

Trade between African states key to economic integration

Speech by Richard Majola DA Member of Parliament

House Chairperson.

It is truly an extraordinary honour for me to take part on this debate. One of the founding principles of the Organisation of African Unity OAU, the predecessor to the African Union (AU), was to achieve political independence, self-determination and to ensure the sovereignty of OAU Member states.

While the majority of the African people have obtained political emancipation, the political freedom of the African people will never be complete for as long as they continue being denied the right to self-determination, which is a flagrant violation of AU principles and the organisation cannot afford to look away. The AU must get involved in ensuring that there is amicable solution between the Kingdom of Morocco and Western Sahara. The two sister countries must be able to co-exist and respect each other's territory.

While we have reasons to celebrate the political freedom of the African people despite some continuous challenges, that I made reference to above, I am worried about the growing incidents of unconstitutional changes in government. We have seen it in Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and now Sudan. We are equally worried about the rise of extremism and terrorism in Africa, especially in East Africa and West Africa. Without taking decisive action against this unacceptable growing trend, our political freedoms will continue to regress and that will threaten peace and security on the African continent. I therefore implore the AU to take a stand and act against individuals and militia groups that are fomenting this instability.

Economic integration

House Chairperson,

Agenda 2063 holds many promises for the integration and economic development of the continent. Still, it is not by any stretch of imagination the first of its kind in the continent. There has been other notable economic agendas established by the AU such as the Lagos Plan of Action and the Abuja Treaty. Both these developmental plans failed to yield desired results and it is important that I underscore why those policies failed.

Both the Lagos Plan of Action and the Abuja Treaty embraced the same principles and goals manifested in this agenda 2063 with particular reference to industrialization, trade and investment, economic and social development.

These economic integration blueprints fell short of their objectives due to the absence of a full engagement with African Legislative institutions, whose primary responsibility involves national budgeting allocations and priorities. That was not done and I am afraid the African Union has not learnt the lesson from those failures. Strangely, they have failed to exploit the unique opportunity available to them through the Pan African Parliament (PAP).

One of the primary objectives of PAP is to facilitate the effective implementation of policies and objectives of the AU. This objective is also reflected in the functions of PAP, consistent

with Rule 4 of PAP's rules of the procedure where it provides that PAP shall facilitate the implementation of the policies, objectives and programmes of the Union and oversee their effective implementation by the various organs of the Union.

We are now at a defining moment in the AU's Agenda 2063 as we begin to evaluate the first ten-year implementation plan of the agenda and to determine if the set goals, priority areas and targets that the continent aims to achieve at national, regional and continental levels have been realized.

While we note the above mentioned challenges on economic integration, we still have long way to go in ensuring full economic integration.

For instance, we trade more with the outside world than amongst ourselves as African States, and in the process, we pay exorbitant tariffs. Look at the issues of oil for instance – Nigeria, Ghana and Libya have oil, including many other African countries who are blessed with oil and gas, but we continue to buy oil from other countries outside the continent. Why can't we trade more amongst ourselves as African States? Without taking practical steps to ensure economic integration, our aspirations for economic prosperity for our people will remain a pipe dream.

I Thank You.