

On Africa Day, jubilee celebrations reflect on Pan-Africanism

Heads of states and government spent the morning of Africa Day, 25 May 2013, that marks the establishment of the Organisation of African Unity in 1963, reflecting on Africa's future 50 years from now, under the theme "Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance".

Moderated by Carlos Lopes, executive secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Africa, the all-morning session was addressed by Donald Kaberuka, president of the African Development Bank who spoke on Mega Trends; P.J. Patterson, former Prime Minister of Jamaica, who reflected on the Diaspora; Amina Mama, a Nigerian writer, gender expert and academic, who expounded on Diversity/Governing ourselves and Conflict; and Tendai Wenyika, secretary general of the Pan African Youth Union who spoke passionately on 'Future is Youth.

"May 25 was the culmination of over a century of pan-Africanist struggle to assert the dignity of the African peoples," said Lopes in his statement. He said the occasion showcased the desire of unity by the African people and their desire to overcome the balkanisation of the continent.

"It was a repudiation of negative stereotypes and racist interpretations of African history; it underscored the common commitment of Africans to achieve freedom and end decolonisation and apartheid on the African continent - It was about Africans taking pride in the continent," he stated.

Africa's peace and prosperity prospects

The session provided insights into Africa's peace and prosperity prospects over the next 50 years in the context of mega-trends, such as the emergence of new economic powers; recession in the developed world; urbanisation, changing demographics; climate change; digitalisation and changing security threats.

Kaberuka said the debilitating narrative of Africa and her whole litany of problems have given way to a Rising Africa. "Our continent now offers the highest risk adjusted return on investment" he added.

He stressed the need to unlock domestic demand and stated that Africa's "market of a billion people must be a primary objective as it will lay a basis for industrialisation, and for jobs and enable the economies of scale for some of the large infrastructure projects Africa needs."

"Africa, faces in the next fifty, a complex landscape, but she also has many opportunities; provided we do the right thing, this could truly be Africa's hour," he said.

Wenyika said that Vision 2063 is a vision for the youth. She highlighted the issue of land and its resources, saying this must be addressed so that it rests in the hands of the people, and not an elite minority. Speaking on behalf of the youth, she said, "our vision is to create a united, prosperous, democratic Africa" and that they the need to include young people in leadership.

Amina Mama decried microcredit as a minimalist approach towards women entrepreneurs. She also expressed her hope for a future that is freed from systemic injustice that results in violence and a continent where mothers survive pregnancy. "Africa in 2063 will have undergone a paradigm shift, where Africa's wealth will enrich African people," she said.

She also called for regional security architecture and questioned the need for individual national armies, as well as "the militaristic direction in which the costs of war have retarded development, leaving traumas, we are yet to heal."

Speaking to the beat of Jamaican musician Peter Tosh, whose song 'You are an African' started to play before taking the podium, P.J Patterson called for strengthening institutions between Africa and the Caribbean. He expressed his wish for a world that does not leave Africa marginalized.

Later in the afternoon at the Addis Ababa Millennium Hall, artists, poets, current and former heads of states; as well as other leaders participated in a grand ceremony hosted by the Government of Ethiopia.

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