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**WELCOME REMARKS BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES, HONOURABLE N. A. MASONDO, ON THE OCCASION OF PARLIAMENT’S AFRICA DAY LECTURE HELD UNDER THE THEME: “FROM PANDEMICS TO ENDEMICS: BUILDING AN INTEGRATED, PROSPEROUS AND PEACEFUL AFRICA BEYOND THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC”**

**VENUE:** VIRTUAL    **DATE:** 25 MAY 2022    **TIME:** 12H00

Programme Director

Deputy Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces, Honourable Sylvia Lucas

Our Keynote Speaker, the CEO of the African Peer Review Mechanism, Professor Eddy Maloka

Honourable Members of Parliament, National Executive and Provincial Legislatures

Representatives of the South Africa Local Government Association

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and gentlemen

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Programme Director, Africa Day is a day on which the continent of Africa commemorates the founding of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), in 1963, which is now known as the African Union (AU).

In his book titled *Africa Must Unite*, President Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana – which was known earlier as the Gold Coast and became the first nation in sub-Saharan Africa to gain independence from colonial rule - had this to say about African unity:

*”There are those who maintain that Africa cannot unite because we lack the three necessary ingredients for unity, a common race, culture and language. It is true that we have for centuries been divided. The territorial boundaries dividing us were fixed long time ago, often quite arbitrarily, by the colonial powers. Some of us are Moslems, some Christians; many believe in traditional, tribal gods. Some of us speak French, some English, some Portuguese, not to mention millions who speak only one of the hundreds of different African languages. We have acquired cultural differences which affect our outlook and condition our political development.*

*All this is inevitable, due to our historical background. Yet in spite of this I am convinced that the forces making for unity far outweigh those which divide us.”*

The establishment of the OAU in 1963 marked the beginning of a long pursuit for the unity of the continent and for the political and economic emancipation of its people, as well as co-operation among them. The Pan African movement sought to restore the dignity of Africans, against slavery, colonialism and all forms of racism and racial exploitation.

In 1996, on the occasion of the adoption of the South African Constitution, the last African country to be freed, then Deputy President Thabo Mbeki, corroborated Nkrumah's sentiments about African unity, when he said that he owes his being to the hills and the valleys, the mountains and the glades, the rivers, the deserts, the trees, the flowers, the seas, and the ever-changing seasons that define the face of our native land.

Mbeki went on to speak about:

- 1) the use of race and colour to enrich some and impoverish others;
- 2) the corruption of minds and souls in the pursuit of an ignoble effort to perpetrate a veritable crime against humanity; and
- 3) the concrete expression of the denial of the dignity of a human being emanating from the conscious, systemic and systematic oppressive and repressive activities of other human beings.

## **2. ON THE LAUNCH OF THE AFRICAN UNION AND AGENDA 2063**

It was in 2002 that the African leaders decided to launch the AU in order to build on the work of the OAU. This followed the realisation that it was now

important to work for increased co-operation and integration of African states to drive Africa's growth and economic development. One of the concrete expressions of this vision was the adoption of Agenda 2063, on the occasion of celebrating the OAU/AU Golden Jubilee in 2013.

Programme Director, Agenda 2063 is a strategic long term planning instrument for the development of Africa. It is a concrete manifestation of the Pan-African drive for unity, self-determination, freedom, progress and collective prosperity. Its goals and priorities include:

- 1) A high standard of living, quality of life and well-being for all citizens;
- 2) Well educated citizens and skills revolution;
- 3) Transformed economies;
- 4) World-class infrastructure that crisscrosses Africa;
- 5) Preservation of peace, security and stability; and
- 6) Healthy well-nourished citizens.

Unfortunately, the Covid-19 pandemic has crippled the continent's resolve to focus on these priority areas as resources had to be diverted to stem the tide of the pandemic. As if this was not enough, as we speak, the effects of climate change continue to batter our countries, further exposing our people to hunger and suffering. In particular, the Covid-19 pandemic has greatly exposed the economic vulnerability of African countries, as well as the weaknesses of the health and food systems.

In recognition of this reality, the AU has declared 2022 as *The Year of Nutrition*, ostensibly to strengthen social protection systems and safeguard access to food and nutrition for the most vulnerable people. And it is for this reason, Programme Director, that we must appreciate the subject of today's Africa Day lecture, which is *From Pandemics to Endemics: Building an Integrated, Prosperous and Peaceful Africa Beyond the Covid-19 Pandemic*. This theme, which will be carried over in a debate in the National Council of Provinces this afternoon, entrenches the Pan African vision that is anchored on integration, prosperity and peace.

Programme Director, one of the organs of the AU, the Pan-African Parliament, seeks to ensure the full participation of African peoples in the development and economic integration of the continent. Our forebears had sought to use the pan African movement as a vehicle to empower citizens to take part in shaping the continent's developmental trajectory. Without development that is embedded in community interventions, Africa will not see the integration, prosperity and peace she is yearning for.

### **3. ON THE NEED TO STRENGTHEN INTERVENTIONS SUCH AS THE AFRICA CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA**

Africa and its development remain the central objective of South Africa's international perspective and policy. As such, we must work hard to strengthen the interventions such as the Africa Continental Free Trade Area, which seeks an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa that is driven by its own citizens. Accordingly, we need to create a conducive

environment for the implementation of the Continental Free Trade Area. As part of that, we must, amongst other things, fight the exploitation and abuse of foreign migration into South Africa by Afrophobic, right wing organisations and tendencies, which leads to, amongst others, the strained relations among Africans.

Of course the country must deal with illegal immigration in a decisive manner, especially given its impact on schools, health facilities, housing, water and sanitation, electricity, and business infrastructure.

#### **4. ON DEALING WITH CONFLICTS**

Building an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa also requires that we deal with sources of conflict in the continent, such as in Ethiopia, the insurgency in Cabo Delgado province in Mozambique, and the return of coups, as seen recently in Burkina Faso, Mali which has seen two military coups since 2020, and Guinea.

Underscoring the need to work for peace and stability to facilitate development in the continent, researchers<sup>1</sup> have put the number of coups and attempted coups in Africa from the various times of independence of its countries at over 200. They say that there was a coup attempt every 55 days in the 1960s and 1970s, and that over 90 per cent of African states had a coup experience.

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<sup>1</sup> *Why West Africa has had so many coups and how to prevent more*, an article published in *The Conversation* of 15 February 2022. <https://theconversation.com/why-west-africa-has-had-so-many-coups-and-how-to-prevent-more-176577> [Accessed 22 May 2022]

## **5. CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, as we recall the pioneers of African unity, among them President Kwame Nkrumah who argued that the forces for unity far outweighed those which divide us, we will well to remember that the future of our native land is in our hands. We carry the responsibility to navigate disasters and setbacks, so that future generations could inherit a continent that represents a dynamic force in the global arena. To achieve this goal will require that beyond the Covid-19 pandemic, and in the midst of other new and recurring disasters, we must continue to address the many impediments in our pursuit of a better Africa.

Programme Director, please allow me to welcome the presenters and all the participants to this Africa Day Lecture and I do really appreciate the opportunity to make these remarks.

Thank you.