

INAUGURAL STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY HON. UHURU KENYATTA, C.G.H., PRESIDENT AND COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE FORCES OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA DURING THE 21ST ORDINARY SESSION OF THE ASSEMBLY OF HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT OF THE AFRICAN UNION

Your Excellency Ato Hailemariam Desalegn, Chairperson of the African Union and Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia,

Colleague Heads of State and Government,

Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union,

Excellencies, First Ladies of Africa,
Invited Guests,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to be among brothers and sisters at this eminent Assembly that marks the 50th Anniversary of the launch of our premier multilateral institution of the Organization of the African Unity and precursor to the African Union.

I also wish to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, for hosting this historic celebration and commend you most sincerely for the able manner in which you steered the watershed and memorable celebrations yesterday. I am sure that each and every one of us will return home with cherished memories of the event.

I feel honoured that my first AU Summit is this defining Assembly that seeks to set the stage for the re-birth of Africa, as espoused by the theme of our Summit: Pan Africanism and African renaissance.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Government and people of Kenya, allow me to extend our deepest gratitude to Africa in its entirety for the honour you all bestowed upon me and the people of Kenya by attending my swearing-in ceremony on 9th April, 2013 in Nairobi. I also

acknowledge the many messages of goodwill that I received after my election as President of the Republic of Kenya, and remain humbled by the strong expression of support.

The solidarity of Africa with us was also embodied in the AU Observer mission led by H.E. President Joaquim Chissano and the visits by Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma before and after the elections. Undoubtedly, Kenya's victory was an African triumph. For us in Kenya, the journey to that historic election is one of a rebirth of our nation.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Just a little over 5 years ago, my predecessor, President Mwai Kibaki, stood before this Assembly at a time of unprecedented political crisis in our country. He described to you the unfortunate events that had followed the disputed election outcome. He urged this Union, in the spirit of African solidarity, to lend its voice and support to the efforts to bring about calm and national reconciliation to our country, Kenya. Africa heeded, engaged us in our search for a political solution to the crisis and like true brothers and sisters, stayed the course with us until a solution was found. It is this same spirit of unity that bound our forefathers in their quest for independence, and it is the same spirit that must guide us in the next 50 years in our search for a peaceful, stable, secure and prosperous Africa. Our gratitude to this Assembly and the entire continent of Africa for standing with us during that dark period of our history knows no bounds.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Assembly will recall that in discussing the Kenyan crisis on the 1st of February 2008, you urged critical reflection on the emergent trend that saw elections become a trigger for violence and crisis on the continent. I believe that, that decision was as relevant then as it is today.

Competitive electoral politics pose challenges that call for focused reflection and dialogue on how to manage diversity and outcomes of elections in order not to plunge our nascent democracies into crisis. It is my hope that we can use the opportunity of our Anniversary year to organize this reflection. Kenya pledges its readiness to host such a

dialogue.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

During that same Summit, President Kibaki made a promise to guide Kenyans towards restoring their dignity as a people and a nation. Today, I can confirm that we have kept that promise faithfully. We have, in a period of five years, reformed our entire society.

We have adopted a new constitution, undertaken far-reaching reforms in the judiciary, vetting our judges in public under the watch of more than 40 million Kenyans and beyond, expanded the freedoms of all Kenyans, put in place a new electoral machinery, a devolved system of governance that ensures equity for all, a reformed Public Service, security sector, and many others.

In short, as espoused by the theme of our Summit, Pan-Africanism has sparked a Kenyan renaissance. Even more importantly, we have tested this renewal. Our electoral body has organized and run elections repeatedly. On the 4th March 2013, it executed one of the most complex elections, six in a day, achieving a feat applauded across the world, and of which we are proud.

Our reformed judiciary enjoys public confidence and became a beacon for the country when, following an election dispute of a similar nature to that of 2007/2008, it processed the petition expeditiously and delivered a judgment that enabled us to move forward as a Nation. These are but a few highlights, we have achieved much more within a very short period of time, and this is because the process of reform was organic and driven by Kenyans. Our experience validates the value of African solutions to African problems.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

This 50th Anniversary Summit is of great significance for Kenya. The coincidence of 1963, when we gained independence has come upon us again. As Africa celebrates its jubilee so does Kenya and we do so with a renewed sense of hope. We are a Kenya that is in renaissance, a Kenya that has closed a door to a regrettable past, but also a Kenya that has generated invaluable lessons, which we stand ready to share with our brothers and sisters across the continent, as part of our

shared values and common destiny. This does not mean we have resolved all our problems as challenges still remain as they do for all of us. But the spirit of hope that this Assembly rekindled in us five years ago remains a beacon that the remaining challenges are also surmountable.

At a personal level, this day is of particular significance. 50 years ago, my father, Mzee Jomo Kenyatta, spurred by Pan-African ideals, led Kenya into independence. Under his tutelage, I schooled on Pan-Africanism, African values and the imperative to realize the full potential of the African person and continent. For me, therefore, the imperative of the African renaissance is a call to duty. In this regard, I reaffirm the commitment I made during my inauguration on 9th April 2013, to promote the African agenda at a national, continental and global level, and to enhance Kenya's participation in the African Union.

I stand ready and willing to work with each and every one of you towards achieving our collective objectives and to propel this continent to greater heights. To this end, I wish once again to reaffirm, that my region and by extension, this great continent will be the cornerstone of Kenya's foreign policy.

Excellencies,

The celebration of the Golden Jubilee of this Union offers us an opportune moment to reflect on the journey travelled thus far. But it also provides an opportunity to use lessons learnt to ground our aspirations for the future. I urge us to be candid and bold in our reflections and generate outcomes that answer to the imperative of this watershed moment.

I believe strongly that there are no limits to what our continent can achieve. Building on the current growth momentum and transformation that many spoke about in the last two days, I envisage a continent that will be a world leader in economic development, social progress and political enlightenment, where our economies are intertwined by an infrastructure that seamlessly connect our countries to one another, with Africans visiting, living and working anywhere on the continent.

I also envision a conflict-free Africa where our people live in productive

societies, competing in their contributions to further development and greater good of the continent. We must rekindle the spirit of Pan-Africanism that propelled us during the birth of independent Africa. We must inspire our people, to once again take their destiny in their own hands, to cultivate faith and confidence in the ability of Africa to address her problems and craft appropriate solutions to deal with them. We must deliver on an Africa at peace with itself, driven by its people, an Africa that is prosperous, but that shapes its own destiny and determines its international relations in a humane, just and equitable manner.

To do this, each one of us must avail the requisite resources, financial and otherwise to the African Union Commission to guarantee African ownership of our destiny. We must enable our secretariat to maintain the agenda as defined through our collective will and succeed in its endeavours to implement programmes that promote peace and advance development of the continent.

We also need to deploy the tremendous physical and human resources that our continent has more effectively, in order to create wealth and jobs for our people. The youthful and energetic population of our continent is an asset we must tap successfully. Just two days ago, I participated in a panel where the youth made clear their intentions that their future is now. The promise of 2063 is theirs, not ours, and they are unwilling to wait.

Let us involve them, work with them, and harness their energy to a positive end. We must invest in our youth and fulfill our obligation of removing all impediments to our citizen's self-development, to enable them to realize their aspirations. Our national resources must be utilized for the benefit of our people, benefiting today's generation while maintaining prudence to ensure we safeguard future generations. Our borders should no longer be barriers, but bridges to seamless socio-economic interactions that drive integration.

It is my conviction that an important key to this aspiration lies in accelerated integration, enhanced trade, particularly intra-Africa trade, investment and creation of a web of infrastructural networks that link the continent and facilitate these productive activities. Kenya remains keen to implement, in full, all Africa Union programs in these areas, and in particular on agriculture, regional infrastructure and the

negotiations that improve trade relations with our international partners.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we move forward, I reiterate that in Kenya, you will continue to have a partner and an ally. Kenya, as an active member of the African Union as well as a beneficiary of its activities and programs, will continue to uphold her obligations not only within the AU but internationally. I look forward to fruitful engagement with each one of you during this Summit and beyond.

In conclusion Mr. Chairman, I wish to draw on the words of Emperor Haile Sellassie at the opening session of the 1st OAU conference of 1963 and I quote, " we stand today on the stage of world affairs, before the audience of world opinion." The theme of our Summit is the yardstick against which our performance will be measured. It is my strong conviction, that in 2063 the world will look back and agree that 2013 was a watershed moment for Africa, and that it forged the rebirth of our great continent and heralded a great period of African renaissance. Let us pull together in the spirit coined by my Father, of - Harambee!

So may we cease to whisper but stand tall and speak in one collected voice of our strong and undeterred belief that the future lies within our hands. May God Bless Africa, her people and our children.

Asanteni Sana.