



**MESSAGE OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE
AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION**

H.E. MR. MOUSSA FAKI MAHAMAT

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE 54TH AFRICA DAY
ADDIS ABABA, 25 MAY 2017**

Dear Fellow Africans,

It is with honour and utmost humility that I stand before you dear African Compatriots to pay tribute to our Founding Fathers, to bow to their unwavering commitment to an upright, free, united, interdependent and fraternal Africa. On this day of 25 May 2017, we celebrate the anniversary of the liberation of our Continent from the yoke of colonialism and the unity that our Founding Fathers so dreamt about and fought for. The establishment of our Organization, on this day, 25 May in 1963, in Addis Ababa, marked a pivotal turning point in the history of our Continent.

Africa Day is also an opportunity for us to celebrate the significant progress made by the Continent since the inception of the OAU fifty four years ago and the transformation to the African Union we are today. Notable among them is the improvements in peace and stability, democratic governance, human development, the promotion and protection of human rights, the quest for accelerated regional and continental integration through the execution of the Regional and Continental projects, the establishment of gender parity in national and continental institutions, the reduction of infant and maternal mortality are so many other tangible peace dividends of which Africa may rightly feel proud.

Notwithstanding this progress, Africa continues to face many challenges, including mainly population growth control, protection of the environment and climate change, migration, youth unemployment, terrorism, radicalization, various forms of trafficking, deficit of political and democratic governance, in brief, peace and security. After 54 years, the building of the unity of the African peoples is still a major task while the challenges, which Africans must take up collectively, keep increasing.

With an average growth rate of 5% over the last 15 years, with six countries among the top 10 in the world's most dynamic economies, it is clear that Africa is one of the regions of the world where growth is definitely fastest but where challenges remain in reaping the full benefits of its all its human and natural resources.

It was, therefore, in response to these immense challenges that, at the 24th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union, held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in January 2015, the African Heads of State and Government adopted Agenda 2063, establishing the most significant structural transformation programme for Continent for the next 50 years. This ambitious programme is a challenge for all Africans and especially their leaders. The implementation of this programme will be carried out in several gradual steps, as provided for in the First Ten-Year Implementation Plan 2014-2023.

In this sense, a number of priority flagship projects are being executed to hasten shared prosperity, namely: the liberalisation of the African airspace, the Continental Free Trade Area, the African Raw Materials Strategy, the African Passport and the free movement of persons and goods, the Pan-African University, and the end of conflicts by silencing the guns by 2020.

The goal of shared prosperity for all of all African citizens underpins Agenda 2063, and gives African women and youths a prominent place with calls upon the continent to promote gender equality through the empowerment of women and young people in all spheres of life.

Our Heads of State and Government moved quickly to ensure that Agenda 2063 is translated into concrete actions. It is this commitment that led them to adopt the historic decision of the Kigali Summit of July 2016, reaffirming their full resolve to establish an effective mechanism to finance this ambitious vision. The speedy and strict implementation of this decision is not only a response to the urgent need for financing, but it is also a matter of the credibility and assertion of the African leadership.

It is also in the same spirit that in January 2017, the Heads of State and Government adopted a reform package based on the recommendations contained in the Report of President Kagame. The implementation of these reforms will make it possible to give a new life to the Organization.

This process of consolidating our financial sovereignty is timely, important and necessary. And as it in this spirit that we acknowledge the much appreciated contribution of our international partners who, in a spirit of solidarity and shared prosperity, have always supported us.

We must also continue to promote synergy and complementarity between the UN Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda and our homegrown Agenda 2063. The signing, on 19 April 2017, of a Joint UN-AU Framework for Enhancing Partnership in Peace and Security is in line with this logic.

By referring to the need for a strengthened partnership for peace and security, which is one of the priorities of my mandate, I will also frankly admit my heartbreak in the face of the atrocious tragedies that plague South Sudan, Somalia, Central African Republic, the Lake Chad Basin and the Sahel?

Of all these humanitarian crises, the tragedy of South Sudan is the most unbearable. The proliferation of crimes committed by all parties and the deliberately inflicted and unspeakable suffering of civilians, over 60 per cent of whom are in need of humanitarian assistance, more than 2 million are internally displaced, more than 1 million are refugees, the ongoing famine ... this cannot continue. Yes, the denial of our humanity in this country is a shame to the honour and dignity of the African man, woman and child.

A few days after taking office, I personally witnessed the unbearable magnitude of this tragedy. I urge the parties to stop these massive crimes and, without delay, to establish an inclusive dialogue, to re-determine a peaceful destiny for their people. For this this the leaders can count on our readiness to assist with all our strength and resolve. But first, the violence and the suffering must stop.

Dear Fellow Africans,

The African population reached, in this May 2017, more than 1.2 billion inhabitants, or just under 17% of the world population with an average age of 19.5 years. This makes Africa the second most populous continent in the world after Asia and also the continent with the youngest

economically active population. It is, therefore, important to transform this huge human energy into a dynamic and creative development tool. To do this, this year's theme of the African Union is "Harnessing the demographic dividend through investment in youth".

Investing in youths in Africa depends on a significant effort of crosscutting mobilization, supported by sustained economic growth, job creation through all-out entrepreneurship, investment in education, improved social services, including universal healthcare coverage. Investing in African youth also implies the promotion of culture, our positive values and sports.

In this regard, one of our African heroes, President Nelson Mandela, said:

"Sports has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire, it has the power to unite peoples which is unique. It speaks the language of youth. Sports can rekindle and generate lost hope".

The African Union, recognizing sports and physical activity as effective tools for achieving social and economic integration, makes significant use of them to take up health, conflict prevention and post-conflict reconstruction challenges. It is in this context that the celebration of this Day will be marked by sports competitions.

Dear Fellow Africans,

Africa no longer accepts the marginalization of our Continent. We all, - political leaders, civil society, the private sector, ordinary citizens, the diaspora ...have the moral obligation to fight against this marginalization of Africa.

I call upon you, Brothers and Sisters, from the bottom of my heart, to pool our efforts, to multiply the chances of a successful integration of our Mother Africa.

In this regard, I am pleased to welcome once again the return of Morocco to the African Union on 30 January 2017, after 33 years of absence. As His Majesty King Mohammed VI proclaimed, this is an opportunity to bring together the whole continent in an effort to cement the cohesion of all the African peoples.

Based on the determination of all our 55 Member States, our Continental Organization will carry out the resolute reform of its functioning and will take up all the challenges of political and socio-economic development that are hampering the march of the continent towards the realization of the vision: an integrated, peaceful, prosperous Africa.

The Commission of the African Union, which I have the honour and privilege to head, will play its

full part, in close cooperation with all the Member States, in this collective effort for a free, sovereign and independent Africa in its choices, an Africa that offers to its sons and daughters pride, dignity, happiness and prosperity.

Happy Africa Day to all and May God bless Africa.