

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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Africa Day: The African Union and its Member States Commemorate the 60th Anniversary of the OAU-AU



African Union Commission (AUC) today 25th May 2023, at its Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia celebrated the 60th anniversary of the Organization of the African Unity (OAU) and the subsequent formation of the African Union (AU). The Africa Day which is being observed by all Africans in the continent and the Diaspora, was an opportunity for the AU to pay tribute to the Founding Fathers and Mothers of the OAU/AU for the huge strides they made to achieve sovereignty across the African continent, as well as the decision adopted by African Heads of State and Government to transition from the OAU to the AU, as issued in the Sirte Declaration in Libya in 1999 which called for the establishment of an African Union, with the aim of accelerating the process of continental integration among others.

The commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the OAU-AU is a milestone that vividly portrays the continent's commitment to solidarity, peace, security, and economic integration. Worth recalling that, the OAU was established on 25 May 1963 in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa, to promote unity and solidarity between African states and to contribute to the economic, social, and political development of the continent, among others. 60 years on, it has been notable in its role of fostering collective action, with the enshrining of common values and the collaboration between African nations.

The celebrations at the AU headquarters took place in the presence of H.E. Dr. Abiy Ahmed, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, H.E Azali Assoumani, President of the Union of Comoros and Chairperson of the African Union H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the AUC, H.E Dr. Monique Nsanzabaganwa, Deputy Chairperson of the AUC, H.E. Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, former Chairperson of the AU Commission, AU Commissioners, Members of the Permanent Representative Committee, AUC staff and their families, Representatives from AU Organs and RECs, the media and invited guests.

In his welcoming remarks, H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the AU Commission, said May 25, is a very important day in the history of Africa as it honours the vision and pan-Africanism of the Founding Members of the OAU-AU which laid the groundwork for the African renaissance and its socio economic and political development.

The AUC Chairperson noted that “we have good reasons during this celebration of the 60th anniversary of the OAU to meditate and communion in solidarity with our brothers and sisters who have been forced to internal displacement or exile due to different conflicts in the continent” .

The AUC Chairperson however recalled that, during the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the OAU in 2013, “our leaders, by adopting Agenda 2063, insisted on the ambitious project of "Silencing the guns by 2020" with the hope not to leave future generations the burden of war and insecurity”...as our leaders want to see a united Africa, at peace with itself and playing a dynamic role in the world arena.

Chairperson Faki further underlined that, “despite the difficulties of all kinds, Africa remains characterized by its great capacity for resilience. It was able, despite alarmist forecasts at the time, to hold firm in the face of the COVID 19 pandemic. Better still, Africa seized the opportunity of this misfortune to rethink its health strategy in concerted action by our heads of state and government. Proof that if Africa wants, it can, whatever the nature and type of adversity it may have to face...Africa must unite, said Kwame Nkrumah”.

“On this solemn day, the celebration which takes us back to the spirit of the founding fathers of the OAU, I would like to amplify their voices which continue to resound from beyond the grave, by issuing a vibrant appeal to all of us, African men and

women, of the continent and of the diaspora, so that the strength of our unity and our long-awaited and expected solidarity now operate as indispensable levers for our power and emancipation...Let's rely on ourselves first. The solidarity of our friends and partners will come in addition...Long live Africa, long live friendship between peoples!" concluded the AUC Chairperson. (See complete speech of AUC Chairperson on the AU website: www.au.int)

Speaking during the event, Dr. Abiy Ahmed, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia said "Sixty years ago on this very date, Addis Ababa did host a historic event that would shape the course of our continent, as 32 Heads of state and Government of independent African Nations converged in our capital to sign the Charter that would create the Organization of African Unity".

The Prime Minister underlined that the continent with its 55 African Union members are very strong and is fast becoming a critical voice in the global arena, " we have come a long way in promoting and defending an African common position on issues of interest to our continent and our people, yet much remains to be done, in realizing the aspirations of our forefathers as stipulated in the founding charter and that of our Agenda 2063" he added . (See complete speech of PM Abiy on the AU website: www.au.int)

H.E Azali Assoumani, President of the Union of Comoros and Chairperson of the African Union on his part said " Let us be proud of the achievements of the past six decades of our Organization, while continuing to chart, with lucidity and pragmatism, the path of our future". Between 1963 and 2002, the Organization of African Unity succeeded in achieving two major objectives in a particular historical context, by getting rid of the colonization of Africa and the end of apartheid in South Africa", the President Added.

President Azali emphasized the need to pursue together the ambitions for unity, peace and development to succeed in creating the conditions for the free movement of goods and people in the continental space, through the establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). "Let us ratify the Agreement, for those who are still hesitating, in order to make this ambition a reality, and give our continent a chance, to experience sustainable economic growth and to nourish the hope of becoming one of the largest markets in the world, in the years to come", urged the President. (See complete speech of the Chair of the AU, President Azali Assoumani, on the AU website: www.au.int)

Other events which took place during the celebrations included Honouring the OAU founders Fathers, Planting trees to mark the 60th Anniversary, Exhibitions , various games and activities for children and Cultural evening.

Background

In May 1963, 32 Heads of independent African States met in Addis Ababa Ethiopia to sign the Charter creating Africa's first post-independence continental institution with the main objectives to rid the continent of the remaining vestiges of colonisation and apartheid; to promote unity and solidarity amongst African States; to coordinate and intensify cooperation for development; to safeguard the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Member States and to promote international cooperation. Among others.

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