

## **AFRICAN UNION AGENDA 2063:**

### **TOWARDS A TRANSFORMATIVE VISION FOR AFRICA**

*A Keynote Presentation by H.E. Dr. Sulley Gariba*

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*Presented at Carleton University, Ottawa during conference organized by the African Womens' Diplomatic Forum and the Institute of African Studies of Carleton University*

*March 12, 2015, Carleton University, Ottawa*

#### **Introduction**

A journey of 1000 miles begins with one tiny first step. About 58 years ago this very month in March when Ghana gained its independence from British colonial rule, its first President, Kwame Nkrumah declared that “the independence of Ghana is meaningless unless it is linked to the total liberation of the entire African continent”. At its founding, the African Union re-affirmed commitment to this inspiring vision and set about an elaborate action plan, mobilizing the collective effort of all of Africa's energies to prosecute one of the most far-reaching efforts in continental liberation. So successful was the first 50 years that, when the AU celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, the entire continent was, indeed, liberated. A large majority of Africa's citizens today live in freedom and are governed under constitutional democracies. Nearly a dozen African economies are among the world's fastest growing economies; the African middle-class is growing and the basis for wealth and economic progress are spreading.

Agenda 2063 derives its reference point from the 50 year projection from the founding of the OAU (now AU) in 1963, and it maps out the next tiny step in the journey of 1,000 years; and this step is another 50 year vision that aggregates the collective aspirations of all member states of the AU into a single document.

### **Contours of Agenda 2063**

This presentation will sketch out the contours of Agenda 2063, as this is the subject for our day-long deliberations in this conference. The agenda is both aspirational and inspirational, and it is based on 7 core aspirations:

- 1. An Africa where development is people-driven, unleashing the potential of women and youth** – this is amply manifested by the very convening of this conference, as it was spearheaded by the African Women Heads of Missions, to both celebrate the centrality of women in Africa’s development and provide opportunities for a real dialogue about the status of women and youth, and how, collectively, we plan to engage on the path of gender equality as we build capacities for a truly inclusive development transformation. The very notion of an inclusive, gender-sensitive and youth oriented goal is an aspirational one. It is both a recognition that the previous paradigm in which many African countries begun their development journey did not adequately reflect peoples participation, nor did it endear itself to sound and grounded gender and youth considerations. By making this a cardinal principle, AU in Agenda 2063 is reflecting a potential paradigm-shift in

development thinking and associated practices. Evidence is already borne out for this principle. Nearly all African countries are embarking on one strategic, medium-term plan or another. An analysis of these reveals that the people-driven ethos, and sensitivity to gender and youth concerns are increasingly becoming central to these plans.

2. **Africa as a strong, united and influential global player and partner** – again, manifested in this conference, as we are witnessing the incremental growth of Africa’s collective voices, both within and outside the continent, vis-à-vis international transactions and partnerships. We are seeing more collective, united actions by African states on issues of international concern, including unity around the Ebola pandemic and the collective nature in which African states stayed together, first as West Africa, and later within the AU, to provide leadership and response.
3. **A prosperous Africa, based on inclusive growth and sustainable development.** This is a critical, agenda setting vision, which is now being translated into the development plans of every single African country. The issue of inclusive, shared and sustainable growth has emerged as paramount. While many African economies appear to be growing rapidly, this growth is primarily in the numbers registered as GDP; most of that growth is jobless growth; much of the figures are reflecting resource exploitation (such as precious minerals, oil and gas) which constitute extraction and repatriation, rather than sustainable development. So the notion of prosperity referred to in this principle,

also embodies the real values of what type of growth, for whom and with what future.

4. **An integrated continent, politically united and based on the ideals of Pan Africanism and the vision of African Renaissance** -- in this specific aspect of Agenda 2063, the protagonists refer to substantial progress already achieved in nearly a dozen highly effective regional integration bodies<sup>1</sup> that operationalize various forms of economic and other types of integration across the continent. As these increasingly form part of the body-corporate of the AU, so much integration gets operationalized in manageable chunks. Added to this is a growing sense and recognition of the African diaspora, both as a source of investment capital for the benefit of the larger continent, but also of social, cultural and political capital. If remittances from the African diaspora is currently valued at about 200 billion dollars annually, imagine what it would be like in 50 years!
5. **An Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law** -- here again, we see a visionary aspiration which embodies a set of values about democracy, and projects an ideal form to which African countries must aspire and work towards.
6. **A peaceful and secure Africa** – crucial agenda item, but one in which progress has been rather slow and difficult, as many of Africa’s conflicts have tendered to involve fractured leadership and internal

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<sup>1</sup> Strong and well-functioning regional institutions. Africa’s sub regional institutions have been rationalized and the eight officially AU recognized Regional Economic Communities (CEN-SAD, COMESA, EAC, ECCAS, ECOWAS, IGAD, SADC and UMA) are today strong development and political institutions that citizens’ can count on and Agenda 2063 can stand on.

rifts. Nonetheless, much progress has been made, led by regional bodies such as ECOWAS, which have used their energies to mount successful peace-keeping forces.

- 7. An Africa with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, shared values and ethics** – Most are concerned that Africa is suffering an identity crisis, yet this Agenda seeks to restore the dignity of Africa, Africans and the diasporas that go with the notion of being African.

### **Some Reflections**

These are feel-good aspirations, and they need to be, because no one dreams about gloom and doom. However, in this conference, we must impose some real rigor in our deliberations, and engage in critical analyses. Just a few random thoughts, as we begin this discourse. While there is much to celebrate in 50 years of Africa's journey, as a continent, there are substantial challenges that continue to confront us as a people and as a continent:

- Economic growth is happening, but not benefitting the majority of our citizens. Part of the problem is corruption, and this problem while manifested in Africa, is a global phenomenon that is aided and abetted by a complex global network of actors, including money laundering and related vices. We must address these concerns as we discuss strategies towards rendering Africa's apparent economic growth more meaningful for its majority.
- Democracy is spreading, as manifested by elections, but the dividends of freer societies are not translating into jobs and livelihood enhancing

opportunities for the majority. Democracy cannot therefore be measured by elections alone, it must be accompanied by more active participation in decision-making, especially for the most marginalized, women and youth, so that their aspirations, for jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities can dominate the choices that are made in the allocation of resources and values.

- Africa's natural resources are fuelling ever-increasing records of GDP expansion, but their exploitation do not appear to be leading to a rapid expansion of the infrastructure that supports accelerated growth and transformation of the economies and societies for the benefit of Africa. The quantum of resource transfers out of Africa are therefore not commensurate with the magnitude of infrastructure requirements that will keep the pace of development, let alone expand and transform lives. As we speak here today, almost every country in Africa is either without electricity, and those who had, once a time, are losing their generation capacity. The fastest-growing economies are particularly hardest hit. How can South Africa, Nigeria, Ghana, who are exporting increasing amounts of natural resources and growing apparently at over 7% annually, also have power outages!

### **Concluding Remarks**

Such are the huge discrepancies and challenges confronting Africa that a thorough stock-taking occurred during the first 50 years of AU to propel the need for a strategy for the next 50 years. Let us use this conference to deepen the understanding of Agenda 2063, and most of all, undertake a critical

assessment of how our collective actions, in research, policy development and international cooperation can help propel Africa's Agenda 2063 into the next giant step towards Africa's transformation.

Agenda 2063 envisions several measures at the national level that include: among others, designation of national focal points for Agenda 2063, integrating Agenda 2063 milestones/targets into national planning frameworks, as well as regular progress reports on Agenda 2063 to cabinet retreats and to National Assemblies/ Parliaments.

About the author:

**DR. SULLEY GARIBA** was appointed Ghana's High Commissioner to Canada in December 2014 and assumed office in January 2015. Prior to his appointment, he was the senior Policy Advisor to the President of Ghana, and head of the President's Policy Delivery Unit. Dr. Sulley Gariba is a policy analyst and governance specialist with over 30 years of experience in advising governments and international institutions on development policy, governance, evaluation and international relations. He studied in Canada, obtaining a Masters and Ph.D in Political Science and International Relations, and spent some time teaching in those fields at Carleton University, Ottawa and the University for Development Studies in Ghana. In June 2014, Carleton University in Ottawa, conferred a Doctor of Laws, honoris causa, on Sulley Gariba, in recognition of his longstanding work and academic scholarship in international development, civil society practices, government policy and program development in Africa. He has published several articles and served as social and political commentator on many subjects, including evaluation of public policies and programs.

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