

**Speech by**  
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**Republic of Kenya**  
**‘African Achievements and Challenges:**  
**Learning from the Past but Looking Forward’**

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## **Ladies and Gentlemen:**

I am delighted to be here at this important gathering and I would like to thank the organisers for inviting me.

As you can imagine, Africa's development is something very close to my heart.

I am an Afro-optimist and a committed pan-Africanist. I have felt Africa's birth and growing pains.

I have mourned Africa's betrayal and its forced under-performance.

But I have also celebrated Africa's moments of triumph and Africa's emergence. I continue to have faith in the future of my continent, and I fully associate with the current wave of international optimism concerning Africa's future.

Africa has come a long way in the past half-century. Fifty years ago, African visionaries such as Kwame Nkrumah, Haile Selassie, Julius Nyerere, Abdel Nasser, Leopold Senghor and Sekou Toure envisaged a united, prosperous and peaceful Africa spearheaded by the Organization of African Unity, the OAU, which was established in 1963.

The OAU set itself three objectives: the decolonization of Africa, the ending of apartheid in South Africa, and the promotion of peace and security throughout the continent.

We have successfully realized the first two of these objectives. Our founding fathers, with the OAU as one of their instruments, succeeded in placing the African liberation agenda at the center of post-World War II global politics.

The OAU inspired many people in Africa to fight for independence and accelerated Africa's wind of change. South Africa finally became free.

However, realization of the third objective, universal peace and security on the continent, has remained a challenge.



## **Ladies and Gentlemen:**

The OAU has come a long way from its beginnings on a liberation platform, through its middle years as a regional integration agency to its present function and mandate under its newer name, the African Union.

Its history and geo-political context have defined the dynamism of both its mandate and mission, which it received in the context of a bipolar global environment. The Cold War played a large part in defining the role the OAU would play in decolonization and in protecting the sovereignty of newly independent African states.

There were a number of challenges – chief among them that the OAU lacked the diplomatic and military capacity to deal with Cold War-generated and intra-African conflicts.

It was faced with carving out for itself a respectable and strategically effective niche within the increasingly assertive non-aligned movement.

It also had to grapple with the well-orchestrated undermining of Africa's progressive leadership by Cold Warriors and conservative Western establishments.

This determined the fates of Nkrumah, Ben Bella, Patrice Lumumba, Thomas Sankara and others.

In the area of development policies, the Lagos Plan of Action for the Economic Development of Africa 1980-2000 stands out

as great achievement, given its admirable attempt to provide African economies with a new and progressive development paradigm, and an escape from the neo-colonial development policy framework.

This was made possible by the progressive agenda of the UN Economic Commission for Africa, based in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Significant changes have since taken place in the global political arena: we have moved from the Cold War, through a US-dominated world order, to the ongoing shift towards multilateralism.

This made necessary a strategic rethinking of the OAU's posture and architecture.

Former presidents Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria and Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal; former Prime Minister Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia, and international civil servant Kingsley Amoako of Ghana midwifed the AU from the OAU.



They envisaged a continent defined by peace, security, economic prosperity and mutually beneficial engagement with the international community.

**Ladies and Gentlemen:**

Against this background, allow me to share my vision of what Africa could and should look like in 50 years' time.

I dream of continent that will long have consigned poverty to history.

It will have a youthful, skilled and healthy population, and will serve as a granary, factory floor and supplier to the world. It will be a continent that has made the 21<sup>st</sup> Century its own, and whose key development indicators match global standards.

I believe this vision is within our reach. But it will be realized only if there is vigorous and sustained implementation of policy and institutional reforms.

To help achieve this goal, the AU needs to be vigorous in guiding Africa to a new awakening across all indicators of human endeavor, towards a continental democratic revolution.

There must be a deliberate strategy to develop the continent's productive forces, ensuring inclusive economic growth and fostering an environment where the creative energy and synergy of Africa's peoples finds free reign.

Indeed, our development trajectory will be conditional primarily on how we Africans manage our political, economic and technological relations internally and internationally.

This must embrace all aspects of human rights – political, economic, social, environmental and ‘informational’. Better governance of mineral revenues, higher agricultural prices, the demographic dividend and rapid urbanization represent opportunities for making growth more inclusive and more effective in reducing poverty.

Key drivers in this regard include:

**One**, quality leadership and citizen involvement, leading to capability and effectiveness in development.



**Two**, the expansion of formal democracy to include skillful management of social contradictions, and the forging of social compacts to promote social inclusivity.

**Three**, assured free, fair and democratic multi-party elections. (We have yet to achieve this goal, as demonstrated in Kenya and Zimbabwe, to mention but two countries.)

**Four**, the continental will to pool sovereignty in political and economic policy – not so much to develop an African government but rather as East Asia did, in synergic osmosis.

**Five**, the development of strategic acumen to manage changing economic power balances across the continent, which might otherwise lead to unhealthy competition and even conflict.

In addition, non-state actors such as private entrepreneurs, academics, researchers and activists in the media and the arts should claim and be afforded space to support and nurture pan-African revival.

The recent move to exclude civil society actors from African Union events militates against social inclusivity.

**Ladies and Gentlemen:**

As we look forward to the next 50 years, it goes without saying that improved healthcare, physical security, quality education, food self-sufficiency and food security are priorities for Africa.

Our success in these areas will depend on developing new and creative ideas in line with technological advances. It will depend on creating wealth from our abundant natural resources, and on harnessing the human capital necessary to achieve our objectives.



Development outcomes for the coming decades will be determined by various drivers of change – global, ideological, ecological and human.

The African Development Bank has said that continued rapid population growth will result in an absolute increase in Africa's working age population to about 1.87 billion by 2060.

Our success will depend largely on the quality of the policies Africa evolves to take advantage of this vibrant young population.

This human resource will need applicable knowledge and skills to propel the continent forward.

We can therefore not gainsay the need to increase investment in education, training and research.

Looking at global forces, we see three major areas that will affect us all deeply – the changing structure of global trade; new trends in technology; and the international architecture governing trade, finance and development assistance.

Over the past decade, the acronym BRICS – Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa – has come to symbolize the growing power of the world’s largest emerging economies, and their potential impact on the global economic and, increasingly, the political order.

The economic muscle of BRICS members makes it imperative for Africa to define its relationship with this bloc now, and to place itself strategically to benefit from those countries' thirst for resources and markets for their goods and services.

How Africa leverages and harnesses its natural resources and how it sets the terms of its relationships with global partners will help determine the path of change in the continent's favor.

As far as ecological drivers of change are concerned, Africa faces three in relation to its physical environment: first, climate change; second, the continent's renewable and non-renewable natural resources; and, third, the continent's endowment of land and water, which is coming under increasing pressure.

Currently, 79 per cent of Africa's arable land remains uncultivated. Sustainable management of these resources will make a huge difference in the next five decades.



Two major human conditions that will drive change in Africa in the next 50 years are a delayed demographic transition and the burden of HIV-Aids. The often-cited ‘demographic dividend’ of Africa could turn out to be a demographic disaster without the right kinds of investment in its population.

Already, African cities are the fastest growing in the world. By 2035, Africa's labor force will be larger than China's. By 2050, more than a quarter of the world's labor force will be African. And by 2060, the continent is likely to be home to more than 15 mega-cities of more than 10 million inhabitants.

Cities are centers of innovation, and such shifts could facilitate higher growth rates – or they could mean larger and larger slums with unmanageable social tensions and conflicts, as seen recently in relation to the so-called ‘Arab Spring’.

How individual economies in Africa will fare in meeting these challenges will depend on choices made individually and collectively.

One thing that goes without saying is that Africa's development over the next 50 years must be determined by Africans, with the international community playing a supporting role in the form of improved performance on trade and investment.

## **Ladies and Gentlemen:**

As we mark our proud heritage, there are disturbing trends with the potential to harm these great granaries of opportunity for future generations.

While there were flickers of hope in Somalia, brought about by the election of a president last year and the partial defeat of Al-Shabaab, the lack of physical security in Africa is still a major risk.

In the Great Lakes Region, conflict continues, pollinated by economic interests and misunderstandings, as well as subjective emotions.

The situation in Mali and the Sahel region is another cause for great concern, as are the political problems in Guinea Bissau.

How can the AU really celebrate 50 years, when, for instance, some of our member states are sanctuaries for the narcotics trade?



How can it celebrate when women in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo live in perpetual fear of conflict and rape by armed thugs?

To effect real change, the African Union must demonstrate commitment beyond the spoken word, and genuinely work towards lifting the majority of Africans from the poverty trap.

There is no freedom in an island surrounded by a sea of poverty and ignorance. As long as this continues, political freedom faces an uncertain future.

Above all, Africa must keep at the forefront of its mind the need to pursue the interests and aspirations of Africans.

It must rebuff external efforts to divide, dominate and rule. And as I have said, how successful we shall be in the coming 50 years will depend primarily on the people of Africa themselves.

Frantz Fanon's challenge to humanity was that "each generation must, out of relative obscurity, discover its mission, fulfill it, or betray it".

Fulfilling that mission, ladies and gentlemen, must be an abiding moral precept for Africa.

Thank you.