

# PM Hailmariam foresees bright future for Africa as Africans celebrate AU Golden Jubilee in London



17<sup>th</sup> May 2013

Africa has struck gold this year with the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of the Organization of African Unity/AU being observed across the continent and beyond under the theme *“The Year of Pan-Africanism, the African Renaissance.”*

The 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary and **Africa Day** were colourfully celebrated on the 17<sup>th</sup> May, 2013 at the Langham Hotel here in London.

H.E. Hailemariam Dessalegn, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and Chairperson of the African Union, in a message sent on the occasion and read out by H.E. Berhanu Kebede, Ethiopian Ambassador to the UK and the Scandinavian countries, said Africa Day this year is indeed special as it marks a significant milestone in the history of our continental organization.



The OAU played an invaluable role in the liberation of our continent and, for this, we have to pay tribute to successive generations of African leaders. Nevertheless, he said, “We all recognize that Africa’s aspirations for lasting peace and prosperity still remain to be realized and the vision of our Founding Fathers is yet to be fulfilled”.

The Prime Minister stressed how it is important to carry out “serious soul searching” on why Africa wasn’t able to transform its societies in spite of its rich historical heritage and abundant natural resources.

Previous generations have paid the ultimate sacrifice to liberate our continent from all forms of subjugation and apartheid and it is up to the current and future generations to achieve the socio-economic emancipation of the continent.

Africa, as it moves forward, needs to rededicate its efforts to ensuring lasting peace and stability, to accelerating economic growth and to deepening governance reforms, with a view to laying a solid foundation for Africa’s socio-economic transformation.

Concluding his message the Prime Minister said “It is my earnest hope that by 2063, we will have a continent free from the scourge of conflicts and abject poverty, where many African countries will have achieved upper middle income status and the standard of living of large populations of the African people will have been significantly improved.”

Africa stands united more than ever before, a credit to the founding fathers of the continental organization who established the Organization of African Union, the precursor of the African

Union, in 1963 with the noble objective of promoting the unity, independence, solidarity and cooperation of African States to ensure a better life for the peoples of Africa.

Addressing participants at this great African gathering, Dean of African Ambassadors, H.E. Roy Warren Blackbeard, Botswana's High Commissioner for the UK, congratulated Africans all over the world on the OAU/AU achievements over the past fifty years, which saw the liberation of African states from the yoke of colonialism and economic progress which is now gaining momentum on the emerging continent. He called for increased investment and dynamism in relations between the UK and Africa.

Speaking on the occasion, Lord Boateng urged Africans to rededicate themselves to the ideals of the Founding fathers of PanAfricanism and those values and visions that inspired them. He said Africa should be the main author and the actor of its destiny and "only the best is good enough for Africa."

Representatives of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Additional Director for Africa and UK Special Representative for Sudan and South Sudan, Mr Robin Gwynn, underlined the importance of the growing relations between the UK and Africa which, he said, is a land of emerging economies.

African countries are achieving record growth - of between five and 10 per cent - despite the global economic downturn. Seven out of ten of the world's fastest growing economies are in Africa. Millions of Africans now have access to education and healthcare facilities. Massive road, railway and energy projects are thriving and linking nations across the region, lifting people out of poverty at an unprecedented rate. Telecoms technology has leap-frogged Africa into the 21<sup>st</sup> century creating a more enabling environment for business and investment.

Earlier in the week, in anticipation of the AU anniversary, an Africa Jubilee Business Forum was jointly organized by the African High Commissioners Group in London, the Commonwealth Business Council and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

The Forum was opened by Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg, who has been engaging Africa ahead of the G8, and HE Dr Tedros Adhanom, Foreign Minister of Ethiopia and Chairman of the AU Council of Ministers.

The 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations in London included an exhibition and delicious African cuisine including Ethiopia's trademark *Doro Wat* (spicy chicken stew) to the satisfaction of the African communities and invited guests.



The award winning Ethiopian music troupe, Dankira, gave a thrilling performance alongside the Rwandese, Kenyan, Egyptian and a number of outstanding musicians that projected Africa's rich colours and exciting dance.



Left, Ethiopia's Dankira Cultural Troupe and right, performers from Kenya.



Present on the occasion were African High Commissioners, parliamentarians, representatives of the FCO, members of the African Diaspora and distinguished invited guests.

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