

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY
HIFIKEPUNYE POHAMBWA,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA
ON THE OCCASION OF AFRICA DAY**

25 MAY 2007

WINDHOEK

**Check Against Delivery*

Director of Ceremonies

Your Excellency, Dr. Sam Shafiishuna Nujoma, Founding President and
Father of the Namibian Nation

Honourable Speaker of the National Assembly

Honourable Chairperson of the National Council

Honourable Ministers and Deputy Ministers

Honourable Members of Parliament

Honourable Governor of Khomas Region

Your Excellency, Mr Manuel Alexandre Duarte Rodrigues, Dean of the
Diplomatic Corps and Ambassador of the Republic of Angola

Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Your Worship, the Mayor of Windhoek

Distinguished Invited Guests

Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the great honour to address this important occasion marking the 44th Anniversary of the founding of the Organisation of the African Unity (OAU), which has now been transformed into the African Union (AU). The Founding Father of our Nation, Dr Sam Shafiishuna Nujoma has eloquently spoken about the bitter struggle and long history that marked the march of the African People towards self determination and freedom. Guided by the spirit of Pan Africanism, African leaders founded the Organisation of African Unity which spearheaded the efforts for the decolonisation of the African continent. Indeed, the OAU served as a strong foundation upon which the people of Africa have continued to build a stronger and more united continent.

At the 1999 Extra Ordinary Summit of the OAU in Sirte, Lybia, the Assembly took a decision to establish the African Union. This was followed by the adoption of the Constitutive Act of the Union in 2000 in Lome, Togo. The implementation road map for the AU was drawn up at the Lusaka Summit in 2001 and the AU was launched at the Durban Summit in 2002. These historic milestones reflect the determination of the African people to fulfil the vision of the Founding Fathers and Mothers of the OAU with the ultimate aim of creating a stronger and united continent.

Director of Ceremonies,

The quest for unity, economic and social development under the auspices of the AU is our long cherished dream. Today, the organs of the AU such as the Assembly, the Executive Council, the Pan African Parliament, the Court of Justice and the Commission have been established.

Moreover, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the developmental arm of the AU, has made progress through the implementation of practical programmes and projects.

One of the initial efforts of NEPAD was to campaign for the cancellation of external debt owed by African countries, especially those which were classified as Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC). Today, the external debts of African countries falling in that category have been cancelled. Therefore, resources that should have been used to service and repay such debts can now be directed towards development programmes to eradicate poverty and to ensure that our continent is on the course of economic growth and sustainable development.

The overall objectives of NEPAD can be outlined as follows: to eradicate poverty; to place African countries on the path of sustainable growth and development; to stop the marginalisation of Africa in the globalisation process; to enhance Africa's full and beneficial integration into the global economy and to accelerate the empowerment of African women.

Our objectives for continental unity are underpinned by our strategy to promote regional integration. It is for this reason that regional economic communities have been established to spearhead regional integration efforts. Regional blocs such as the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD), Economic Community of Central African States, (ECCAS); Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD), the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) and the Union du Maghreb Arabe (UMA), are today serving as building-blocks for continental unity. Their efforts serve to complement the objectives of the AU as our continent strives to build closer continental unity, with the eventual creation of the United States of Africa.

Director of Ceremonies,

Here in Southern Africa, regional integration has been spearheaded by the Southern Africa Development Co-ordinating Conference (SADCC), which was transformed into Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) in 1992, at the SADC Summit held here in our capital city, Windhoek. SADC is part and parcel of the integration programme of Africa under the auspices of the African Union. It goes without saying that the objectives of SADC are in line with the vision outlined in the Constitutive Act of the AU.

The principal institutions of SADC have been established and the restructuring process has made good progress. In many aspects, it is nearing completion. In order to fast-track regional economic integration, SADC has put in place the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP). This plan is a reaffirmation of our region's commitment to political stability, economic growth and good governance entrenched in a culture of democracy. It also seeks to promote full participation by civil society groups in the process of development, while ensuring transparency and respect of the rule of law.

This plan provides strategic direction for programmes and activities being implemented by SADC and to align the objectives and priorities with policies and strategies aimed at achieving our long term goals.

In addition, other programmes have been introduced to facilitate commercial trade, as well as to facilitate the removal of trade barriers and double taxation among Member States.

The key behind regional integration in SADC is the Protocol on Trade, signed in 1996 and implemented since 2000. SADC member states adopted the RISDP and the Strategic Indicative Plan for the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, as the main instruments to achieve regional integration. The goals for regional integration are enshrined in the RISDP, namely, to establish a Free Trade Area by 2008, a Customs Union by 2010, a Common Market by 2015, a Monetary Union by 2016 and one Central Bank with a single currency by 2018.

Director of Ceremonies,

It is evident that the ongoing process of globalisation can have a negative impact on African countries. We must, therefore, plan and work together to take advantage of this process while reducing its negative impact in our continent.

As a Member State of SADC and the AU, Namibia will continue to play its part in promoting and implementing its share of responsibilities so that the integration process of the continent can succeed, with our full participation.

We have already participated in projects that can enhance regional integration, such as the construction of the Trans-Kalahari and Trans-Caprivi Highways, the implementation of the Walvis Bay-Maputo Corridor, the implementation of the Southern African Power Pool and other projects.

Namibia is the host country for regional institutions such as the SADC Tribunal and the SADC Parliamentary Forum. This is an indication that Namibia stands ready and willing to advance the cause of regional integration and continental unity.

For Africa to succeed, we must join hands and work as a team. We must adopt new strategies to ensure that natural resources from Africa are exploited for the benefit of Africans. It is for this reason that Namibia welcomes the establishment of institutions aimed at regulating the production and export of our minerals, such as copper and diamonds.

Furthermore, Africa is endowed with huge untapped natural resources, such as the Hoodia plant, aloe, mushrooms, sea fisheries and fresh water fisheries. More research should be encouraged and funded to ensure that these resources are preserved and harvested on sustainable basis for the benefit of our people.

Director of Ceremonies,

At the international level, Namibia supports the common African position on the reform and democratisation of the United Nations. We call for the expansion of the UN Security Council and the allocation of at least two seats to the African continent with all the privileges and rights enjoyed by other permanent members of the Security Council.

Today, we celebrate Africa day. It is a day on which we take stock of the progress that we have made and the challenges that confront our continent. As Africans, we have a responsibility to promote peace and security on the continent, especially in troubled spots such as the Darfur Region of the Sudan, Somalia and other locations.

When peace is restored, Africa as a whole should stand together to promote post conflict reconstruction efforts. We must consolidate, guard and defend democracy, peace, security and political stability. The principles and guidelines governing democratic elections must be respected by all Africans. Likewise, we must combat the scourge of dishonesty and corruption. Corruption is an evil that must be uprooted from our societies.

I believe that the prosperity and development of our continent depends on our ability to equip our youth with the necessary knowledge and skills through education, so that they can compete in the global economy. Thus, our efforts to promote continental integration must place education of our people at the top of our priorities. Each African child must be given the opportunity to gain skills so that they can escape the shackles of poverty and destitution.

As we celebrate this Anniversary, let us stand together to remember and honour the contributions made by the fore-runners and the founders of the OAU to the achievement of the total liberation of Africa and to our collective dream of the formation of a United States of Africa.

Today, the people of Africa are standing at the cross-roads of history. We have the opportunity to roll back the frontiers of poverty, to advance the benefits of development for all our communities and to pull Africa from the trademark of hunger, disease and conflict to a place of hope and progress. Africa has made a promising start, we have established the institutions to take our continent to a higher level of integration and unity. We must endeavour to achieve our common objectives within the frameworks that we have established so that we can claim the 21st Century as the African Century.

This must be the century when Africans should defeat the challenges of under-development, poverty and suffering. It must be the century when Africans should defeat the diseases that afflict millions of our people and render them helpless and weak. It must be the century when Africans should break the back-bone and crush the ugly head of HIV/Aids.

Indeed, this must be the century when the people of Africa bring their collective dreams within reach and achieve the vision of our fore-bearers. Africa is a great continent.

It is the origin of human kind and of many civilisations. It is the fountain of knowledge. We must make Africa greater. We must, therefore, work for the unity, peace, security and integration of Mother Africa.

Long Live Mother Africa!
Long Live African Unity!

I thank you.