

Lack of political will standing in the way of economic equality in Africa

Speech by Mergan Chetty MP, DA Shadow Deputy Minister of International Relations and Cooperation

Madam Speaker, since the inception of the Organisation of the African Union in 1963, and its proclamation “Free at last from the bondage of colonialism and Apartheid”, yes, we are free, and blessings to those struggle heroes and heroines who paid for this freedom, that many take for granted, with their lives and livelihoods. Our very own Tata Nelson Mandela, must rank high as one of those, but, are we truly free.

With the continuous scandals involving one or another African leader breaking out on social media, our very own, former president Jacob ‘Nkandla’ Zuma and current lame duck, president Cyril ‘flip-flop’ Ramaphosa, amongst those, one cannot be faulted for believing that the emancipation and economic advancement has benefited a few power hungry African leaders and not the majority of the African people on the African continent. Our people are still starving in Africa. We have failed to ensure that the African child, 60 years later, is on an equal footing to their American, European or Asian counterparts.

The wealth of Africa is in the hands of those few who are closely connected to the political elite, while the people of Africa are still chained to poverty, unemployment and are homeless. If those visionaries that pioneered the AOU, had to see how those leaders in power, have lost their moral compass and ideologies, blinded by self-enrichment and greed, at the expense of a more prosperous life for the African people.

We as South Africa must not shy away from our share of responsibility in failing to fast tracking the emancipation and economic integration of the African people, as we had the fortune, or misfortune of having 3 of our leaders, former President Thabo Mbeki, Minister Nkosazane Dlamini ‘Zol’ Zuma and Current President Cyril RamaPhalaPhala, all who must accept that the lack of political will and that governments unlikeliness to pursue as identified integration with much seriousness if they do not benefit from the integration, is another reasons for the failure for the successful implementation and delivery of the Agenda set by the visionaries of the AOU in 1963.

The African Continental Free Trade Area, which was conceptualised in 2012, to enhance trade integration on the continent, only came into force in May 2019, displaying the lack of urgency to advance Intra Africa Trade, by

Let’s not forget about the wars and civil unrests that are currently raging, and the economic impact that Putin’s Russia on Ukraine has on the African continent, the fleeing of innocent families from Sudan, the continuous conflict of Israel and Palestine. Where has the decisiveness in making decisions for the right reasons vanished? Where are those African leaders who used to lead the African continent with the courage of their convictions for the benefit of the African people, and not themselves?

Yes the AU can claim that it has achieved some success in the past 60 years, but tragically the agenda set out by our visionary leaders of 1963, has not been fulfilled. Sadly, agenda 2063

will be a bridge too far for our current leaders, who are punch drunk with their own perceived power rather than the plight of the African people.

The vision of leaders such as Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah, amongst others, in 1963, who advocated for 'full continental integration as a must to ensure Africa be taken seriously, internationally', must be turning in their graves, that 60 years later, their vision hasn't achieved their expectations.

Thank you.