

**Message from H.E. Hailemariam Dessalegn, Prime Minister of the
Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
and Chairperson of the African Union
on the Occasion of the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of the OAU/AU**

25 May 2013

In the longstanding Pan-Africanist tradition, I would like to extend my greetings to African brothers and sisters all over the continent and beyond. I also wish to express my warmest congratulations to them on the occasion of **Africa Day**, which is celebrated worldwide by Africans and peoples of African descent living in the Diaspora, highlighting Africa's shared history and heritage, its unity and diversity as well as its enormous potential and common destiny.

The celebration of Africa day this year is indeed special as it marks a significant milestone in the history of our continental organization. It was fifty years ago on 25 May 1963, that our Founding Fathers, inspired by the ideals of Pan-Africanism to promote common understanding between the peoples of Africa and foster greater cooperation between African States in a larger unity transcending ethnic and national differences, signed the Charter establishing the Organization of African Unity.

As we celebrate the Golden Jubilee of the OAU/AU, we take stock of the last fifty years of our continental organization with a view to drawing lessons from our achievements and challenges and chart out the way forward. Needless to say, there have certainly been ups and downs along the way. Much as we take enormous pride and satisfaction from our successes, we also feel dissatisfied by the pitfalls that contributed to our current state of affairs. It is in view of this fact that the theme “**Pan-Africanism and the African Renaissance**” was selected to give us the opportunity to look at Africa’s past, present and future.

When the OAU was established in 1963, there was indeed a lot of euphoria and optimism for Africa’s rejuvenation. Those were the heady days when thirty-two African States just started to enjoy their hard won freedom and independence and to aspire to a

better future. The OAU Charter was the expression of their collective aspirations to promote unity and solidarity amongst themselves as well as to coordinate and intensify their cooperation to achieve a better life for the peoples of Africa.

There is no doubt that 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 who have bequeathed to us a continent free from the shackles of colonialism and Apartheid. The OAU has also contributed to the process of integration on our continent and has served as a continental platform for collective action within Africa and in interactions with the rest of the world.

Nevertheless, 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. We cannot deny the reality that internal problems related to bad governance together with the adverse external environment contributed to Africa's current political and socio-economic problems. In the 1960s, although some east Asian countries were economically at par with the newly independent African countries, it is disheartening that the latter still languish in poverty and underdevelopment while the east Asian countries managed to achieve economic miracles in a span of two or three decades.

At this important juncture, it is therefore incumbent upon us to ask what really went wrong. In spite of our rich historical heritage and abundant natural resources, why have we not been able transform our societies? We need to do some serious soul searching as we reflect on our past and try to chart our future in a bid to realize a peaceful, prosperous and united Africa. Previous generations have paid the ultimate sacrifice to liberate our continent from all forms of subjugation and Apartheid. **It is up to the current and future generations of Africans to achieve the socio-economic emancipation of our continent.**

We have indeed made certain progress over the last decade, which gives us hope and optimism in this regard. The transformation of the OAU into the African Union has no doubt enabled us to better respond to the challenges facing our continent in the 21st century. We have also charted an independent path of development through the **New**

Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and started to learn from each other's experiences on issues of governance by utilizing the **African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM)**.

Over the last decade, it is encouraging that several African economies have entered a high growth trajectory. The number of conflicts ravaging our continent has also slowly subsided, though have not been completely eradicated. Moreover, we are witnessing improved governance with the introduction of a democratic dispensation in many African countries. **As we move forward, we need to rededicate our efforts to ensuring lasting peace and stability, accelerating economic growth and deepening governance reforms, with a view to laying a solid foundation for Africa's socio-economic transformation.**

With visionary leadership, committed to bringing about change, a Developmental State capable of playing a proactive and dynamic role, and the mobilization of all sections of the African people, there is no doubt that we will be able to fully realize our continental agenda in the coming decades.

It is my earnest hope that by the time Africa celebrates the centenary of the OAU in 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. As previous generations were inspired by the ideals of Pan-Africanism to fight for their freedom and dignity, current and future generations should therefore be guided by the same Pan-African spirit to struggle for Africa's socio-economic emancipation and realize the African Renaissance.