

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



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

25 MAY 2009

**ONDANGWA,
OSHANA REGION**

**Check Against Delivery*

Director of Ceremonies
Honourable Ministers and Deputy Ministers
Honourable Members of Parliament
Honourable Governor of Oshana Region
Your Majesty King Kauluma Elifas of the Ondonga Traditional Authority
Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps
Your Worship, the Mayor of Ondangwa
Fellow Namibians
Members of the Media
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today we celebrate Africa Day. A special day on which we as Africans remember and honour our heroes and heroines, cherish our victories and dedicate ourselves to making our continent more prosperous under the theme, “*Towards a united, peaceful and prosperous Africa*”.

Informed and inspired by Pan Africanist ideals, African leaders founded the Organisation of African Unity, which spearheaded the struggle for the decolonisation of the African continent. The OAU served as a strong foundation upon which the peoples of Africa, have continued to build a stronger and more united continent.

The establishment of the OAU was a bold step by dedicated Pan Africanists such as Kwame Nkrumah, Modibo Keita, Abdel Nasser, Emperor Haile Selasie, Julius Nyerere, Sekou Toure and many others. Their commitment to self-determination inspired our own cause, namely the struggle for Namibia’s freedom and independence.

The aims of the OAU at its inception as set out in its Charter were:

- To promote the unity and solidarity of African States
- To coordinate and intensify their cooperation and efforts to achieve a better life for the peoples of Africa
- To defend their sovereignty, their territorial integrity and independence.
- To eradicate from the continent all forms of colonialism, and
- To promote international cooperation, having due regard to the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

It is these aims that still continue to guide the AU, which has been formed to take the OAU to a different level given the changing political- economic climate of the world.

At the 1999 Extra Ordinary Summit of the OAU in Sirte, Libya, 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 peoples to fulfill the vision of the Founding Fathers and Mothers of the OAU with the ultimate aim of creating a stronger and united continent.

Namibia is a product of international solidarity. It is the coordinated efforts of the OAU Liberation Committee, our friends in the United Nations and, indeed, the steadfast engagements and campaigns of our people under the leadership of SWAPO that brought about our own independence.

It is, therefore, not surprising that we cherish the ideals of the Founding Charter of the OAU and its successor, the African Union. These values are embodied in our supreme law, the Constitution of our Republic. It is on the basis of this history, the struggle and the sacrifices that we engage with our neighbours and encourage all our citizens to build a better future for all Africans, here at home and in the diaspora.

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, is making progress through the implementation of practical programmes and projects.

Our commitment to continental unity is underpinned in our strategy to promote regional integration. It is for this reason that Namibia remains part of SADC as a community to spearhead regional integration efforts.

Regional blocs such as the Community of Sahel-Saharan States; Economic Community of Central African States, 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 Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), are today serving as building-blocks for continental unity and socio-economic integration. They are doing important work to complement the objectives of the AU as our continent strives to build closer continental unity, with the eventual aim of creating a continental Government for Africa.

Director of Ceremonies,

We are aware of the negative impacts of globalisation on developing countries, including African countries. The current global financial crisis is a stark reminder to this danger. We must, therefore, plan and work together to harness the positive aspects of globalisation while counter-balancing its negative impact on our continent.

As a Member State of SADC and the AU, Namibia will continue to play its part in promoting regional economic integration and continental unity through NEPAD.

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, the laying of the West Africa Cable System (WACS) and other projects. The West Africa Cable System will boost international band with capacity in Africa by connecting countries on the west coast of Africa to Portugal and UK.

Namibia is the host country for regional institutions such as the SADC Tribunal, the SADC Parliamentary Forum and the Southern African Customs Union, (SACU). 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 sustainably exploited and harnessed 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 uranium, copper and diamonds.

Furthermore, Africa is endowed with huge untapped natural resources. The economic and industrial importance of certain minerals such as uranium, copper and diamonds is well-established. We must, therefore, ensure that these resources are exploited on a sustainable basis for the benefit of our people.

Director of Ceremonies,

Namibia has joined other countries to build consensus on a number of important issues aimed at bringing about equity, fairness and justice in the operations of international institutions and mechanisms that affect humanity in one way or another.

At the international level, Namibia supports the Common African Position on the Reform and Democratisation of the United Nations. This calls for the expansion of the UN Security Council and the allocation of at least two permanent seats to the African continent with all the privileges and rights enjoyed by other permanent members of the Security Council. We remain members of the AU Committee of Ten on this matter and will work towards the realisation of the Consensus.

We have also participated in negotiations for an Economic Partnership Agreement in the ANSA group to make sure that, at the end of the day, the final products do not put us at a disadvantage and undo the progress that we have made in SACU, SADC and, indeed, in the OAU and AU.

As we celebrate Africa day today, 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.

Africa as a whole should stand together to promote post-conflict reconstruction efforts once peace is restored. 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. We must move forward to make the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance a living reality.

Director of Ceremonies,

I believe that the development and prosperity of our continent depends on our ability to equip our youth with the necessary knowledge and skills through education, so that they can compete successfully 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 historic occasion, let us stand together to remember and honour the contributions made by our forebearers 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. We can proudly say that decolonisation has been achieved with the exception of Western Sahara. We must work hard in the AU to make self-determination a reality for the Saharawi people.

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 abyss of hunger, disease and conflict to a place of hope and progress. Despite the challenges, Africa has made much progress. We have established 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 weak and helpless.

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.

Fellow Namibians,

We must make Africa greater. We must, therefore, work for the unity, peace, security and integration of Mother Africa.

We must conduct our elections this year in such a manner that we can indeed be proud to be part of a continent with an illustrious history. A history of tenacity, steadfastness and dedication to peace, freedom and justice. Let us make Africa proud.

Let us be a shining example of what mother Africa has produced. Let us make Africa the tree of life!

Long Live Mother Africa!
Long Live African Unity!

I thank you.