

Africa Day Speech

Speech by Thamsanqa Mabhena MP

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Poor leadership is stunting Africa's growth

AFRICAN UNITY

Chairperson,

The African Union (AU), as we know it today, is a by-product of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), formed on this day in May 1963 by African visionaries and intellectual giants of this continent.

These leaders were selfless, driven by the greatest urge to pursue a common vision: to unite and achieve total independence for all African states. It was a call answered, pioneered, and championed by great African statesmen whom our continent has produced. His Excellencies Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia, and Sekou Toure of Guinea are but some of the many counted and credited with nurturing this vision.

The concept and objective of uniting this great continent must continue to inspire all of us to contribute tirelessly to its realization, as articulated in Article 2, Section 1 of the OAU Charter:

- (a) To promote the unity and solidarity of the African States;
- (b) To coordinate and intensify their cooperation and efforts to achieve a better life for the peoples of Africa.

PEACE

Chairperson,

Certain pockets of our continent are beset by permanent conflict and political instability. We are witnessing the failure of diplomatic efforts, the established method of influencing one another through dialogue, negotiation, compromise, and other measures to avoid war and violence. These efforts have been circumvented by the self-interest of dictators and extremists alike, driven by greed and an uncontrollable desire to seize political power and, as a consequence, economic power for self-gratification and wealth accumulation.

The ongoing active war zones and the displacement of the people in Sudan remain sore points, and we call for a peaceful resolution to the conflict. These active war zones are characterized by human rights violations, which further contribute to an already fully-fledged global immigration crisis.

PROSPERITY AND DEVELOPMENT

Chairperson,

Dr. Alexander Darku, an Associate Professor of economics at the University of Lethbridge in Canada, makes the following observation: that the inability of Africa to collapse the fragmentation of various regional economic lobby groupings such as Economic Community of West African States ¹(ECOWAS), South African Development Community ²(SADC), Common market for Eastern and Southern Africa ³(COMESA), and Economic Community of Central African States ⁴(ECCAS) under a single free trade agreement perhaps is a worrying signal and a starting point to analyse the dearth of African diplomacy.

In the main, these fragmented groupings point to the lack of diplomatic headway to aid the economic situation of our continent. The African continent's approach to the global market, is that of working in silos and failure to leverage, a unity of purpose, which may have a much positive yield in terms of trade agreements with the international community for the benefit of these African nation states.

Yet the African continent is unable to find each other in as far as economic policy is concerned. Diplomatic envoys, have also failed to produce a unified trade policy (namely: *the African free trade agreement*). African nation states don't trade among each other. Our trade ratios are shockingly low.

Africa has the lowest intra-regional trade among its nation states as compared to the rest of the world, yet Africa is blessed with natural deposits. However, Africa accounts for a meagre collective Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of just \$3.4 trillion which translates to about 3% of global trade. These, are the consequences of fragmented African trade programmes.

Chairperson,

In conclusion, the late Archbishop Desmond Tutu warned the ANC government and said "WATCH OUT", and you failed to heed his call. The ***African Growth Opportunity Act (AGOA)*** is a R60 billion annual trade in exports to the USA from our country. Yet, the ANC government is willing and acting decisively to jeopardise this favourable export regime. With our economy already struggling, and crippled with an ANC manufactured energy crisis, we cannot afford another ANC mess.

Your cosiness to the Russian regime, is unfortunately at the expense of our economy and is threatening livelihoods of South Africans. Again, dare I say, "WATCH OUT" ANC.

I thank you.