

## Statement on Africa Day 2023

Sixty years ago on this very date, Addis Ababa was host to a historic event that would shape the course of our continent. 32 Heads of State and Government of independent African nations converged in our capital to sign the Charter that would create the Organization of African Unity.

During this first Organization of African Unity Summit, His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie declared, ***“We stand today on the stage of world affairs, before the audience of world opinion. We have come together to assert our role in the direction of world affairs and to discharge our duty to the great continent whose two hundred and fifty million people we lead.”***

Sixty years later, Africa is the second most populous continent with an estimated population upwards of 1.4 billion people. It is expected that by 2050 more than half of the global population growth will occur in our continent. Paying attention to Africa means paying attention to a continent that by 2050 will be home to one in four humankind. This is indeed an opportunity we must harness.

President Kwame Nkrumah had rightly pointed to this opportunity during his remarks sixty years ago, whereupon he reiterated the great material and natural wealth our continent possessed and the necessity of its growing population ***“to the economic capitalization and profitability of modern productive methods and techniques,”*** to effectively utilize our wealth.

Today, our continent and our African Union is 55 members strong and is fast becoming a critical voice in the global arena. We have come a long way in promoting and defending an African common position on issues of interest to our continent and our people. Yet much remains in realizing the aspirations of our forefathers in the founding Charter and that of our own in our Agenda 2063.

In particular, unity and freedom were a common theme that the Founding Fathers of the OAU proclaimed leading up to its formation and emphasized thereafter.

The global state of affairs sixty years ago that triggered the formation of the OAU may have shifted. The complex world we find ourselves in today and the aspirations we carry as Africans summon us to further accelerate our unified positions.

Can we yet proclaim we are free when our people are still in the grips of poverty and our systems are shackled by corruption, ineptness and indifference? Can we yet assert independence while we seek beyond ourselves and our continental borders to deliver us from the challenges we are faced with?

Undeniably, our continent and each of our countries possess great natural and material wealth that lays abundantly bare for us to catalyze our continent to prosperity.

We must continue unearthing the potential of our people and enable them to transform our continent into the **Africa We Want** by fighting corruption, creating conducive environments for local and international investments and by awakening the service delivery potential of our bureaucracies.

As African nations blessed with natural bounty, we must mobilize the productive capacities and inventiveness of our youth in agriculture, industry and technology. Africa can and must be able to feed itself.

Ethiopia is clear evidence of this sheer will for self-sustenance that has seen our agriculture sector productivity expand in farmed land and output. The natural and man-made disasters and challenges that we have been confronted with for the past couple of years have not deterred us from progress, driven by a spirit of African resilience. We are committed to reshaping the narrative about Ethiopia and through it that of Africa.

I have shared before that narratives shape our destiny. What we believe we are capable of, we thus become. For a long time now, we have as Africans accepted a narrative about ourselves that has not been crafted by us.

This needs to change in two critical ways. Firstly, through adequate representation and permanent seat at the UN Security Council and proportionate representation at the G7 and G20. And secondly, through materializing our African Union Continental Media House.

In an increasingly complex, dynamic and fast changing global order, unity is no more a catchphrase but a means of survival.

I call upon all African leaders and peoples to heed the call of unity declared by our great forefathers as we commemorate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the Organization for African Unity!

**God Bless Africa!**

**May 25, 2023**