enhance the operational capacities of our regional economic bodies such as SADC, COMESA, ECOWAS, the Arab Magreb Union, ECCAS and the East African Community. We must strengthen them to perform their vital role in bringing about deeper inter - African trade and regional economic integration. The African Economic Community, created by the Abuja Treaty of 1991, must promote African interests and generation of prosperity for all our peoples.

The first thing I noticed when I stepped out of the plane was the crisp, cool air. It felt like a fresh blanket after a long, hot journey. The pilot's voice crackled over the intercom, announcing our arrival with a warm smile. I looked out the window, watching the lush green fields stretch out below, dotted with small white flowers. The sun was just beginning to set, painting the sky in soft shades of orange and pink. I took a deep breath, savoring the moment. This was it. I was finally home.

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is a timely and welcome initiative. It represents African leaders' resolve to urgently address the challenge of economic development and social progress on our continent. We must, therefore, throw all our combined weight behind it. We must also, at the same time, ensure that NEPAD remains an African Union's homegrown and owned programme for Africa's economic emancipation and sustainable development.

Africa is a resource - rich continent but with poor people. Key to its progress in economic growth and eradication of poverty is the development of human resources. It is obvious that the level of development of human resources is a measure of the level of development of a particular country. Africa is at the moment not able to take full advantage of its natural resources. In order to succeed Africa must adopt new ways of doing business and avail itself of the globally available technologies to defeat

poverty, empower the people and become winners.

The development of the African people's skills and expertise should, therefore, become the top priority among the African Union's priorities. Necessary knowledge and skills will enable our continent to realise the optimal exploitation and use of its resources and on this basis to be able to effectively fight underdevelopment and diseases that haunt millions of Africans today.

It is also high time that we, African leaders, make it our unfailing duty to encourage and provide the necessary incentives for the thousands of African scientists and engineers who work as expatriates in Europe, North America and other parts of the world to return to Africa.

They should come back home and contribute to Africa's socio-economic development and the upliftment of the standard of living of our people.

They must be persuaded to make a contribution to the ending of Africa's humiliating poverty and marginalisation.

This is a moment of history, heritage and of a new beginning for Africa itself and the descendants of Africa everywhere in the world. On this occasion, we must be inclusive in our vision for the future and invite Africans from Diaspora to join us on the Continent to build together the future of our Continent. We must do this in remembrance of the legendary pioneers of Pan- Africanism from the Americas whose collective dream and inspiration called for the United States of Africa or the African Union that we are realising in Durban today. We must include them in the process of consolidating the African Union and create opportunities for them to be able to make constructive inputs in the African economic Community, in NEPAD and in regional economic structures for a win – win outcome.

Africa must act in unity and with a renewed sense of seriousness to be able to influence

the forces of globalisation with a view to protecting the interest of all our people.

Our ability to respond forcefully to the challenges of globalisation depends on how seriously and urgently we address growth and productivity of our economies. Africa must rise beyond its current dependence on the production and export of raw materials.

It is only when we are able to export value-added and manufactured goods that economic recovery and sustained growth will be possible.

In the face of a looming drought which is currently threatening this particular region of Southern Africa, we must pay due attention to agriculture and rural development. More and more resources and the use of modern science and technology are essential for the continent to cope with situations of recurrent drought.

I am optimistic that if we remain united as leaders, as Governments, as a Union and,

indeed, as one people, the African continent will succeed in improving the quality of lives of our people and in expanding trade between our continent and the rest of the world.

The economic development, eradication of poverty, unemployment and the fight against HIV/AIDS pandemic on our continent will be equally difficult as it was with the struggle for the total liberation of Africa. Therefore, it is very important that we remain united and depend on our own human and natural resources and build a strong economic foundation upon which the future generations will build on as the Founders of the OAU did in respect of achieving political emancipation of the African continent.

Long Live the African Union!

I thank you.

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