

## **Africa needs leaders who are on the right side of history**

By **Mlindi Nhanha MP** – DA Member of the NCOP

We are gathered here today to observe Africa Day, a day where the essence should really be to celebrate individual nations and collective achievements as a continent. But more so, Africa Day was created by the Organization of African Unity, the predecessor to the African Union, in order for this body and the continent to celebrate victories against colonialism and apartheid.

Today, elsewhere on the continent the African Development Bank is holding its annual meeting of member states to tackle modern difficulties such as poverty, civil strife, corruption, illicit cash outflows, tax evasion, and the negative impacts of climate change and the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Since its inception in 1963, the OAU saw it fit to that on this day all Africans, regardless of race, religion, colour or creed converge in unison to proclaim, *“Free at last from the bondage of colonialism and apartheid”*.

Previously, the OAU was clear in its mind that Africa can never be totally free until South Africa was free and a democratic government was chosen based on an election by the will of the majority.

Following protracted and delicate negotiations, finally on the 27 April 1994 a democratic breakthrough was achieved and the people of South Africa came out in droves to elect a government of their choice. This event alone raised hopes and aspirations of South Africans of a better future for all of us. One key advantage for South Africa having been the last country in Africa to attain its freedom was we had an opportunity to observe and learn from the mistakes of our counterparts who had been liberated in earlier years.

Indeed, our country in the earlier years of our young democracy was a shining light and the epitome of a democratic state envied by onlookers from around the world. Needless to mention, it became apparent we fast took a wrong turn and followed in the path of all other failed states on the continent. What concerns me though; we took the turn, some of us rung alarm bells but were obviously shut down.

We are now on a downward spiral and nobody seems to remember where did we go wrong, or we are conveniently forgetting the enablers of former President Jacob Zuma's reign.

Today, Africa lives on handouts and grants from the wealthier nations. Today, Africa is at the mercy of its former colonial masters. Today, Africa is ravaged by civil wars and coups. Today, Africa is an embodiment of corrupt and failing states.

Honourable members, Africa is not short of fuel and gas, Africa is not short of mineral resources, Africa is not short of land, and we are most certainly not short of human capital and intellectual capacity. Africa has a short supply of trustworthy, ethical and beyond reproach leaders. Africa lacks leaders who put the interests of those who elected them before their own and those of their comrades and cadres. Africa is in short supply of leaders who never vacillate on matters of principle, leaders who have the courage to stand up for the truth no matter how politically incorrect it is.

Until we get ourselves this crop of leaders in power, I am afraid a dream of *“building an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa”* will remain deferred.

I wish to commend the African Presidents and Head of States who chose to be on the right side of history, who chose humanity over distraction, who chose democracy over dictatorship, who had the courage of their convictions by voting in the UN against the unlawful invasion of Ukraine by Vladimir Putin and siding with Russia.

Finally, I wish to congratulate the Federal Leader of the DA and leader of the official opposition in parliament, honourable Steenhuisen for showing bravery and courage of his convictions by visiting Ukraine to see the destruction for himself. It is so sad that three months into this war the African Union will be sending an envoy.

Africans we are on our own, it's us who can truly liberate ourselves from the despots and corrupt leaders on our continent.

I thank you.