

## Tedros: Africa, the new Eldorado

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Ethiopian Foreign Minister and Chairman of the African Union Executive Council, H.E. Dr. Tedros Adhanom, told a Chatham House platform that Africa, which was once the marginalised continent, has now emerged, as some put it, "the new Eldorado", at a time when much of the developing world is suffering from the economic slump, thus rekindling a great sense of hope and optimism.

Africa's profile on the world stage has been raised and it is no exaggeration to state that Africa has now become a force to be reckoned with.



Speaking at a discussion titled *"The Future of the AU: Fifty Years of the Organization of African Unity-African Union"*, the Minister thanked the think tank for organising the debate as it was relevant in light of the celebrations of the Golden Jubilee of the OAU/AU, which gave the opportunity to take stock of the achievements and shortcomings, as well as the prospects and challenges of continental organization.

Dr. Tedros noted that Africa is attracting a growing interest both from developed and emerging economies, as a new frontier for untapped business and investment opportunities. "Over the last decade, improved macro-economic governance, coupled with better prices for African commodities on the international market have enabled African countries to register robust growth, in spite of the global economic crisis...some of the countries like Ethiopia are now among the fastest growing economies in the world," he said.

Quoting Pan-Africanist Ghanaian leader, Kwame Nkrumah, "United we stand, divided we fall", Dr. Tedros urged African states and its peoples to stand together in unity and solidarity. "Africa has started to speak with one voice on issues of common interest to our continent and as such, the African Union has become an important vehicle for developing the African common position on a range of international issues such as climate change."

The Organisation of African Unity was established on 25<sup>th</sup> May 1963 by 32 independent countries signing a charter. Ethiopia, the Minister said, played a critical role in the establishment of the OAU and is very proud to play host to this premier continental organisation for the past 50 years, and it has never shirked from discharging its heavy responsibilities.

Africa has made remarkable progress over the last decade in terms of promoting peace and stability despite the existence of a few hotspots, he said. The African Union plays a proactive role in the search for the peaceful resolution of conflicts in Africa by promoting peace, security and stability and creating a favourable environment for sustainable development in line with its mandate. Moreover, African leaders have also committed themselves to promote democratic governance, respect for human and people's rights and ensure the rule of law.

The Minister also noted that even though Africa has recorded remarkable progress over the last fifty years, the last decade has been slow because reorienting the direction the organisation took more time than expected, but it was worth involving in such type of exercise as it helped reach a solid consensus to implement agreed programs.

The minister said he is confident the commission will make further progress towards the realisation of the objectives of the Union and outlined the strategic plan the AU has developed for the years 2014-2017, which aims to accelerate progress towards creating the foundations of an integrated, prosperous, people-centred and peaceful continent in the short and medium term.

The African Union, in connection with the Golden Jubilee Celebrations, is in the process of elaborating the Strategic Framework for Vision 2063, outlining Africa's agenda for the next 50 years in realisation of the vision of an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa.



Responding to a question about ending colonialism and neo-colonialism, Dr. Tedros said Africa has untapped potential. For African renaissance to succeed, ownership by African states is crucial. "We have to own our businesses and with that ownership comes commitment. Empowered Africa is better for the world." Africa has to encourage investment flow from the UK and Europe. It needs support and should be taken as an equal partner.

As development is key to Africa, attention should be given to investment, trade and infrastructure development. Promoting and developing the micro and small enterprises is essential to create more jobs for African youth and addressing unemployment.

With regards to colonial borders, the Minister said, any border dispute should be resolved peacefully. Linking African countries through a developed infrastructure and economic integration focusing on trade and investment would help strengthen bonds that will foster stability and development.

On the situation in Mali, the Minister said, elections will go ahead as planned in July and France's support is welcome. The AU and regional body, ECOWAS, are also helping in the mapping of a comprehensive program to restore peace and stability in Mali.

On Somalia, he noted that the government role should be strengthened and the international community should be more robust in its support for the implementation of the six pillar strategy.

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