

## The Africa we Want.

Honestly, I cannot in good conscience begin to speak about 'The Africa we want' without firstly acknowledging the cruel and unjust past from which Africa has emerged. Having begun with slavery in 1619, followed by the Berlin Conference in 1884 and the subsequent partitioning of 'This Magnificent African Cake'<sup>1</sup>, and Africa successfully gaining independence with the exception of six island nations, African states over the last fifty years have developed a number of responses to the pressures of the times with two major transitions that stand out in this regard. The first transition came in the 1960's to 70's (a decade after a large fraction of the African countries attained independence) when, to continue advancing the agenda for economic freedom and drawing lessons from the global energy crisis of the 1970s, Africa took the bold step to pursue continental integration as a strategy for economic development.<sup>2</sup> Secondly, this period was marked by the Bretton Woods Agenda on Structural Adjustments, which saw the diminution of African economies with far reaching repercussions on critical environmental and social sectors which are still visible in the present day Africa.<sup>3</sup>

Based on the conviction that Africa has the potential and capability to unite and outshine other regions of the global village and take her rightful place in the world community, the Agenda 2063 Framework Document and its Popular Version were adopted in January 2015, in Addis Ababa.<sup>2</sup> To me, the phrase 'The Africa we Want' raises questions of 'an Africa wanted by who?' – especially in a world full of greed and deceit – and therefore I am more inclined towards the slogan 'The Aspirations of the African People' as it is less ambiguous and frank. Nonetheless, the Africa we want is "an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the international arena".<sup>2</sup> In essence, it is an Agenda that we as Africans all have a stake in its implementation and have contributed, either directly or indirectly, to its formulation.

The Africa we want is one that has its economies being sufficiently transformed, moving away from being commodity based with weak value addition, poor manufacturing and industrialization, towards having the benefits of growth being shared widely coupled with job creation for the betterment of our youth and women.<sup>2,4</sup> Owing to Africa's encouraging recent economic performance and with positive developments in other regions as examples, African people now have raised expectations for a better life for themselves, their communities, nations, Africa at large and rightfully so. Bearing this in mind, we cannot continue to be synonymous with corruption and inefficiency and need to position ourselves in such a manner that we are able to finance our own development and curb the illicit flow of resources, be they monetary or otherwise. With a greater sense of urgency, we need to change the status quo as it will neither satiate the expectations and aspirations of Africans, both on the continent and those in the Diaspora, nor will it enable Africa to catch up with the rest of the world, reclaiming her rightful place in the global economic, political and social order.<sup>2</sup>

In our present context of an African renaissance, transformation and integration, and based on changing our mind-sets and attitudes in order to strengthen Pan African values of self-reliance, solidarity, hard work and collective prosperity, we want an Africa that can mobilize African resources to finance and expedite transformation and integration, putting in place in all fields and at all levels transformational leadership, ensuring capable developmental nations with the relevant institutions, policies, human resources, systems and processes. For a very long time, Africa has not had the privilege of writing her own story due to a lack of agency, and the Africa we want is one where we actively take charge of Africa's narrative and brand so that we ensure that it reflects realities on the ground, the aspirations of African people, their priorities and the continent's position in the world.<sup>2</sup> We want integration of this beautiful vision and plan that is Agenda 2063 into all our national and regional development plans. We want the strengthening and transformation of national, regional and

1. Ikein A. (2009). "The Potential Power of West African Oil to the Economics and Energy Security Interest of Euro-America in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century". *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*. Vol. 10, No. 4. Clarion, Pennsylvania. ISSN: 1520-5509.
2. African Union Commission. (2015). "Agenda 2063: The Africa we Want. Framework Document". ISBN: 978-92-95104-23-5.
3. Reed D. (2013). "Structural Adjustment, the environment and Sustainable Development". URL: [taylorfrancis.com](http://taylorfrancis.com) (14 Feb 2019)
4. AUC-UNIDO. (2012). "Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Plan for Africa (PMPA) Business Plan". Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

continental institutions and the status quo with regards to doing business, so as to lead effectively and to drive the Agenda for transformation and integration.

Like most countries in the Global South, we want to elevate large numbers of our population out of poverty, to improve incomes and fast-track economic and social transformation, and with the United Nations to find multilateral approaches to humanity's most urgent issues which include, but are not limited to, human security and peace, poverty eradication, hunger and disease, and reduction in vulnerability to climate change risks.<sup>1</sup> Reigniting Africa's determination to end conflict and war and to build shared prosperity, we do not only want but need responsive and pluralist democratic governance with African people at the centre of all continental efforts to ensure participation that is broad-based and the building of caring and inclusive societies and communities in which women are empowered and the barriers that impede women's full participation in all areas and levels of human endeavour are thwarted. This is crucial for our society to reach its full potential and for there to be sustained innovation, we need a conducive environment for us African youth and children to flourish and reach our full potential. In order to effect equitable and African-centred growth and development, we want an Africa that harnesses Africa's continental endowments embodied in her people, their history, culture and natural resources as well as their geo-political position; the aim of this being poverty eradication, Africa's human capital development, building social assets, infrastructure and public goods, and to consolidate enduring peace and security, putting in place strong developmental states that are effective, participatory and accountable institutions, and empowering women and youth to bring about the African renaissance.<sup>1</sup>

Being a continent that is more united, an international power to reckon with, Africa is capable of rallying support around a shared Agenda and speaking with one voice and the capacity to negotiate and withstand the forces, both internal and external, that would like to see us divided. Fortunately for Africa, and the world, we are in the age of globalization and the information technology revolution which have provided unprecedented opportunities for countries and regions with the right policies to make sizeable advances and elevate large numbers of people out of poverty, improve incomes and expedite socioeconomic transformations.<sup>1</sup> We want a Connected Africa and commend Liquid Telecom who recently completed the first terrestrial fibre network to span the entire length of the continent – running all the way from Cape Town in South Africa to Cairo in Egypt. Stretching over 10,000km, it is the shortest direct fibre route between South Africa and Egypt. This means there is an offering of significantly reduced latency between African countries.<sup>2</sup> In addition, we want more Member States of the AU to ratify the Continental Free Trade Area which I believe would be a game changer for Africa as a single market for goods and services across the continent will bring benefits for businesses and consumers and strengthen Africa's position in trade.<sup>3</sup> We want the free movement of Africans within Africa through an electronic, biometric African passport as the free movement of persons, capital, goods and services will promote integration, Pan Africanism, enhance science, technology, education, research and foster tourism, facilitate intra-Africa trade and investment, increase remittances within Africa, promote mobility of labour, create employment, improve the standards of living of the people of Africa and facilitate the mobilization and utilization of the human and material resources of Africa in order to achieve self-reliance and development. Our vision and aspirations as Africans are not just economic integration, but the integration of Africa's people by breaking down the invisible and physical barriers which have limited the movement of people and resulted in the weakening of the Pan-African spirit.<sup>4</sup> On another level, we need harmonization of policies on international relations and cooperation to be strengthened so that AU Member States speak with one voice with the goal of ensuring better gains in the international arena. Regional integration must be conducted with haste to allow Africans to take their destiny in their own hands. Furthermore, Africa needs to continue, at both a regional and continental level, to make significant strides in building the institutions required

1. African Union Commission. (2015). "Agenda 2063: The Africa we Want. Framework Document". ISBN: 978-92-95104-23-5.
2. RwandAir. (2019). "Our journey from Cape to Cairo." Inzoz, December – February 2019 Edition. Page 35.
3. RwandAir. (2019). "The Continental Free Trade Area: A game changer for Africa". Inzoz, Dec – Feb 2019 Edition. Page 41.
4. RwandAir. (2019). "African Passport. Free movement of Persons in Africa. Inzoz, Dec – Feb 2019 Edition. Page 40.

for political and economic integration. A vast array of protocols, frameworks and plans are leading to increased harmonization of policies and actions, and advances in key areas are laying a solid foundation for future progress.<sup>1</sup>

The Africa we want has a key driver of her prosperity being its world class capital developed through education that is high quality and focused on attaining 100 percent literacy and numeracy, with a clear emphasis on science, technology and engineering, which has thus far been elusive. There should be an end to Neglected Tropical Diseases and all communicable and infectious diseases, such as Ebola which devastated West Africa and is currently plaguing the Democratic Republic of the Congo<sup>2</sup>, fully brought under control. There is a need for integrated and robust health systems in place to significantly reduce non communicable diseases and lifestyle changes related diseases, and deaths from HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis being brought to naught. Africa deserves healthy, well-nourished people with life expectancies above 75 years old in well planned cities that have modern mass transit systems, while rural communities are not isolated but instead are connected to the rest of the economy through road, energy, mobile communication networks, water, sanitation and hygiene systems. We deserve macroeconomic stability, diversified, accelerated and inclusive economic growth.<sup>1</sup> In the last couple of years catalysed by an increase in the number of African friends I have, I have become quite passionate about African culture and I for one would like a situation where we celebrate our culture in Africa and all African cultural treasures that are currently not in Africa, be returned to their rightful owner for the preservation of Africa's unborn citizens and generations to come. Anyone interested in seeing them can come and see them on home soil, flying our African national carriers in African Open Skies, thus increasing travel to Africa and boosting the tourism sector, among other possibilities.

The Africa we want is an Africa with a seat at the table, assuming her rightful place in the assurance of global peace and security through permanent seats on the United Nations Security Council with all the privileges of permanent membership category and, based on a Common African Foreign Policy, a deepened south-south cooperation. In addition, we the African people want an African presence that is strengthened in other multilateral fora such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, including those that relate to global/regional security. We want the continued advocacy for reform of other global institutions such as the World Bank, IMF and World Trade Organization to enhance international standards in a manner that caters to the aspirations of developing nations and enables these nations to face their challenges head on.<sup>1</sup>

Having the biggest landmass and the second largest in terms of population, Africa is strikingly diverse in terms of geography, language, culture, history, political developments, resource endowments and this comes as no surprise when speaking of the continent which is the cradle of human civilization. Shaped by a sense of a common destiny, with similar languages, cultural values of Ubuntu and heritage, as well as a common history of struggle against colonialism and liberation from external dominance and unity as expressed by the Founders, this led to the establishment of the OAU in 1963 and its subsequent transformation into the African Union in 1999.<sup>1,3</sup> I commend those who work daily to build upon the current positive trends and address old and new challenges that Africa faces, those who came up with a clear long-term vision of where Africa wants to be in 2063 and a plan as to how to arrive at that destination. Lastly, as an African youth resident in Africa, I am deeply moved by the love and courage mustered by generations of Africans before me who sacrificed so much for us youth to be here right now and I take ownership, and hope many more of my peers do too, of Agenda 2063 which is our generations context of the "long walk" of Africa's struggles against colonialism and foreign domination, and our pursuit of self-determination, freedom, justice, peace and prosperity. As Sauti Sol said, there's "no place I'd rather be; I want to live and die in Africa".<sup>4</sup>

1. African Union Commission. (2015). "Agenda 2063: The Africa we Want. Framework Document". ISBN: 978-92-95104-23-5.
2. World Health Organization Regional Office for Africa. "Ebola Virus Disease". URL: <https://www.afro.who.int/health-topics/ebola-virus-disease> [Accessed on 12/2/2019]
3. Murray R. (2004). "Human Rights in Africa. From the OAU to the African Union". Cambridge University Press, United Kingdom. ISBN-13 978-0-511-26172-5.
4. Sauti Sol. (2015). "Live and Die in Africa". URL: <http://www.metrolyrics.com/live-and-die-in-afrika-lyrics-sauti-sol.html> [Accessed on 13/02/2019]