

**Address by the Honourable Member of Parliament (NCOP ) H.E.  
Ambassador Mohammed Dangor to the joint sitting of Parliament  
on the occasion of Africa Day 2022 – 25 May 2022**

The Speaker & Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly

The Chair and Deputy Chair of the NCOP

The Chief Whip

Chair of Committees in both Houses

Leaders of the Opposition Parties

Members of Parliament

Members of the Diplomatic Corp

Fellow South Africans

1. Introduction

*“Africa Day celebrations deserve praise because they remind us of how far the continent and its people have come and the associated sense of pride, healing and dignity with a mixture of pain, joy, fear and hope.”* (Source IOL- May 22- Koffi Kouakou- Celebrating Africa Day is worth it).

59 years ago today on 25 May 1963, Africa made history with the founding of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) to build greater unity and solidarity between African countries and its people. Thus since then we have celebrated this day as Africa day. The history of Africa Day therefore stretches back over half a century and is entrenched in the history of our continent. And while the date of 25 May commemorates the day that the OAU was established, its roots go back even further. A year after its independence, Ghana under the leadership of President Kwame Nkrumah convened the first Conference of Independent African States on 15 April 1958. The conference called for the observance of African Freedom Day (or

Africa Liberation Day), once a year in April and this marked the beginning of what would later be known as Africa Day. The conference called for this Day to forge a common goal of fighting against colonialism and apartheid, to mark the progress of the liberation movements, and to symbolise the determination of the People of Africa to free themselves from foreign domination.<sup>1</sup>

As more African countries achieved independence, the need then arose for an organisation that would articulate the aspirations of African people and their struggle. Consequently, on 25 May 1963, leaders of 32 African nations converged in Ethiopia's capital Addis Ababa and formed the OAU. The OAU thereafter changed the date of Africa Freedom Day from 15 April to 25 May to mark the founding of the organisation. South Africa itself had joined the OAU on 23 May 1994 as its 53rd member.<sup>2</sup>

Since then, the 25th May has been celebrated widely across the world particularly in Africa to signify Africa's identity and unity.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> July 2002 the OAU dissolved and became the African Union (AU). Thus whilst today marks the 59<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Africa day this year also marks the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the AU. The theme this year for Africa Day is "the year of nutrition". Thus our reflection and celebration should be done within the context of both the Africa Day theme but also the progress made in terms of our more long term objectives of Pan Africanism. This year's theme of nutrition as an indicator of our people's health and welfare is intrinsically linked to the goals and objectives of the AU and the Africa we want as well as the global and continental challenges we are currently facing . In other words we cannot have 100% fully healthy continent within the context of nutrition without Africa's political and economic prosperity. Linked to this we cannot have political and economic prosperity without continental political unity and inclusive and diversified economic development. And we cannot have inclusive and diversified economic development without peace.

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<sup>1</sup> Accord Africa Day Statement 2020

<sup>2</sup> Ibid 1

Today and this year is therefore an opportunity to : Reflect on the state of nutrition on our continent, Celebrate African diversity and success, highlight the cultural and economic potential that exists on the African continent and acknowledge the progress that as Africans we have made.

Any reflection of this day , the state of nutrition and the more broader goals of the AU within the context of Pan Africanism this year must also be done within the context of the 7 pillars of Agenda 2063. <sup>3</sup> They are:

1. A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development;
2. An integrated continent, politically united and based on the ideals of Pan-Africanism and the vision of Africa's Renaissance;
3. An Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law;
4. A peaceful and secure Africa;
5. An Africa with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, shared values and ethics;
6. An Africa where development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children; and
7. Africa as a strong, united, resilient and influential global player and partner.

Honourable Members

## 2. Progress : What has been Done ?

Since the launch of the OAU there has been slow but significant progress in reaching the goals of Pan Africanism i.e. political and economic liberation and integration. By 2002 when the OAU dissolved all of Africa except for Western Sahara had secured independence and in the case of South Africa, the end of Apartheid.

Since the launch of the AU there has been much progress to strengthen both political and economic integration . Some of the initiatives in the continent, to alleviate Africa 's challenges, include:

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<sup>3</sup> Agenda 2063 is a strategic framework for the socio-economic transformation of our continent. Agenda 2063 seeks to realise the African people's aspirations for sustainable growth and development across Africa.

The Pan African Parliament – which is the legislative arm of the AU.

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) which aims to promote Africa's development through the promotion of democracy, human rights, accountability, transparency, and participatory governance.

The AU embracement of the Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG) which is linked to clean governance. The IIAG provides an annual assessment of the quality of governance in AU member states. It assesses crucial areas of Safety and Rule of Law; Participation and Human Rights; Sustainable Economic Development and Human Development.

The establishment of the Africa Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) which is a monitoring tool that has been developed by NEPAD. It aims to monitor governance performance and progress to ensure the promotion of political stability, accelerated sub-regional and continental economic integration, economic growth and sustainability.

The African Continental Free Trade Area (ACFTA) which is the largest free trade agreement since the creation of the World Trade Organisation. African leaders signed the Kigali Declaration on the establishment of this trade agreement at the 10th Extraordinary Summit of the Assembly of the African Union in Kigali, Rwanda, on 21 March 2018. Trade commenced in 2021.

The goal of Silencing of the Guns - That is creating conducive conditions for Africa's development to achieve the goal of a conflict-free Africa which includes ending Gender-Based Violence (GBV) . It aims to resolve the scourge of domestic wars that have ravaged the continent. The AU Peace and Security Council has adopted this resolution in the effort to end continental conflicts.

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### 3. Challenges

Yet despite all the progress that has been made in developing institutions and tools to strengthen democracy , human rights, good governance, peace, stability , conflict prevention and reconstruction and development there remain numerous challenges , weaknesses and threats to achieving the ideals of pan Africanism and the Africa we want. They include amongst others the triple challenges of poverty , inequality and unemployment . These triple challenges are intrinsically linked to and are both the cause and the effects of as well-being exacerbated by :

- 1) The state of conflict in Africa – these are both inter and intra state conflict between states and non-state actors because of tribal , ethnic , transnational criminal syndicates , violent religious and cultural extremism and terrorism amongst others.
- 2) The historical post-independence political and economic relationships and agreements between the former colonisers and colonised. For example, many of the former French colonies still have economic agreements where France has/had exclusive access to the country's resources , state contracts etc for decades. In addition, until 2020 many French colonies are still required to provide more than 60% of their reserves in the French Reserve bank . France, like the US has thousands of their military deployed across Africa to ostensibly protect their economic interests in Africa as part of there Francafrrique policy.
- 3) The extractive and exclusivist commodity based and agricultural economies resulting in most of african resources being shipped out to the western world in its raw state for it to be manufactured and then being sold back to Africa and the rest of the world without any beneficiation for the african people. Today intra Africa trade is approximately 17% which is a 7% improvement since 1995 when it was 10%, however it still remains the lowest amongst all regions and continents.
- 4) The lack of regional and continental rail, road , air , port, water and hydra infrastructure which is a "sine qou non " for the successful implementation of the ACFTA and regional and continental economic integration and intra continental trade.
- 5) The political disunity amongst african countries on key global issues .

- 6) The rise of populism , xenophobia , narrow nationalism and violent extremism and terrorism.
- 7) The increase in coups on the continent and the decrease in democratic culture and institutions and government continentally and globally.
- 8) The increase in armed conflict on the continent.
- 9) The rise of unilateralism and the disregard for global governance rules , international law and a rules-based order and international human rights. This includes violations through illegal invasions in Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine , Western Sahara and more recently Ukraine amongst others.
- 10)The Covid Pandemic and its economic impact.
  
- 11)The emergence of a new cold war between West ( US and most European countries) and China and Russia .

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#### 4. “ Qou Vadis “ -Where to

This new cold war includes traditional warfare strategies and tactics such military invasions, nuclear arms races, Star Wars etc as well as the newer asymmetrical and nonlinear warfare. The newer asymmetrical warfare includes warfare through proxy countries , trade and currency wars, IT and Information wars, non-state actors etc. It seems that as in the previous cold war this new cold war between the US , China and Russia amongst others and the US in particular now requires those countries who are not directly involved and in particular the developing world to choose sides. We as developing countries of which all of Africa is included are now required to support there (US) positions as opposed to allowing us to choose our own policy positions which is in line with our own domestic regional and continental and developing world interests. The latest issue of the Ukraine is instructive in this regard. Since the illegal invasion and violation of the Ukrainian sovereignty South Africa has been under tremendous pressure and lambasted for taking a position that is independent from the Western

Narrative. Ours has been a position of non – alignment ( as opposed to neutrality). This position we have taken of non-alignment is inline without own national interests and foreign policy priorities . Thus, while we have recognised and condemned the violation of international law and the principle of sovereignty by Russia in the Ukraine our response has been premised on the principles of Pan Africanism , Respect for International Law , Human Rights and a rules-based system. And equally important the peaceful resolution of conflict through negotiations led by our institutions of global governance such as the UN. Our policy position is not only consistent with our post democratic foreign policy approach it is also in line with the spirit of constitution as it relates to our foreign policy . Our non-aligned position which was also informed by not only the action of invasion and the war that has subsequently followed but by the root causes of the war. In this regard we must this war as another deposit of the new cold war that is emerging between the current hegemonic power of the US which is now being challenged by the likes of China and Russia.

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## 5. Conclusion

Today as we celebrate Africa Day , we must be proud of what we have achieved, and we must not bow to the pressures of the inconsistent megaphone politics of the opposition parties and the West. Now is also the time for us to consider revitalising the Non-Aligned Movement in order that we as Africa and the broader developing world can begin to take up our own independent positions which is not aligned wholesomely to the US and the rest of the West nor to the other emerging powers which are challenging the current US hegemony such as China and Russia amongst others. If we want to achieve a prosperous Africa where every african child , mother and all citizens are healthy we need an Africa that is stable , and peaceful. We cannot have the prosperity we seek and the political and economic development we need as long as there is conflict on our continent, whether this conflict is local and /

regional and / whether this conflict becomes part of a broader future cold war proxy conflict.

Let me conclude with the wise words of one of founding fathers Kwame Nkrumah.

In a speech he delivered in 1963 called Africa Must Unite he said

*“ the forces that unite us are intrinsic and greater than the super imposed influences that keep us apart”.*

I thank you