

# OAU-AU 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY LECTURE BY ANC PRESIDENT JACOB ZUMA

ICC EAST LONDON 26<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2013

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JACOB ZUMA

LECTURE

Director of the Programme, Vice Chancellor and Principal of the University of Fort Hare, Dr Mvuyo Tom, ANC Officials and Members of the National Executive Committee of the ANC, Leadership of the ANC and the Alliance in the Eastern Cape Province, Members of the Diplomatic Corps, Traditional and Religious Leaders in our midst, Representatives of organised business and civil society, The SRC, University academics and students, Comrades and friends, we bring warm African greetings from the National Executive Committee to this significant gathering for the ANC and the country.

This meeting takes place just a few hours before we mark the 96th birthday of one of the most distinguished sons of Africa, the late former President of the ANC, Isithwalandwe Oliver Tambo. President Oliver Tambo was not just President of the ANC. He was a leader of immense significance in the general affairs

of the African continent as a whole. It is thus proper that the ANC uses OR Tambo month to celebrate the OAU 50th anniversary.

Comrades and friends, we have gathered to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the OAU under the poignant theme: "2013 a year of Pan Africanism and the African Renaissance."

Closely examined, this theme resonates neatly with the fundamental objectives and aims of the OAU. The theme takes us back to that historic day on the 25th of May 1963 in Ethiopia, when prominent and revered founding fathers of the African liberation struggles descended on Addis Ababa and established an organisation that would mark a turning point in the history of Africa. They did so ever conscious of the importance of Africa's unity, independence and sovereignty.

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**Keywords:** African Unity, ANC, 50th Anniversary, Pan-Africanism.

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The formation of the OAU was indicative of the strong resolve on the part of African leaders to free this continent from the shackles of oppression, whether economic or political. The fathers of Pan Africanism held a vision of a united, economically and politically emancipated continent at peace with itself and the world. This was a profound vision of a united Africa, totally emancipated from the bondage of colonialism and imperialism.

It is a vision which was championed by giants of the struggle such as Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Chief Albert Luthuli, Haile Selassie, Oliver Tambo, Patrice Lumumba, Frantz Fanon, Amilcar Cabral, Jomo Kenyatta, Eduardo Mondlane, Moses Kotane, Ben Bella, and many others.

The formation of the OAU sent a clear message to the world that Africa had come of age and was therefore ready to be a continent driven by its own citizens, seeking and finding African solutions to African problems. There were some key principles that underlined the formation of the OAU. It was to promote the unity and solidarity of African states. It was formed to ensure the defence of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of African states and the eradication of all forms of colonialism. The OAU was also formed with the guarantee that all Africans will enjoy human rights and that their living standards will be raised.

As the African National Congress we are proud of the fact that our early founding leaders had begun articulating the vision of the African rebirth and unity much earlier.

Former ANC President, Pixley ka Isaka Seme's seminal article on the Regeneration of Africa, was written in 1906 even before the formation of our glorious movement. It defined the African Renaissance profoundly. He wrote:

*The brighter day is rising upon Africa. Already I seem to see her chains dissolved her desert plains red with harvest, her Abyssinia and her Zululand the seats of science and religion, reflecting the glory of the rising sun from the spires of their churches and universities. Her Congo and her Gambia whitened with commerce, her crowded cities sending forth the hum of business, and all her sons employed in advancing the victories of peace – greater and more abiding than the spoils of war.*

It was a vision of an Africa rising, an Africa shining and moving forward to unity and prosperity. Our task as the custodians of this overarching vision is to assess how far we

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have come as a continent in relation to these noble aims. We must take stock of the extent to which the ideals of the founding fathers enshrined in the founding charter have been realised.

For as long as these ideals which were put together more than 50 years ago remain relevant today, the case for the existence of the OAU, now AU, remains intact.

Also important is to remember that the real work began when Africa attained independence from colonialism. One of the founding fathers of Pan-Africanism and the African Renaissance, Dr Kwame Nkrumah stated eloquently in his seminal speech at the launch of the OAU in May 1963 that real work begins after independence. He said:

On this continent, it has not taken us long to discover that the struggle against colonialism does not end with the attainment of national independence. Independence is only the prelude to a new and more involved struggle for the right to conduct our own economic and social affairs; to construct our society according to our aspirations, unhampered by crushing and humiliating neo-colonialist controls and interference.

We are thus charged with the immense responsibility to jealously guard and never to betray the sacred cause of African freedom and independence based on fundamental human rights, dignity, justice and equality.

As we continue in our journey to properly define Africa's place in the world, informed by the shared dreams and common destiny of the peoples of Africa, we must always be mindful of the immense challenges Africa faces mainly as a result of the actions of those who fear a united and strong Africa.

Like any living organism, the Organisation of African Unity evolved through the years and underwent the necessary changes both in character and form to make it more united, stronger and effective. It is against this background that the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) was disbanded on the 9th of July 2002 under the stewardship of its last Chairperson, Former President of the ANC and the Republic of South Africa, Comrade Thabo Mbeki. It was replaced by its successor the African Union (AU).

The African Union is a much stronger organization capable of driving the African agenda. Through the AU, the peoples of Africa must reject any idea from outside the continent which seeks to foster an agenda of regime change in any African state.

We must continue to reject and frown upon the unconstitutional replacements of democratically elected governments in our continent. We must totally close rank for imperialism and neo-colonialism in line with the overarching vision of the OAU and now

the AU which I referred to earlier on. We must do everything we can to prevent Africa from being cheaply auctioned as a result of the ineptitude and lack of united action and resolve on the part of some of its leaders in safeguarding its vital territorial and sovereign interests.

Compatriots our position as the ANC is that the AU must be seized with the advancement of interests of a continent whose time has come. The mandate of both the OAU and the AU has always been clear and is determined by history. The OAU had to deliver African unity, freedom, independence, economic emancipation and development. The achievements of these objectives still continue today under the banner of the AU. The mandates of these organisations have essentially been the same but with a different emphasis at particular moments, but for these goals to be achieved unity of the African continent still remains paramount.

The OAU Liberation Committee worked tirelessly to assist liberation movements in the continent to advance the struggle for liberation, and the mission was partly accomplished when South Africa attained her freedom in 1994. Save for Western Sahara, the continent is free. The AU's mandate is to promote socio-economic emancipation and the enhancement of Africa's role in global affairs. It must harness Africa's wealth for the benefit of the African continent. As the AU we are executing these responsibilities under a more positive climate than that during which the OAU was in existence.

Africa is one of the fastest growing regions in the world. It is no longer characterised as hopeless, but rather as a continent of hope and opportunity. The economic renaissance of the continent will be attained best through total economic integration of the African Continent.

Through the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) adopted by the AU an economic blueprint for Africa's development – a vision of the continent's development was shaped.

Integration will enable Africa to grow the markets, allow for more diversification, and encourage the optimization of resources. Greater regional and market integration will help lower transport costs; ensure that people, goods and services are able to move more effectively and efficiently throughout the Continent.

To achieve greater integration, Africa agreed that the provision of infrastructure is the key. Roads, bridges, rail lines, pipelines, power plants, ICT connectivity, cables, ports, and waterways are the underpinning arteries of growth. It is for this reason that we have

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adopted the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA) and the Presidential Infrastructure Championing Initiative (PICI).

PIDA calls for an acceleration in infrastructure provision. We have identified certain Heads of State to champion priority infrastructure projects to give strategic political impetus to this process under the auspices of PICI.

South Africa champions the North-South corridor, road and rail construction projects, from Durban to Dar es Salaam. The infrastructure programmes provide a common framework for African Stakeholders to build the infrastructure necessary for integrated transport, energy, ICT and Trans-boundary water networks to increase trade and create employment opportunities.

Through adopting these continental initiatives, African leaders have expressed a common vision and have also enabled Africa to speak with one voice and strive to reach common goals. To achieve this economic emancipation, Africa needs to continue to build on the work that has been done to connect Africans in the Diaspora to their roots.

Africa's people, including those who live outside its borders, must recognize the need to contribute to its development. Beyond this, Africa cannot develop if the continent is not peaceful, and there cannot be peace without development as the two are indivisibly intertwined.

The peace and security efforts that the African Union is championing in the continent are important and should be supported by every member state, so that we can achieve the goals of a peaceful and stable Africa as envisaged by the founding leaders of the OAU and the African Union.

Most importantly, as Africans we should continue to think globally, beyond the confines of our own continent and familiar surroundings. We want to be part of the UN Security Council. We want to see an urgent transformation of global economic institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. All these require us to broaden our thinking and outlook further, as a continent of one billion people that deserves to be an equal partner in global world affairs. We say this from a position of strength. A new Africa is rising. A renewed Africa focused on economic development and harnessing the knowledge economy with speed and efficiency is making its tottering steps.

A new Africa with expanded industrialisation efforts reaching out to the outer limits of their urban bounds is crying out to be born. And the African Union should lead Africa to

this new rebirth, working with all the progressive forces in the continent, the ANC being one of the leading forces, as one as the oldest liberation movements in Africa.

Thus comrades and friends, as we celebrate this heroic Golden Jubilee of selfless giving by our Founders, we should rededicate ourselves to the quest for a just and peaceful world.

Our call for Africa's rightful place amongst the Family of Nations should be enhanced. Our calls for the reform of the governing global order should be intensified for our peoples to enjoy a better life. Africa should declare war against poverty, disease, illiteracy, famine and inequality.

For a continent as richly endowed as Mother Africa, the chronic challenges of children dying of malnutrition, hunger and treatable diseases should be unheard of. These challenges and many more, should – whilst rightfully celebrating the fifty years – remind us that the road ahead to attain full peace, stability and prosperity on the African Continent for all her peoples, is still arduous.

We are confident that in 2063 Africa will be a world leader setting the standard for inclusive economic development that benefits the people as whole, democratic governance and a humane and just social order. Only then shall we truly say that Africa is at peace with itself and with the world.

Comrades, let me close with words of wisdom from former President Albert Luthuli in his Nobel Peace prize acceptance speech. He said:

*Africa is a vital subject matter in the world of today, a focal point of world interest and concern. Could it not be that history has delayed her rebirth for a purpose? The situation confronts her with inescapable challenges, but more importantly with opportunities for service to herself and mankind. She evades the challenges and neglects the opportunities to her shame, if not her doom. How she sees her destiny is a more vital and rewarding quest than bemoaning her past with its humiliations and sufferings.*

Africa's time is now. Let us seize the moment.

I thank you.

**JACOB ZUMA**  
President, Republic of South Africa  
The Presidency, Pretoria