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**PROGRESS REPORT ON THE PREPARATIONS FOR THE**  
**50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE OAU/AU**

## PROGRESS REPORT ON THE PREPARATIONS FOR THE 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE OAU/AU

### I. Introduction and context

1. Over the years, the dignity of Africa has been eroded by the de-humanizing practices of slavery and slave trade as well as colonialism and apartheid. The image of Africa was a continent seen through the prism of the Western media: a place of coups, famine, disease and corruption; a region characterized by political instability, conflict, unaccountable governance systems, poor political and socio-economic development coupled with endemic poverty, chronic food insecurity, limited infrastructural development and communication, low human capital, illiteracy etc. In short, it was an image of hopelessness.

2. While colonialism, apartheid and the transatlantic slave trade have since ended on paper, the reality is that the continent continues to endure the bitter legacies of these dehumanizing practices more so at the socio-economic sphere. The continent continues to be portrayed as only a major source of raw materials for Western industries and consumers with minimal beneficiation of these materials for greater economic value addition to African countries. The international legal order, geo-political and economic paradigms are still heavily skewed towards the former colonial powers and the West, with Africa still regarded as underdeveloped and requiring aid and technical support to sustain its policies and populations.

3. Africa has undoubtedly witnessed its fortunes change for the better as it entered the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, with notable improvements in the economic, social and political governance systems of the continent. Many African countries have made impressive strides in building capable states and this underpins the positive trends with respect to the steady consolidation of democracy, greater political inclusiveness, accountability and improved economic management. Even the most violent critics have been unanimous to acknowledge that Africa is the continent of the future and that Africa's time has come.

4. The future is therefore positive and this is enough cause for celebration. As Africa strives to achieve the human dignity by ensuring social, political and economic justice of its peoples, in a bid to reclaiming its rightful place in the global world order, the 50 years anniversary of its continental body, the Organization of African Unity in 2013 is an opportune moment to reflect on the progress made in that regard, together with challenges and prospects towards the realization of true freedom, continental integration and unity and its vision of Pan Africanism and African Renaissance. It is also necessary to interrogate the sustainability of this evolution so that Africa can speak of a genuine political, cultural and economic renaissance as it looks ahead at the next fifty years.

5. The year 2013 marks the celebration of 50 years of existence of the Organization of African Unity / African Union (OAU/AU). When the OAU was established on 25 May 1963, one of its primary objectives was to fast-track the total liberation of Africa, from colonialism and all forms of discrimination, including racial discrimination. OAU equally

aimed at promoting unity, solidarity, cohesion and cooperation amongst the peoples of Africa and African states, as a means of securing Africa's long-term economic and political future.

6. However, as soon as independence was achieved, new challenges emerged which informed the need to translate, as a matter of priority, the newly acquired political independence into freedom. In other words, apart from fostering the liberation and integration of Africa, it was also necessary to propel the continent into sustainable socio-economic development that would change the lives of the African people for the better.

7. Thus, while the total liberation of Africa from colonial domination and racial discrimination stands out as one of the major achievements of the OAU, the AU is grappling with issues pertaining to the integration of Africa and bringing about sustainable and people-centered socio-economic development that is not only inspired and informed by Africa's culture, but that also leads to poverty reduction and changing the lives of Africans for the better. Nevertheless, the vision of the African Union remains: "An Integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena".

8. The celebration of 50 years of the existence of OAU/AU offers the continent a rare occasion to reflect not only on the achievements and prospects, but also on the challenges still facing the continent. It is also an appropriate time to review and assess the state of political liberation on the continent in terms of advancing and promoting inclusive and participatory governance by African peoples, consolidation of democracy, respect for human and peoples' rights, entrenchment of the rule of law and attainment of durable peace and human security.

9. It is within the context of the celebration of OAU/AU's 50th anniversary that the Assembly, in operative paragraph 3 of its decision Assembly/AU/Dec.422(XIX): "Encourages the Commission, in close collaboration with the Ethiopian Government, to work together with all the Member States and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) as well as other AU Organs to organize various activities, including media events, debates and competitions in schools and universities, public opinion surveys, sessions in local and national legislatures, and other activities to celebrate the Year of Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance so as to enhance the awareness of the new generation of Africans about the ideals of Pan-Africanism". It is also to be recalled that by the same Decision, the Assembly decided that the Theme for 2013 be: "Pan Africanism and African Renaissance".

10. Pursuant to the Assembly's Decision, the celebration of the 50th anniversary of OAU/AU should be Africa-wide and not limited to Addis Ababa and the AU Headquarters and should be a year-long event. The time, in substance of existence for the past 50 years, the meaning of Africanism imparted to its people, the creation of a continental political platform, focus and a rallying point for its people and the hope to live for tomorrow lay unassailable credence to marking the Golden Jubilee of the Organization of African Unity/African Union (OAU/AU). In other words, the Golden Jubilee should be celebrated in all Member States and throughout the year 2013.

**11.** This report attempts to elaborate on the achievements of the OAU/AU, its challenges for the past 50 years of its existence and prospects for the future. It further expresses the quest of the African Leaders to celebrate this Golden Jubilee of OAU/AU through the promotion of Pan Africanism and African Renaissance as well as honouring the founding fathers of this continental body through celebrations at national, regional and continental levels as well as in the Diaspora.

## **II. Achievements**

**12.** The OAU has served its time with distinction and tribute is hereby paid to the founders and the vision they pursued with unity. Its greatest success was in relation to decolonization.

**13.** The most important achievement of the OAU is definitely the liberation of several of its Member States from the yoke of colonialism. At its foundation, only 32 countries were independent and many others were still under foreign domination. Through its Liberation Committee operating from Dar es Salaam since its creation, the OAU has rendered decisive support to Liberation Movements from countries that were still dominated by foreign powers and helped in the attainment of their independence. Moreover, the OAU has been a strong moral authority in mobilizing the continent and the world towards the promotion of self-determination, equality of nations and dignity for all the peoples of the planet. A special mention should be made to the significant contribution towards the total liberation of the peoples of Southern Africa through tremendous sacrifices paid by the then independent Frontline States and special tribute should be made to great leaders such as late Mwalimu Julius Nyerere and former President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia who should be honoured and recognized as we celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the OAU and its Liberation Committee. Tribute should also be bestowed to Leaders from all other regions who have lend great support to the liberation struggle as well as Freedom Fighters who led the liberation struggle on the ground such as Nelson Mandela and Sam Nujoma as well as to those who have since left such as Samora Machel, Agostinho Neto, Amilcar Cabral and other equally admired heroes in the continent. To this homage should be associated all those personalities, scholars, intellectuals, human rights activists, writers, artists and other groups who have indeed championed Africa's political, economic and cultural independence and dignity. There is a need to identify all these personalities for the sake of their recognition by the Organization.

**14.** Through its Charter, the OAU has assisted tremendously in keeping stabilizing peace and security among Member States by affirming the intangibility of borders inherited from the colonial powers as well as by adopting the principle of non-interference in internal affairs.

**15.** Indeed, the OAU has made significant contributions to the development of international law in various fields, in particular in the field of refugee law where it was the first regional Organization to adopt in 1969 of the OAU Convention on the specific aspects of African Refugees aimed at supplementing the UN Convention on Refugees

of 1951. Further, some of the landmark actions of the OAU aimed at entrenching the respect of human rights and dignity in the daily life of citizens in its Member States were notably the adoption of the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights in Nairobi in 1981 and the African Charter on the Popular participation in the Development in Arusha in 1990, as well as the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child in 1991. In addition, several important Treaties and Conventions were adopted under the auspices of the OAU, although in practice progress was slow in terms of signature, ratification and implementation of these instruments.. A Protocol on the Court on Human and Peoples' Rights was prepared as well as a Protocol to the Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, though their operationalization came after the launching of the AU in Durban, South Africa in 2002. Efforts were made to promote economic cooperation throughout the continent. Indeed, after the adoption of the Lagos Plan of Action in 1980 which provided a framework for regional and continental integration, the Abuja Treaty establishing the African Economic Community(AEC), which set a roadmap for the integration process within 36 years, starting with a Customs Union, a Common Market, and African Monetary Union and finally an economic Community at continental level. Other major practical achievements of the OAU were mediations in several border disputes, including those of Algeria and Morocco (1963–64) and Kenya and Somalia (1965–67), as well as other efforts in bringing conflicting parties to the negotiating table.

**16.** The OAU maintained the “Africa Group” at the United Nations (UN) through which many of its efforts at international coordination were channeled. The OAU was instrumental in bringing about the joint cooperation of African states in the work of the Group of 77, which acts as a caucus of developing nations within the UN Conference on Trade and Development.

**17.** The OAU closely monitored events in Apartheid South Africa and coordinated with the rest of the world in the advocacy and maintenance of international economic sanctions against that country as long as the apartheid regime was in place. In 1993, the OAU created a mechanism for preventing, managing and resolving conflicts on the continent. In 1998, the OAU sponsored an international panel headed by former Botswana President Ketumile Masire to investigate the genocide that took place in Rwanda in 1994; and its report was released in 2000. Also in 2000 in Lome, in a move spearheaded by the Libyan leader Colonel Muammar al-Qaddafi, a Constitutive Act establishing the African Union to replace the OAU, with a re-invigorated mandate, was adopted. The African Union was to operate beyond the mere political field and involve itself more closely in socio-economic development efforts and to accelerate the pace of integration of African economies and peoples, similar to the European Union, and would contain key common institutions with specific mandates such as an investment bank, a monetary union, a central bank, a court of justice, and a parliament, among some of its operational arms. The Constitutive Act of African Union was ratified by two-thirds of the OAU's members and came into force on 26 May, 2001. After a transition period, the African Union (AU) replaced the Organization of African Unity (OAU) after its launching in Durban, South Africa in July 2002. In 2004, the AU's Pan-African Parliament was inaugurated, the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights was inaugurated in Arusha in 2006 and the Organization agreed to create a peacekeeping force, the African

Standby Force, of about 15,000 soldiers to assist in keeping peace in the conflict areas as and when it was deemed necessary.

### **III. Challenges**

**18.** The major challenges that have faced African states since the advent of political independence has been that of:

- Establishing and sustaining appropriate governance institutions and practices that would engender democratic practices and promote sustainable development on the continent;
- Attainment of regional cohesion, economic development, and the creation of a peaceful Africa;
- Lack of sufficient funding and mobilization for the realization of regional and continental integration projects, intra-African Trade and establishing industrial base to depart from the status of mere raw materials suppliers;
- Securing the right role and place Africa in the management of world affairs and lack of coordination of relationships with international partners;
- Mobilization of political will on the part of the African governments to submit domestic political and economic interest to supranational institutions;
- Inadequate mechanisms for equitable sharing of the costs and benefits of regional arrangements, which evidently works against attaining African integration;
- Lack of policy consistency and credibility as well as antipathy to market-oriented economic reforms;
- Absence of organizational harmony between and amongst regional groupings in Africa, which poses another threat to the success of African integration.

### **IV. Future prospects for the African Union**

**19.** The success of the Union is dependent on addressing the following:

a. Geographical and Historical Challenges:

- Application of lessons learned from the historical transformation processes of democracy;
- Reflection on significant events that helped shape Africa's identity, including management of important economic resources;

- Review of how various beliefs and practices influence the ways in which African people interact; and
  - Understand the interconnectedness between Africa and the global environment.
- b. Security Challenges:
- i) There is a growing concern at the persistence of conflict and crisis situations on the continent, despite the many efforts deployed thus far to resolve them. The 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary is a time for renewed determination to give further impetus to the implementation of relevant AU decisions and promote lasting peace, security and stability on the continent, for without such an environment the political and economic integration and development of Africa will not be significantly furthered.
  - ii) Today, Africa has the necessary institutional and normative framework to address the scourge of conflicts, and the AU has demonstrated a renewed dynamism in dealing with issues of peace and security on the continent. Important strides have been made in the resolution of conflicts in Africa, as evidenced by the remarkable achievements in many countries, as well as the advances recorded in the search for peace in a number of other countries and regions. These developments have enhanced the prospects for development and democratic transformation, which now need to be enhanced through sustained efforts at peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction.
  - iii) The continued prevalence of conflict, insecurity and instability in large parts of the continent, with its attendant humanitarian consequences and socio-economic impact, the resurgence of unconstitutional changes of Government, as well as the emerging trend of election-related violence and conflicts; the threats posed by terrorism, drug trafficking, transnational organized crime, piracy, and illicit exploitation of natural resources to fuel conflicts; and the persistence of the border disputes and conflicts, the implications of climate change and its resulting consequences, highlight the vital necessity not to bequeath the burden and challenges of these situations to the next generations of Africans.
  - iv) Among the collective responsibilities of AU member States is the full operationalization of the APSA, which must be accelerated. Equally important is the need to make renewed efforts to address the root causes of conflicts in a holistic and systematic manner, including through implementing existing instruments in the areas of human rights, the rule of law, democracy, elections, good governance, disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation, counter-terrorism and good neighborliness.

c. Economic challenges

- Defining the roles of the state, the private sector, international financial institutions and nonprofit organization are still highly contested issues in African development

## V. Objectives

20. The overall objective of the celebration is to reflect on the achievements and prospects, as well as the challenges still facing the continent vis-à-vis peace, human security, integration and socio-economic development. The specific objectives of the celebrations are to:

- Commemorate the 50 years of existence of the OAU/AU and its struggle to improve the lives of the African people;
- Raise awareness on the continent about the achievements of the OAU/AU as well as the role and the existence of the African Union as a major catalyst for political and socio-economic development in Africa;
- Identify and reflect on the achievements and challenges facing integration and socio-economic development and to search for viable strategies for Africans to take charge of their destiny;
- Review and assess the state of political liberation on the continent especially the role of the OAU/AU relative to supporting and facilitating Member States' achievement of legitimate, credible, inclusive and participatory governance by African people, consolidation of democracy, effective realisation of human and peoples' rights and attainment of sustainable peace and human security on the continent;
- Generate Africa's re-awakening, Pan- Africanism and African Renaissance;
- Encourage Member States to sign, ratify and to effectively implement all AU legal and policy instruments that constitute a growing body of our shared values;
- Reflect on where Africa, under the platform of the African Union, should be in the next 50 years, and;
- Reflect on what type of continental platform and executive body would be most appropriate to realize the vision of the African Union, for "an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena".



## **VI. Expected outcomes**

**21.** The expected outcomes of this undertaking are as follows:

- The 50 years of existence and struggle of the OAU/AU commemorated, valorised and disseminated;
- The African Union and its symbols such as anthem, flags, emblem, history and instruments popularized in Member States and in the different regions and regional groupings as pillars of the African Union;
- The renewed commitment of the Member States to the objectives of the African Union achieved through universal ratification/accession and implementation of all OAU/AU legal and policy instruments that constitute the growing body of our shared values;
- A re-energized, united and proud citizenry poised to overcoming the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century;
- Assessment and progress report of the state of the OAU/AU towards continental unity and integration and attainment of political and socio-economic development in Africa;
- Renewed African identification and recommitment to the ideals of Pan Africanism and African Renaissance.

## **VII. Activities for the 50th Anniversary Celebration and their Funding**

**22.** In line with the above mentioned Decisions of the Assembly, the Ethiopian Government and the African Union Commission had been working closely together, in close collaboration with the African Embassies accredited to the African Union as well as the representatives of the Diaspora, so as to mark this historic event with a wider participation and contribution of all continental stakeholders. To this end, the Ethiopian Government and the African Union Commission have successfully identified activities which would be carried out by either side, those to be carried out by the Ethiopian Government, and those to be jointly carried out by the Commission and the Ethiopian Government. In the same vein, the Commission has put together a list of activities to be undertaken at continental, regional and national levels as well as the Diaspora (See *table 1*).

**23.** The funding of the activities marked for the celebration will be borne in totality and exclusively by the African Union Commission, the Ethiopian authorities, the other Member States of the AU, by way of voluntary contributions as well as other indigenous sources of funding.

**24.** Some Civil Society Organizations and Diaspora have approached the Commission with a view to organizing relevant activities in the context of the celebration

of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the OAU/AU and the Year of Pan Africanism and African Renaissance. In the spirit of an all-inclusive celebration, these Organizations should be encouraged to actively participate, being understood that they will be able to mobilize the required resources to fund their activities. It is also advisable that such kind of activities be staggered over the Year of Pan Africanism and African Renaissance. This could be taken on board in elaborating the final programme of activities for the celebration (See Table 1).

### **VIII. Participation**

**25.** One of the strong criticisms often made against the OAU is the fact that the Organization was perceived as an elitist inter-governmental Forum that excluded the vast majority of the African masses. The AU departed from this Vision by emphasizing on grass root ownership and belonging of the common Africans. Against this background and with this understanding, the celebrations should witness the full involvement and participation of the broad spectrum of the African Society, including all people of African descent. In this regard therefore, participation in the celebration will be drawn from, Member States, African Union Commission, Other Organs of the African Union, Regional Economic Communities, Host Country-Ethiopia, Private Sector, and Civil Society Organizations, the Diaspora, Media and Religious groups.

### **IX. Implementation and monitoring mechanism**

**26.** In consonance with the Decision of the Assembly on the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations (supra), it is imperative to put in place a monitoring mechanism to ensure that the planned activities are carried out timeously and to address any constraints likely to impede the deliverables. It has therefore been wisely suggested to put in place an Ad-Hoc PRC Sub-Committee to oversee the overall organization of the events and activities. The Commission on its part has already assigned the task to its Conference and Event Management Committee, working under the supervision and direction of the College of Commissioners. The Host Country has also put in place a National Organizing Committee for the celebrations. The above Structures of the Commission and the host country have been working closely on the event. The missing link is the PRC. The idea of setting up an Ad-Hoc Committee of the PRC is therefore most welcome. It will ensure concerted and synergized action in the preparation of this historic event. .

### **X. Legacy**

**27.** The question to answer here is what should be remembered after all the celebrations are over. In other words, over and above feasting and merry making, there should be something concrete as a fall out of the celebration. This could take several forms such as the erection of Golden Jubilee monuments in prime areas of cities in the continent, a film, documentary and book on the 50 years of the OAU/AU and its pursuit for a Pan African Agenda and African Renaissance

## XI. Conclusion and Recommendations

- i) Time is of the essence and it is necessary for the PRC to pronounce itself on the list of activities to mark the celebrations of 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary;
- ii) The funds solicited should be made available by the PRC which has the mandate of the Assembly in this respect (vide Decision 422) in order to translate the planned activities into concrete action;
- iii) The PRC Ad hoc Committee on the celebrations should be established as soon as possible;
- iv) The PRC should be briefed monthly, on the progress of the preparations of the celebrations;
- v) Member States should be encouraged to inform the Commission on the activities they are planning for that celebration at national levels and to indicate their voluntary contributions towards the continental celebration as invited by the Assembly to do so;
- vi) RECs also should be encouraged to celebrate this Event in their own regions and Headquarters;
- vii) National CSOs, Women and Youth Associations, Private Sector should be equally encouraged to mobilize their membership towards these celebrations; AUC should prepare a comprehensive timetable for year 2013 based on all relevant information gathered on celebration related activities by all stakeholders;
- viii) MS should consider to have also their individual timetable and could use all relevant activities and events being organized at home to advertise or to place these under the Theme of the 50<sup>th</sup> Year Anniversary Celebration, including National Days and those activities/events carried out by them CSOs (meetings, seminars, art exhibition, films and documentary, etc.) so as to sensitize their citizenry at large;
- ix) Inviting President Barack Obama as a Guest of Honor and identifying other prominent dignitaries to be invited on the Day of Celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on 25 May 2013;
- x) Start reflecting on the possibility of a Peace Nobel Prize (coinciding with the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of its existence) for the African Union which has greatly contributed to consolidate peace and security on the continent under difficult circumstances, stimulating development efforts and creating strong bonds of solidarity among the African peoples and those of the world, thus contributing to consolidating peace and harmony on our planet.

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