

STATEMENT
BY
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AMBASSADOR OF THE
FEDERAL DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ETHIOPIA,
TO CHINA AND REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
CURRENT CHAIR OF THE AU
AT
THE SEMINAR ON PAN-AFRICANISM AND
AFRICAN RENSAISSANCE

24 May 2013
BEIJING

H.E. Ambassador Zhong Jianhua,
Special Representative of the Chinese Government to African Affairs,
H.E. Ambassador Martin Mpana,
Ambassador of the Republic of Camerron to China and Chair of the
Seminar Committee
Excellencies Ambassadors,
Distinguished, participants,
Distinguished Friends,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all I wish to thank you all for finding the time to participate in this historic Seminar which aims to explore the journey of Africa in the last half a century, and Africa-China partnership during this period. I also wish to express my sincere thanks to all the panelists, particularly to H.E. Ambassador Haggag, former Assistant Secretary General of the OAU who travelled long distances to join us today. I also would like to commend the Chair and members of the Committee on Seminar/Panel discussion of the African Group of Ambassadors in China for its meticulous organization of this event an integral part of the Celebration of the Golden Jubilee of the OAU/AU. I am confident that the Committee would continue to organize similar colloquiums or seminars including outside Beijing over the coming months of the year.

Excellencies,
Distinguished Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

African leaders have taken the decision to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the OAU/AU at the Ordinary Session of the Assembly in July 2012. They have also decided on the theme for the yearlong celebration which is “Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance”. Series of Seminars have continued to be conducted in Africa and beyond to expound the theme. Therefore, this Seminar is only the first in a series which will be followed by many others to come as the Celebration continues throughout the year in China. In this regard, I wish to take this opportunity to call upon the Chinese academic and research institutions ,the media, and other stakeholders to continue to partner with the African Group of Ambassadors in this important endeavour.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you may be aware, Pan-Africanism is a motto which is associated with people centered African unity and solidarity in the struggle against the many historical adversities which visited the African people. But when it is coupled together with Renaissance, it also encapsulates the aspiration of Africa for unity in diversity, prosperity and peace.

Therefore, as Africa celebrates the 50th Anniversary of the OAU/AU, the theme is carefully selected to provide an opportunity for collective reflection on the past, and for objective assessment of the present, as well as to visualize the future setting the horizon on the next fifty years.

The history of Africa, for the most part the last five centuries had been characterized by traumatic experiences ranging from the slave trade and colonialism to apartheid to the worst effects of the cold war era. It is impossible to ignore history, when discussing Pan – Africanism which was the core organizing principle for Africans at home and in the Diaspora, during the struggle against those evils. When we look back into the past history of Africa, it is not because we have wanted to live in the past. Africa is looking into the future and with a bigger picture. Marcus Garvey, an African-Jamaican, as well, an African-American hero who fought against slavery, colonialism and imperialism throughout his life, said a people without the knowledge of their past history, origin and culture is like a tree without roots.

Excellencies,
Distinguished participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The African quest for an effective institutional expression of Pan-Africanism was fulfilled when the OAU was established on May 25, 1963. This OAU was mainly tuned to spearhead the struggle against colonialism. Without any doubt it had successfully accomplished its goal of fully liberating the continent of Africa, which culminated in the demise of apartheid in 1994, in South Africa.

The successful conclusion of the struggle against colonialism, made it imperative to embark on the next phase, which is liberating the peoples of Africa from poverty and its attendant degrading features that tested the resilience and the dignity of our peoples.

It was in the light of the foregoing, that African Leaders, a little over a decade ago, had taken the decision to transform the OAU into the AU, once again utilizing Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance as a powerful instrument to mobilize the African people against poverty and underdevelopment. Today, it is a source of satisfaction to note that the AU is the premier organization and the institutional embodiment of Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance.

The AU having taken stock of the past fifty years and objectively evaluating the present, has now embarked on charting the way forward for Africa, setting its sight fifty years in the future to the year 2063. The goal remains simple and clear-creating one Africa-united, prosperous and peaceful.

Excellencies,

Distinguished participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, Africa has much to celebrate as it made significant progress in socio-economic development and in the areas of peace and security. The AU and its Member States are also capitalizing on this positive momentum through deepening of reforms to ensure sustainable development and good governance and consolidation of peace and stability.

Undoubtedly, the evidence of the past decade points to a bright future for Africa. In the last ten years the average economic growth rate of the continent continues to be more than 5%. It is projected that seven out of the ten fastest growing economies will be in Africa in the next five years.

This has been the trend for some time now, providing a solid ground for hope and optimism, that African Renaissance is beginning to happen already.

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Despite the outstanding success story, Africans also understand that the road to Renaissance is going to be an uphill struggle. In such a huge transformational undertaking, there are bound to be challenges that are sometimes daunting. They need to be addressed collectively and individually. Peace and stability remains a priority for Africa as it is an essential pre-requisite for sustainable development. Poverty level remains unacceptably high in the Continent. Environmental issues and climate change are negatively affecting the lives of African peoples for no fault of theirs. Human resource development is at a very low level. Such key sectors as infrastructure and power generation continue to be huge bottle necks that require sustained efforts.

Even though Africa's ownership of its destiny is crucial for the successful continuation of the current positive trajectory, it should also be underlined that global partnerships are important to the process..In this regard, I am happy to note that the current partnership between China and Africa is making a critical difference in key development areas in Africa. Apart from providing a development model, which is unprecedented in human history in terms of successfully tackling poverty in a short space of time, China today is a vital partner for Africa in its socio-economic transformation effort

and in peace and security. FOCAC indeed is an overall framework of cooperation which is firmly grounded in the principle of win-win partnership between Africa and China.

In conclusion, as Africa celebrates the Golden Jubilee of the OAU/AU, it is with acute awareness that a lot remains to be done for a successful transformation and Renaissance of the Continent. However, when the commitment of the leadership to transform Africa into a global growth pole, is coupled together with the full empowerment of the peoples of Africa, the dream of Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance can certainly be achieved.

Finally, I would like to reiterate my full confidence that this distinguished panel, some of whom with firsthand experience of the OAU, will further enlighten the audience on the theme of Pan–Africanism and African Renaissance..I hope the Committee will find the means to compile and publish the outcome of this Seminar in a way that would be useful for academic and policy research. With this I wish you successful deliberations

I thank you.