

AFRICAN UNION

الاتحاد الأفريقي



UNION AFRICAINE

UNIÃO AFRICANA

---

Addis Ababa, ETHIOPIA P. O. Box 3243 Telephone +251115- 517700 Fax : +251115- 517844  
Website : [www.africa-union.org](http://www.africa-union.org)

---

**ADDRESS BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF  
THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION**

**KHARTOUM, 23 JANUARY 2006**

**ADDRESS BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF  
THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION**

**President Olusegun Obasanjo,**

Throughout these long months, you have successfully elevated our organization with the support of your peers.

You have not faltered for one second, despite the many distressing personal trials that befell you and all the adversities your great country, Nigeria, has gone through.

The brilliance of our organization is now remarkable, and has earned many of its children outstanding promotions which I would like to bring to the attention of this august assembly.

- Ibrahim Gambari, United Nations Under Secretary General for Political Affairs;
- Mohamed El-Baradie, Head of the International Atomic Energy Agency;
- Jacques Diouf, Director General of the FAO;
- Kandeh Yumkella, Director General of UNIDO;
- Rerugwabiza Valentine, Deputy Director General of WTO;
- Abdoulie Janneh, United Nations Under Secretary General and Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa;
- Donald Kaberuka, President of the African Development Bank.

President Obasanjo, we are indebted to you and your peers.

**Your Excellency, the Current Chairperson of the Assembly of the African Union,  
Your Majesty,  
Brother Leader,  
Your Excellencies, Heads of State and Government,  
Your Excellency, the Secretary General of the League of Arab States,  
Your Excellency the Director General of UNESCO  
Your Excellency, the Representative of the United Nations Secretary General,  
Your Excellencies, former Heads of State and Secretaries General of our continental  
organization,  
Honourable Members of the Executive Council of the African Union,  
Honourable President of the Pan-African Parliament,  
Honourable President of ECOSOCC,  
Executive Secretaries of Regional Economic Communities,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Our presence here in Khartoum in this month of January 2006, is indeed an occasion for us to hail the Fiftieth Anniversary of Independence of this ancient country and great people. Khartoum, point of confluence of the muddy waters of the White Nile and the clear waters of the Blue Nile also symbolizes the symbiosis of Africa. Sudan, the land of convergence and a melting point, will forever bear witness to a single and diverse Africa; a Continent rich in culture and history.

### **Excellencies,**

The duty of memory will forever compel us to be vigilant in order to reduce revisionist actions aimed at re-writing, if need be falsifying the History of Slavery, the colonial system, apartheid and the Rwandese genocide.

This duty of memory is a collective African struggle. It also compels us to demand reparations, in other words, acknowledgement of crimes committed.

It equally compels us to create conditions for the special education of our youths.

To this end, would it not be appropriate to consider putting in place African Think Tanks and action groups made up of researchers, politicians and academicians on each of the above-mentioned themes?

### **Distinguished Presidents, Excellencies,**

Our presence here in Khartoum is also an occasion to celebrate the return of peace in Southern Sudan, after almost three decades of conflict, and the virtues of hard-won peace.

Certainly, with the establishment of government of national unity which we hail the way is now open to build a single viable Sudan; that is, a Sudan which is united pluralistic, multi-faceted and democratic.

However, despite all the efforts deployed (7000 military personnel and civilians on the ground, to whom we pay tribute) by the members of the Committee of Heads of State created in this respect, notably President Obasanjo and Brother Leader Gaddafi, Darfur continues to be our greatest concern, with its humanitarian tragedy, the potential for the spillover of the conflict into the region, and the attacks against the African Union Mission.

It is important for the Sudanese parties to show genuine good faith in the Abuja Talks and honour their commitments: the Government should effectively disarm the militias and the rebel movements should indicate the positions of their forces to AMIS. This is a basic condition for progress.

### **Excellencies,**

Another situation, the one in Cote d'Ivoire, has become worrisome, especially after the glimmer of hope that accompanied the appointment of a new consensus Prime Minister whose main task was to successfully implement the Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration process (DDR) and organise free and fair elections.

We must continue to support the efforts of our brothers and sisters in Côte d'Ivoire, as you have done, Mr. President, by promoting harmony between the President and the Prime Minister.

Ultimately, however, no one can resolve their problems in their place, nor overcome the numerous obstacles that lie on their way.

We are appealing to our Ivorian brothers to be more trusting of their neighbours, their regional Community, the African Union and the international community who are there to help their country find its back to peace and prosperity.

**Excellencies,**

In these situations of crisis and human rights violations, impunity must not be accepted.

We must also be able to take up our responsibility to make Africa a land of justice, a land where justice can be rendered with total confidence.

**Excellencies,**

This rather sombre picture should not make us forget that tangible progress has been made in other areas. 2005 appears to be the only year that new conflict did not break out somewhere on our continent!

Somalia is moving forward! The DRC is moving ahead and must mobilise all political players to take part in the electoral process in order to guarantee its success! Burundi is forging ahead! Sierra Leone is forging ahead! The Comoros, too, at long last!

Liberia has weathered the storm and emerged triumphant, giving our continent Ellen Sirleaf-Johnson, its first elected female President, to Africa's great honour.

The election of Ellen Sirleaf-Johnson heralds the emergence of other women-Presidents in Africa God willing! And that, Excellencies, will be a fine measure of the success of the gender policy that you adopted a few years back.

Above all, however, Your Excellencies, the ultimate objective of your gender policy should be to ensure a better life for the women of Africa.

**Excellencies,**

The cry of our youth to be heard and to assert themselves, first heard in Bamako in December 2005, is heart-rending but vibrant and full of positive energy. If we allow it to be overtaken by frustration and despair, it could become a destructive force.

No one here can claim not to have heard our youth cry out for greater freedom, for education, health and employment. The youth of Africa are clamouring for their rightful place. They are the embodiment of Africa today and they will still embody Africa tomorrow.

**Excellencies,**

These problems, posed by all our people yearning for well-being, justice, and solidarity, can only be resolved by forging a genuine framework for Africa, fashioned by Africans, from within Africa.

**Excellencies,**

As you have always said, we can no longer remain contented with the empty promises of many of our partners which are not always fulfilled. "With all due respect and to be very candid, I must confess that I am yet to be convinced that the measures announced last July and September will fare any better than the previous ones."

We shall still need others for a long time to come but, at this point, what we need as matter of urgency is solidarity. We cannot wait, we must not wait.

From what you, Distinguished Presidents, have said, the right and the only valid path lies in :

- ensuring good governance in our countries

- pooling our experience and resources and unreservedly sharing in the potential of the successful member countries.

The real course of action to be taken, as you said, consists in:

- creating enabling conditions for the processing of our raw materials locally in Africa along with optimal opportunities for trade; and
- defending collectively the prices of our raw materials.

**Excellencies,**

On the other hand, within the framework of the Khartoum Summit you did agree that Education and Culture should be the two major themes in order to emphasise the fact that, to us, Culture is both “source and resource”, and to highlight the “liberating” aspect of Education.

The African Union Commission has prepared Africa’s positions through several Ministerial and Experts meetings facilitated by UNESCO; I would like to commend and thank its Director General Koichiro Matsuura and his team accordingly.

UNESCO has made considerable efforts in recent years through several regional offices and a number of special programmes for the continent. It is up to our continental and regional institutions to rise to the challenges of the proposed partnerships.

**Excellencies,** I do hope that, if managed efficiently and in a non-bureaucratic manner, and relying on a permanent education observatory, the Second Decade of Education to be proclaimed will enable us to make considerable progress particularly in the area of Pan-Africanist education for our peoples and youths.

On the cultural front, if 2006 is proclaimed as the Year of Africa Languages, as recommended, the African Union Commission will step up its efforts to establish the African Academy of languages and launch the new Pan-African Cultural Charter.

**Excellencies,**

In implementing its programme for year 2006, our Organisation should ensure that Africa maintains the initiative after the successful Tunis World Summit of Information society, if it is determined to reduce the digital divide.

In this context, it is important for all the countries to support and make contributions to the Global Digital Solidarity Fund established on the initiative of President Abdoulaye WADE during the First World Summit held in Geneva in 2003.

On the other hand, **Your Excellencies,** significant progress should be made in the area of African integration, with particular regard to the free movement of persons and goods as well as information, in order to meet the principal aspirations of our peoples.

In this regard, I consider three projects to be very important:

- the first one, if you agree, is the unforgeable diplomatic passport, secured under the control of Member States, that will be introduced right from this year, as recommended by all the meetings we have held. This project has been the subject of presentations at several meetings.

It will however be necessary, in the medium term, to accelerate procedures for the abolition of visas between countries of the same Regional Economic Community and between Regional Economic Communities.

**Your Excellencies**, as many of you recommended, it is also essential to promote, among us Africans, an open and frank debate on the issue of immigration, which cannot be addressed by police and security measures alone. Lasting solutions can be found only through the expression of unfailing solidarity and the execution of development projects,

We cannot accept the degrading and cruel treatment meted out on our nationals who are far from being delinquents.

The multiplication of illegal measures connected with the upsurge of wholesale acts of racism in stadiums and films is a disturbing sign to our contemporary world. We cannot accept the unilateral and selective measures establishing a new type of slavery in the form of brain drain.

**Excellencies,**

The meeting of African Airlines programmed for discussions on transport facilities should deliberate on the cost of air tickets, flight connections on the continent and finally, on air safety and security.

The last project, concerning the Pan-African Television, which was initiated by the Arab Republic of Egypt through the impetus of President Mubarak should help improve the quality of pictures and information on Africa and contribute to the building of Pan-Africanist awareness, particularly in the fields of education and culture.

**Presidents,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Year 2006 will also be the year for a number of grand celebrations that demand our attention:

The Senghor International Year proclaimed by the Francophone Community for the centennial commemoration of the birth of the Poet-President, the great Pan-Africanist – Leopold Sédar Senghor – one of the founding fathers of the OAU.

The year 2006 is also expected to be that of major rendez-vous of the continent with other major groupings: Latin America, Europe and China.

**Mr. President,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Finally, I am fully conscious of the role and mission of the Commission I preside over plays in the success of its actions. To live up to the task, we should complete our institutional transformation process, and improve the quality of our human resources and of governance through rigorous recruitment.

I am convinced that with the success of our programmes, we shall have more assurance with our resources, even if I am still concerned with the non-payment of contributions and our difficulties in finding alternative sources of finance. Fourteen countries are now under sanction (as against 9 in 2005), making almost a third of our Member States.

We are however confident and determined, especially after the Sirte 2005 historic turning point which affirmed the greater solidarity of our States and pointed the way towards the United States of Africa, with the necessity to find a clear strategy with its stages.

I have no doubt that the Presidential Committee created to this effect, under the Chairmanship of President Obasanjo, will be landmark, as also will be the next summit of the African Union which will be especially devoted to the harmonization and the coordination of regional economic communities, pillars of our Union.

**Mr. Chairman,  
Your Majesty,  
Brother Leader,  
Excellencies Heads of State and Government,**

Under the dynamic leadership of President Obasanjo the voice of Africa is heard; the presence of Africa is strong.

It will be so if we are united, inter-dependent and resolute in our determination to fight as was the case last December during the negotiations of the World Trade Organization in Hong Kong.

May this drive mark the progress in the inexorable renaissance of Africa which has been so often sung by President Thabo Mbeki.

Nothing or no one can definitively stop the African sun from shining; not even these morning storms which we hope are passing clouds and which will soon dissipate.

I wish you full success in your deliberations!

May God assist us!

May God protect our continent Africa!