

SPEECH AT THE “AFRICA ARISE SUMMIT”

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Programme Director,

Comrades, ladies and gentlemen:

As I understand it, like many other Africans across our Continent, you are concerned that as leaders in various spheres of human activity in Africa, we must discharge our leadership obligations correctly, thus to enable our Continent to solve its problems without undue delay.

However the topic that was sent to me makes the statement that the organisers of this Summit have already reached some conclusions about Africa’s leadership. As you know the topic to which I have referred is –“*The effects of Leadership Bankruptcy in Africa*”.

You will yourselves soon take over the leadership of our Continent. I therefore think that it is important that you understand as best as you can the challenges of leadership in Africa.

In this regard I would suggest that you approach this important matter as objectively as possible, refusing to be victims of a negative stereotype of Africans in general and the African leadership in particular.

Accordingly, I believe that properly to discuss this important matter, we would have to start by understanding what these problems are and what Africa’s leaders have said in this regard.

You will recall that the beginning of the last decade of the 20th century was marked by a major change in the global situation with the end of the Cold War, following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Having understood the importance of this development, on July 11, 1990 Africa’s leaders, meeting as the OAU Assembly of Heads of State and Government, adopted an important “*Declaration on the Political and Socio-Economic Situation in Africa and the Fundamental Changes Taking Place in the World*”.

With your permission, I will quote some of the main points made in the Declaration and explain later why this is important.

Among other things the Declaration said:

“In particular we have noted the changing East-West relations from confrontation to cooperation, the socio-economic and political changes in Eastern Europe, the steady move towards the political and monetary union of Western Europe, the increasing global tendency towards regional integration and the establishment of trading and economic blocks, as well as the advances in science and technology. These, we found, constitute major factors which should guide Africa’s collective thinking about the challenges

and options before her in the 1990s and beyond, in view of the real threat of marginalisation of our Continent...

“We noted with satisfaction the achievements of Africa in the struggle for the decolonisation of the Continent and in the fight against racism and apartheid, as well as the positive role played by the OAU in this respect...We wish at the same time to confirm our solidarity with the oppressed people of South Africa and to assure them of our undivided support at this crucial phase in their struggle...”

Among other comments, the Declaration said:

“The socio-economic situation in our Continent remains precarious today despite the many efforts made by our countries, individually and collectively”, and called for our Continent to continue to be “guided by the principle of collective self-reliance and self-sustaining development.”

It also said:

“We reaffirm that Africa’s development is the responsibility of our governments and peoples. We are now more than ever before determined to lay solid foundations for self-reliant, human-centred and sustainable development on the basis of social justice and collective self-reliance, so as to achieve accelerated structural transformation of our economies...We are determined to work assiduously towards economic integration through regional cooperation...”

“We are fully aware that in order to facilitate this process of socio-economic transformation and integration, it is necessary to promote popular participation of our peoples in the processes of government and development. A permitting political environment which guarantees human rights and the observance of the rule of law would ensure high standards of probity and accountability, particularly on the part of those who hold public office. In addition, popular-based political processes would ensure the involvement of all, including in particular women and youth in the development efforts. We accordingly recommit ourselves to the further democratisation of our societies and to the consolidation of democratic institutions in our countries...”

“We realise at the same time that the possibilities of achieving the objectives we have set will be constrained as long as an atmosphere of lasting peace and stability does not prevail in Africa. We therefore renew our determination to work together towards the speedy and peaceful resolution of all the conflicts on our Continent...”

“We need to strengthen the OAU so that it may also become a viable instrument in the service of Africa’s economic development and integration...”

“We reaffirm our commitment to revive the ideals of Pan-Africanism and commit ourselves...on behalf of our governments and peoples to maintain and strengthen our unity and solidarity, and to pool our resources and wisdom in order to face the challenges of the decade of the 1990s and beyond...”

“We will continue to strive for the establishment of a just and equitable international economic system...”

“We recommit ourselves to strengthen South-South cooperation and to play a lead role in this regard...We do believe that an increasingly inter-dependent world calls for greater international solidarity and that peace and prosperity should be shared for the common good of humanity.”

That concludes the passages I wanted to quote from the Declaration.

As you will recall, the Declaration was adopted by the then African leaders 21 years ago.

What is remarkable about it is that essentially the African agenda our leaders of 21 years ago set for all of us remains, to this day, the agenda which Africa must continue to address.

We must therefore acknowledge the wisdom of Africa's leaders that they could so precisely elaborate the African agenda, even in the climate of uncertainty 1990, caused by the fact that it was impossible to foresee the consequences of the disappearance of the Soviet Union.

At the same time, the fact that an agenda was worked out and adopted by the totality of the political leadership of our Continent makes it possible for us to make a critical assessment of how the African leadership has performed during a period of 21 years.

I believe that it is only on this basis that we would be able to make an objective assessment as to whether Africa's leadership has proved to be bankrupt or otherwise.

Before we proceed, let us recap briefly what Africa's political leaders, 21 years ago, committed our Continent to do. They said:

- Africa would sustain the struggle for the liberation of South Africa until victory was achieved;
- it would engage in struggle to revive the African economy, accelerate regional integration, and put the economy on a sustainable growth and development path;
- it would work for the democratisation of our Continent, respect for human rights and the rule of law, and popular participation in the development process and in governance;
- it would strive to achieve peace and stability throughout our Continent;
- it would strengthen the spirit of Pan-Africanism and therefore African solidarity and unity;
- it would work to strengthen cooperation among the countries of the South; and,
- it would work for the restructuring of the global economy, to fight against the marginalisation of our Continent, understanding that various developments in the post-Cold War period would reinforce this negative tendency.

The questions we must therefore ask and answer is – how far have we advanced towards the realisation of these goals, and how should we judge the African leadership in this context?

The first of these objectives was the defeat of the apartheid regime and the liberation of our country.

This needs no further elaboration and only requires that we, as South Africans, should once again salute the peoples and leaders of our Continent for the steadfast manner in which they persisted in their support for our struggle until our democratic revolution succeeded in 1994.

The second of these goals related to the African economy. What should we say in this regard?

During June 2010 the McKinsey Global Institute published a Report entitled – *“Lions on the move: The progress and potential of the African economies.”*

In their Preface to this Report, the authors write:

“Africa’s collective economy grew very little during the last two decades of the 20th century. But sometime in the late 1990s, the Continent began to stir. GDP growth picked up and then bounded ahead, rising faster and faster through 2008. Today, while Asia’s tiger economies continue to expand rapidly, we foresee the potential rise of economic lions in Africa’s future.”

It goes on to say:

“The key reasons behind Africa’s growth surge were improved political and macroeconomic stability and micro-economic reforms. To start, several African countries halted their deadly hostilities, creating the political stability necessary to foster economic growth. Next, Africa’s economies grew healthier as governments lowered inflation, trimmed their foreign debt, and shrunk their budget deficits.

“Finally, Africa governments increasingly adopted policies to energise markets. They privatised state-owned enterprises, reduced trade barriers, cut corporate taxes, and strengthened regulatory and legal systems. Although many governments still have a long way to go, these important first steps enabled a private business sector to emerge.

“Together, these structural changes helped fuel an African productivity revolution by helping companies to achieve greater economies of scale, increase investment, and become more competitive...

“Today, while individual African economies could suffer many setbacks, our analysis suggests that the continent’s long-term growth prospects are strong, propelled by both external trends in the global economy and internal changes in the continent’s societies and economies.”

What all of this says is that the economic growth and development which Africa has experienced since the 1990s was not accidental.

It was the outcome of purposeful actions by the governments and peoples of Africa to change their condition in a positive direction, relating to the issues of governance and peace we have addressed, as well as the important matters of economic policy and practice.

The positive assessment about Africa’s economic prospects had also been made in a 2008 World Bank paper written by Jorge Arbach, Delfin S. Go and John Page interestingly entitled *“Is Africa’s Economy at a Turning Point?”*

The paper said:

“There is something decidedly different and new about the economic landscape of Sub-Saharan Africa. After stagnating for much of 45 years, economic performance in Africa is markedly improving. In recent years, for example, GDP growth in Sub-Saharan Africa is accelerating to its strongest point at about 6 per cent a year while inflation registered below the two-digit level, its lowest point...

“Is the growth failure in Sub-Saharan Africa finally reversing? An upward shift in the recent growth rates suggests that a trend break may have taken place around the mid-1990s...

“There is...evidence that economic growth is accelerating and registering across several types of countries, not just oil-exporting and resource-rich countries, but also oil-importing, landlocked, and – to some extent – fragile countries.”

Our broad conclusion must therefore be that Africa and its leadership have therefore done a great deal to turn the African economy round, at least to the extent that what has been done has broken a long period of economic stagnation which had lasted as long as 45 years.

The third matter we must address relates to the important issue of peace and stability on our Continent. Again I must say that all of us should be pleased with the progress that has been made in this regard.

According to a Report issued by the then Secretary General of the UN, Mr Kofi Annan, in 1998:

“Since 1970, more than 30 wars have been fought in Africa, the vast majority of them intra-State in origin. In 1996 alone, 14 of the 53 countries of Africa were afflicted by armed conflicts, accounting for more than half of all war-related deaths worldwide and resulting in more than 8 million refugees, returnees and displaced persons.”

The progress our Continent has made away from this disastrous situation is shown by the fact that today there are only two African countries involved in serious military conflict, namely Somalia and Libya.

The latter of these, the conflict in Libya, could have been ended some months ago if the major Western powers had respected the decisions of the African Union to end the fighting and allow the people of Libya to engage one another in dialogue to ensure the democratic transformation of their country.

There are other smaller-scale conflicts taking place in some other countries, notably the Republics of Sudan and South Sudan and the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. We must, of course, do everything possible to end these low-intensity conflicts.

However the conclusion is inescapable that Africa has indeed made much progress in terms of addressing the challenge of peace and stability. Accordingly once again we must salute what the African leadership has done in this regard.

Yet another important matter to which Africa’s leaders committed themselves 21 years ago was the democratisation of our Continent.

I am certain that all of us are familiar with the fact that from the beginning of the 1990s, our Continent did indeed experience a new democratic wave.

In this regard I would like to draw your attention to this report by Adebayo O Olukoshi in a UNISA paper entitled: *“Economic crisis, multipartyism, and opposition politics in contemporary Africa”*, in which he says:

“Between 1990 and 1994, 31 out of the 42 sub-Saharan African countries that did not already have a multiparty political framework embraced one variant or another of the system and held competitive elections on the basis of the new arrangement. Of the 31 competitive elections that were held, 14

resulted in the defeat of incumbent governments, some of them dominated by people who had been in power since their countries attained independence and who had erected elaborate structures for preserving their political power (Bratton 1995).”

The entrenchment of the democratic process on our Continent was most recently demonstrated in the successful elections held in Nigeria, Niger and Guinea Conakry and, of course, the South Sudan referendum.

Therefore I believe that once again we should speak positively about what has been done on our Continent to bring to an end the phenomenon of one-party rule and military dictatorships which had characterised much of Africa for many years after the end of the colonial period.

Of course, as you know, when Africa’s leaders pledged themselves to strengthen the spirit of Pan-Africanism and therefore African solidarity and unity, this confirmed a long-standing objective shared by all the peoples of Africa even as they were engaged in the struggle for liberation from colonialism and apartheid.

Again as you know, the concrete step that was taken in this regard was the replacement of the Organisation of African Unity by the African Union which was launched in Durban in 2002.

Again we must salute this achievement, certainly taking into account the intentions which informed the formation of the AU as well the contents of its founding document, the Constitutive Act.

Everything I have said so far makes the statement that in fact during the last 21 years since the adoption of the *“Declaration on the Political and Socio-Economic Situation in Africa and the Fundamental Changes Taking Place in the World”*, much progress has been made to accomplish the goals which Africa’s leaders set themselves then.

However this does not mean that Africa’s problems have been solved or that we should not make a critical assessment of the performance of our leaders.

In this context I would appeal that all of us should realise the renaissance of Africa we all seek is not the responsibility merely of the political leaders of Africa.

This is an historic project which must involve the peoples of Africa as a whole. Accordingly, as I said when I began, any critical review of the performance of Africa’s leaders must include our leaders across all spheres of human activity, including those in business, civil society, academia, the religious communities, and so on.

Another point I would like to reiterate is that as we make these assessments, we must take care that we do not become victims of negative stereotypes about ourselves as Africans, according to which, for instance, one British magazine described Africa as *“The Hopeless Continent”*.

That said, let me reflect briefly on what I believe are some of the challenges which our leaders on the Continent must address.

I believe that it is important that our leaders should continue to engage one another to see what can be done to end the conflict in Somalia and allow the Somali people to rebuild their lives in conditions of peace and cooperation among themselves.

Similarly, steps should be taken to bring to an end the dispute relating to Western Sahara, which has denied the people of this part of Africa their right to self-determination.

Our leaders should also take steps to ensure the reinvigoration of NEPAD, the New Partnership for Africa's Development, especially as it relates to the partnership among ourselves as Africans. This should be done exactly to accelerate Africa's economic development and integration.

Further, steps should be taken to bring into operation the important "*African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance*", to assist all our countries further to entrench our democratic systems, to ensure popular involvement in governance, and help to ensure greater transparency and accountability on the part of our governments.

The recent uprisings in North Africa, which, among others, have sought the democratisation of these countries, emphasise exactly this point that our Continent cannot afford to be complacent with regard to the task to ensure that the people shall govern.

In this regard it is also important that we pay greater attention to the African Peer Review Mechanism.

Equally, we must act to ensure the implementation of decisions our Continent has already taken with regard to the two important issues of the emancipation and empowerment of women as well as youth development.

Similarly, our Continent must act together to address the continuing challenge of corruption which continues to afflict all our countries, especially bearing in mind the existence of the "*African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption*", which was adopted in 2003.

In this regard we should also make the point that those we might describe as our moral leaders, such as our religious leaders, also have a critically important role to play as address what in our country has been characterised as 'moral regeneration'.

Our leaders should also take additional steps to strengthen the economic relations between Africa and other countries of the South, building on what has already been achieved in the context of our relations with China and India.

This will also relate to yet another important challenge which we must address, which is asserting Africa's role in the system of international relations, especially as it bears on the solution of Africa's problems.

In the 1998 Report by Kofi Annan to which I referred earlier, he said:

"Within the context of the United Nations primary responsibility for matters of international peace and security, providing support for regional and sub-regional initiatives in Africa is both necessary and desirable. Such support is necessary because the United Nations lacks the capacity, resources and expertise to address all problems that may arise in Africa. It is desirable because wherever possible the international community should strive to complement rather than supplant African efforts to resolve Africa's problems. In recent years there have been a number of new African initiatives to resolve disputes that have long plagued particular areas or to tackle new conflicts before they can expand and escalate beyond control. While not all of those endeavours have been successful, the political leaders of Africa have persevered and the peoples of Africa deserve the support of the international community."

However, rather than international action “to complement rather than supplant African efforts to resolve Africa's problems”, and to demonstrate a commitment to the view that “the political leaders of Africa...and the peoples of Africa deserve the support of the international community”, we have seen the opposite, as reflected in actions taken with regard to Côte d’Ivoire and Libya.

Our leaders should act to address this highly dangerous situation.

The last point I would like to make relates to our institutions.

It is critically important that our leaders take all necessary steps to strengthen the AU Commission and other institutions of the Union. Without this we will not be able to make the progress we seek.

In this regard, I must also say the challenge to strengthen our institutions goes beyond our political leaders.

And since we are meeting at the University of the Free State, I would like to emphasise that steps should also be taken to strengthen such important African institutions as AASU, the All-Africa Students Union, and the AAU, Association of African Universities.

This would also apply to other all-Africa institutions, such as OATUU, the Organisation of African Trade Union Unity, and the AACC, the All Africa Conference of Churches.

As I said earlier, you the youth of our country must and will take over the leadership of our country and Continent.

I have no doubt that as you do so you will be better empowered than previous generations of our leaders to advance the African agenda I have tried to address.

As you do this, inspired by the vision, Africa Arise!, you will make all of us Proudly African!

I am pleased to wish the Africa Arise success!

Thank you.