

Africa Celebrates 60th Anniversary of the African Union (OAU-AU)

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The phenomenon of colonialism created the Africa Day 60 years ago. And Africans always remember May 25th, a momentous occasion observed with receipt of friendly messages from across the world. While its primary continental goals include 'sustainable peace and development', and 'unity in diversity', these still remain integral challenges. Despite recognising the significance of some achievements during the past 60 years, Africa extends far beyond.

The African Union itself said in an official statement posted on its website that "celebration of the 60th anniversary is an opportunity to recognize the role and contribution of the founders of the continental organization and many other Africans on the continent and in the diaspora who have contributed greatly to the political liberation of the continent, and equally, to the socio-economic emancipation of Africa."

Further, it is an opportunity to share the information, knowledge and best practices of the past and to encourage each other to take on the vision of the African Union, as well as to drive the realization of the "Africa We Want" under Agenda 2063. It is also an opportune moment for the African Union to reflect on the spirit of pan-Africanism, which connects the past to the present and to the continent's aspirations for the future.

Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, stated clearly that the world is rapidly changing and "the shocks linked to the classic factors of fragility, such as excruciating debt service or the fall in the prices of raw materials, have been added the consequences of the intensification of the hegemonic struggle between the big powers. In this international context of confrontation of divergent geopolitical interests, the will of each side threatens to transform Africa into a geostrategic battleground, thereby, recreating a new version of the Cold War that is very detrimental to the effectiveness of multilateralism, on which global peace and security depend."

Across the world, Africa is considered as a burgeoning economic powerhouse, it holds immense potential and deserves to be acknowledged for the remarkable strides it has made. In fact, Africa's economic growth has been nothing short of remarkable. With a burgeoning middle class, expanding industries, and a rising wave of entrepreneurship, the continent is experiencing an economic transformation that cannot be ignored. Gone are the days when Africa was seen solely as a land of challenges; it is now a land of extraordinary opportunities.

According to the popular belief, Africa's vast natural resources, including oil, gas, minerals and agricultural produce, are driving global industries to invent a new future. The continent's potential for renewable energy, particularly solar and wind power, is unrivalled. As the world increasingly shifts towards sustainable solutions, Africa stands at the forefront, poised to become a leader in the clean energy revolution, even while suffering the climate consequences caused almost entirely by the so-called developed countries.

However, it would be remiss to discuss Africa's economic growth without addressing the challenges that persist. Poverty, inequality, and lack of infrastructure continue to hinder progress. It is our collective responsibility to work towards addressing these issues, ensuring that the benefits of Africa's economic growth are inclusive and sustainable.

The beauty of Africa lies not only in its economic potential but also in its vibrant and diverse cultures. From the pulsating rhythms of Afrobeat music to the captivating tales woven into African literature, the continent's cultural contributions enrich the global community. Africa's arts, fashion, and cuisine resonate across borders, fostering cultural exchange and mutual understanding.

Despite the growing hatred for the United States and Europe, the condemnation for colonial policies and blamed for under-development in Africa, the leaders have recieved congratulatory messages. Africa's "non-Western friends" such as China and Russia also sent goodwill messages.

Russian President Vladimir Putin, in his message for example, described Africa Day, a holiday that has become a symbol of the victory of the peoples of your continent over colonialism, their striving for freedom, peace and prosperity.

"This year marks the 60th anniversary of the founding of the Organization of African Unity. This representative international structure has played an important role in the development of multilateral dialogue and cooperation for several decades. Today, its good traditions are continued by the African Union, within which all states of the continent actively cooperate," he noted.

"Thanks to their joint efforts, it was possible to establish mechanisms for collective response to local crises, to launch regional integration processes in various formats. This undoubtedly contributes to the social and economic development of Africa and the enhancement of its role in international affairs," he added.

Russia has always attached particular importance to strengthening friendly relations with African partners. The holding of the first-ever Russia-Africa summit in 2019 served to intensify ties in many areas. The second Russia-Africa summit, which to be held in St. Petersburg in July, would make it possible to define new tasks for expanding our country's constructive cooperation with African partners in the political, trade, economic, scientific,

technical, humanitarian and other fields. Putin said in conclusion.

Similarly, President Xi Jinping sent a message to the African Union (AU), extending warm congratulations to African countries and the African people. In the message, he pointed out that the AU has united and led African countries to actively respond to global challenges and speed up the development of the African Continental Free Trade Area, and played an important role in mediating hotspot issues in Africa, which has boosted Africa's international status and influence.

He, however, expressed his sincere wishes that African countries and people will continue to achieve greater success on their path of development and revitalization. He emphasized that China-Africa relations maintained sound momentum of development, and China-Africa cooperation has moved ahead to be all-round, multi-tiered and high-quality, taking the lead in international cooperation with Africa.

President Xi expressed his readiness to work with leaders of African countries to further strengthen friendly cooperation between China and Africa, enhance coordination and collaboration on international and regional affairs, and work for the building of a high-level China-Africa community with a shared future.

Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres, said "We mark Africa Day at a time when cooperation and solidarity to advance the continent's future is more needed than ever." Africa's dynamism is unstoppable; its potential is breathtaking, from the vibrancy of its huge number of young people to the possibilities of free trade. The African Union has designated 2023 the year of the African Continental Free Trade Area. When fully established, the world's largest single market could lift 50 million people out of extreme poverty by 2035, driving progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063.

António Guterres looks forward to African governments continuing to seize the opportunities presented by the continent's natural, human, and entrepreneurial richness, by working to increase private investment and raise resources at home.

He urges the international community to stand with Africa. Currently, historic and economic injustices hamper its progress. Multiple crises – from COVID to climate and conflict – continue to cause great suffering across the continent. African countries are under-represented in global governance institutions, from the Security Council to the Bretton Woods System, and denied the debt relief and concessional funding they need.

António Guterres noted further that Africa deserves peace, justice and international solidarity. The continent should be represented at the highest level of the international financial system. Multilateral Development Banks should transform their business models and leverage funds to attract massive private finance at reasonable cost to developing countries. Developed countries should provide the support they have promised for action on climate change, and go further. And we must support efforts to silence the guns across the continent.

The United Nations will continue to be a proud partner in advancing peace, sustainable development and human rights for the people of Africa. With international cooperation and solidarity, this can be Africa's century.

Exactly 60 years ago, on this day in 1963, the founding of the Organization of African Unity was announced, which marked the beginning of the progressive movement of the continent along the path of political and economic integration. Today, the successor to its cause is the African Union, whose task is to develop collective approaches to the problems of maintaining peace and security, strengthening democratic processes, developing human potential, and ensuring socio-economic growth.

In the context of a multipolar geopolitical order, African leaders and the African Union should strengthen their positions regarding external partnerships. If not, the continent risks being left behind and used as a pawn in an increasingly divided global order. The African Union (AU), an organization uniting 55 African states, has to consistently place focus on its empowerment, support its status and in practical terms, to remain overwhelmingly committed to the development Agenda 2063.

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