

07-07-2002
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**ADDRESS BY
MR. AMARA ESSY SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE OAU
AT THE LAUNCHING OF THE AFRICAN UNION
DURBAN, SOUTH AFRICA - 9 JULY 2002**

**Your Excellency Thabo Mbeki,
President of the Republic of South Africa**

Excellencies, Heads of State and Government

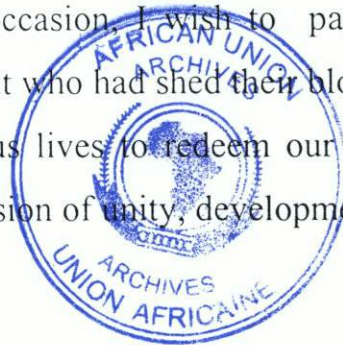
Honourable Dignitaries

Fellow Africans

Ladies and Gentlemen

For over 100 years the people of Africa have strived for and looked forward to this moment. The moment for which our living and fallen heroes have made immense sacrifices; the moment for which many battles were fought and many dreams were nurtured; the moment to reassert our common humanity, regain our collective dignity and forge the eternal bond of unity.

Today, we are realizing the cherished desire of the peoples of this Continent to join together their energies, consolidate their efforts, and create a stronger framework for the collective attainment of a higher horizon. Coincidentally, this year also marks the 90th Anniversary of the founding of the African National Congress that was at the forefront of the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa. On this special occasion, I wish to pay tribute to all the women and men of this Continent who had shed their blood in the liberation struggle and given their precious lives to redeem our African dignity, to defend our right to pursue our vision of unity, development and prosperity..



Fellow Africans

For too long, we were oppressed and exploited. For too long we have been marginalized. Now we are launching an African Union that will strive to ensure that never again should the people of this Continent suffer the vagaries of servitude in any domain of their lives. This is a commitment that we are taking. It is a commitment to use the strength of our unity and our collective heritage in uplifting the living condition of every African from Cape to Cairo, and from Port Louis to Praia.

By establishing the African Union, we are making a firm commitment and taking full responsibility in the shaping of our destiny. Indeed, the realization of the ideals of African Unity requires that every daughter and son of this Continent play her and his part in realizing the collective vision. Each one of us has to work hard and maintain the determination for reaching the milestones. Each one of us has to honour and cherish the values and principles that ^{bind} ~~keep~~ us together and make us stronger as a people.

I salute you, the people of Africa, for this new dawn that is unfolding in front of us. I salute you, the peoples of South Africa – this birthplace of the Great Madiba, Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, the living symbol of Africa's struggle for freedom and dignity. The launching of the African Union amongst you brave people of this country is also a reaffirmation of Africa's pride in the triumph of the last battle against oppression that was fought in this land.

Without relenting our pride, zeal and commitment, let us march forward in unity and solidarity, conquer every adversity and gain the final victory. We can do it, there is nothing to stop us. We have done it before!

Viva the peoples of South Africa!

Viva the Peoples of Africa!

Viva the African Union!

Thank you!

Merci!

Shukraan!

Gracia!

Muito Obrigado

Asante Sana!

Tsiabonge!

Thank you!

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