

REMARKS OF THE PATRON OF THE THABO MBEKI FOUNDATION, AT THE LAUNCH OF THE JOHN A. KUFUOR FOUNDATION:

BANQUET HALL, STATE HOUSE, ACCRA: SEPTEMBER 20, 2011

Mr Thabo Mbeki

My dear friends, Presidents John Kufuor and Horst Köhler,

Distinguished guests,

Friends, ladies and gentlemen:

Let me start by thanking President Kufuor most sincerely for inviting me to return to this country which is always close to our hearts, Ghana, to participate in the launch of the John A. Kufuor Foundation.

I also extend my heartfelt congratulations to the President on the formation and launch of the Foundation as well as thank the University of Ghana and the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology for hosting the two important institutions of the Foundation.

I must say that as an honorary graduate and therefore an alumnus of the University of Cape Coast I feel a little jealous that we are not hosting one of these institutions. However I want to assure you, President Kufuor, that I will not hold this against you.

I am certain that it is a matter of common cause among all of us that our Continent is faced with the urgent challenge to solve many major problems. Equally I am certain that all of us agree that we need to mobilise as much of the African brain power we can to help us elaborate the solutions to these problems.

I say all of this to express my sincere appreciation for the important commitment which John Kufuor made when he took the decision to establish his Foundation.

That commitment was that he would not selfishly keep to himself his enormous experience in the struggle to confront and resolve Africa's challenges but would make that experience available to our Continent and especially our youth.

I am certain that this is exactly the correct response to what I said earlier relating to the imperative for us to mobilise as much of Africa's brain power as possible to ensure that we respond correctly to the challenges we face.

During the 48 years since 1963 when the Organisation of African Unity was formed, into the last nine years of the existence of the African Union, our Continent has paid a lot of attention to the task to evolve a whole complex of policies focused on the reconstruction and development of Africa in virtually all spheres of human activity.

Thus we have a whole corpus of policies contained in agreed Treaties, Conventions, Charters, Declarations and Protocols covering such issues as politics, governance and human rights, the economy in its various elements, conflict resolution, regional integration and African unity, the rights of women,

the youth, children and people with disabilities, education and culture, justice and international relations.

Thus we can safely say that as a Continent we have done at least two important things relating to our challenges, these being that:

- we have identified our specific problems and challenges in a whole variety of areas; and,
- we have put in place the broad policies providing the way forward towards the resolution of these challenges.

It is true that over the years our Continent has indeed made important advances in such important areas as politics and democratisation, economic development, regional integration and conflict resolution.

To that extent we can say that our countries are indeed responding positively to the agreed continental policy positions, which has produced the forward movement we need.

However it is equally true that we are not moving forward with the speed our Continent needs, especially keeping in mind the fact that whatever the progress we have made, Africa still faces enormous challenges.

I believe that in this context we should ask ourselves a whole variety of questions and seek to answer these honestly.

For instance we should ask ourselves the question – why is it that we have failed to end the debilitating war in Somalia which has now raged for 20 years, resulting in a failed state, massive human suffering and the creation of a terrorist base in East Africa?

Does this mean that we need to re-examine the peace and security architecture we have put in place to see what should be done to improve its effectiveness?

Similarly we should ask ourselves the question why undemocratic systems of government persisted in the AU member-states of Egypt, Tunisia and Libya as long as they did, despite clear continental decisions in favour of democracy, as reflected, among others, in the Constitutive Act of the African Union.

We could also pose to ourselves such questions as:

- why has the process of regional economic integration, which should create larger markets, not resulted in the expected accelerated economic development; and,
- why have we still not succeeded to generate greater volumes of capital from within our Continent the more effectively to respond to our investment needs?

A fortnight ago, the Second High-Level Retreat on the Promotion of Peace, Security and Stability in Africa was held in Cairo. Relating to what we have been saying about the need for us to carry out a critical review of what we have been doing, the Retreat made the important observation that:

“Participants agreed that focus for the AU should no longer be the adoption of additional instruments, unless exceptional circumstances so require, but rather the implementation of the existing ones. In this respect, they called for renewed efforts from all concerned to address implementation gaps, enhance compliance and live up to the expectations for a better governance arising from the commitments made

by the African leaders. They underscored the importance of effective leadership in shaping and maintaining institutions of good governance.”

I am certain that these observations relating to issues of peace, security and stability would apply equally with regard to other areas of social activity, even if we took only the three areas identified by the Retreat, these being:

implementation gaps;

- good governance; and,
- effective leadership.

In this context we must necessarily commend the fact that the institution of the John A. Kufuor Foundation which will be based at the University of Ghana in Legon will be the Centre for Leadership, Governance and Development, which will therefore focus essentially on the very same issues identified by the Cairo Retreat.

We must therefore look forward to what the Centre will do which will help our Continent significantly to improve the implementation of its decisions relating to the strategic objectives of such good governance and development as advance the goals of the eradication of poverty and underdevelopment.

Similarly we look forward to the contribution the John A. Kufuor Centre will make to help Africa address the critically important issue of nurturing the quality leadership which our Continent needs.

Two years ago President Horst Köhler asked some of us to contribute articles for a book which would discuss the issue of relations between Africa and Europe, and especially the European Union, around the theme – Partnership on an Equal Footing – Fiction or Reality?

Recent events, focused on the manner in which the African Union has been marginalised with regard to the solution of African problems, as exemplified by what is happening in Libya, have demonstrated how correct President Kohler was to pose the question – is the professed intention of the Western world to establish a Partnership of Equals with Africa fiction or reality!

It seems clear to me that as Africans we face the distinct threat that once more others from outside our Continent have decided that they will intervene to determine our destiny, thus to compromise our right to self-determination, which the whole of our Continent celebrated with such joy when Ghana achieved its independence 54 years ago.

Inevitably this is one of the strategic challenges to which the John A. Kufuor Foundation must respond, to help us recapture in a meaningful way that vitally important right of the Africans to determine their destiny.

I am honoured to wish the John A. Kufuour Foundation success, convinced that it will make an important contribution to the Africa’s continuing struggle to achieve its renaissance.

Thank you.