

Africa Day Speech

Speech by Emma Louise Powell MP

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Africa's future lies in the hands of those at the ballot box

Chairperson, the African Union's Agenda 2063 envisions a continent in which there is a universal culture of good governance, democratic values, and respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law.

Yet, 60 years on from the establishment of the Organization of African Unity, much of Africa still remains desperately poor, undemocratic and besieged by conflict.

Despite the brilliant creativity, resilience and shared humanity of the African people, year by year, the exquisite dream of a democratic, prosperous and economically competitive continent recedes.

Chairperson, today, as the world celebrates Africa Day, opposition leaders are detained in Algeria; the LGBTQI community fear for their lives in Uganda; girl children are kidnapped by violent extremists in Cameroon; and sexual violence against women in Sudan intensifies as vicious warlords continue to diminish any fragile prospects for lasting peace in the region.

In the face of these atrocities - that are actively perpetuated without sanction or consequence by the brotherhood of African leaders - it becomes increasingly intellectually dishonest to continue to chalk up Africa's continued underdevelopment as a continent to the legacy of colonialism.

As Beijing continues to execute its policy of neo-colonialism across Africa, supplying billions of dollars in infrastructure loans and investment in order to extract raw minerals from our fertile soils, many African nations now face the very real risk of defaulting on their mountainous debts.

The dog whistle of Western imperialism becomes hackneyed and tiresome in the face of the failure of present-day African leaders to hold to account dictators and warlords who actively perpetuate the cycle of comparative under-development.

Chairperson, 30 years ago, the world looked to South Africa as a shining beacon of hope on the African Continent.

Sadly, under the leadership of the ANC, the powerful, strategic geopolitical role that our Country should have played in the regions path to prosperity has been punctuated by little other than rhetoric and hypocrisy.

As Africa continues to weather the devastating impact of rising food and energy costs generated by Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine, the dream of a unified, peaceful and prosperous continent continues to stagnate.

If the ANC was genuinely worried about Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine contributing to rising food costs in Africa, they would acknowledge the significant risks that the ANC's dalliance with the Kremlin poses to the sustainability of South Africa's largest trade partnerships, which ultimately feed our people.

Instead, the ANC have consistently snubbed Ukraine whilst cosyng up to the Kremlin, and in doing so, have put billions of rands worth of trade with democracies who actually practice consequence management on the line. This despite Russia accounting for roughly 0.3% of South Africa's trade ties.

The ANC's failure to develop and implement a meaningful Africa-centric foreign policy agenda on the Continent is not only a missed opportunity, but a grave disappointment to all who once held our country in such high esteem.

Honourable Members, Africa has so much to offer the world and we can still navigate our way to prosperity. If the citizens of our nation and our continent come together to usher in change at the ballot box, Africa will one day rise and take its rightful place as a leader on the worlds stage.