



**THE DURBAN DECLARATION IN TRIBUTE TO THE  
ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY ON THE OCCASION OF THE  
LAUNCHING OF THE AFRICAN UNION**

We, the Heads of State and Government of the Assembly of the African Union, meeting in our inaugural session in Durban, South Africa, have adopted the following declaration in tribute to the Organisation of African Unity:

1. Thirty nine years ago, the Heads of State and Government of the then independent African Countries gathered in Addis Ababa Ethiopia to found the Organization of African Unity.
2. The main objectives for establishing the organisation were, *inter alia*, to rid the continent of the remaining vestiges of colonisation and apartheid; to promote unity and solidarity among African States; coordinate and intensify cooperation for development; for the defence of sovereignty, territorial integrity and consolidation of the independence of African States, as well as promoting international cooperation within the framework of the United Nations.
3. The common identity and unity of purpose engendered by the OAU, became a dynamic force at the service of the African people in the pursuit of the struggle for the total emancipation of the African Continent in the political, economic and social fields. Nowhere has that dynamic force proved more decisive than in the African struggle for decolonisation. Through the OAU Coordinating Committee for the Liberation of Africa, the Continent worked and spoke as one with undivided determination in forging an international consensus in support of the liberation struggle. Today, we celebrate a fully decolonised Africa and Apartheid has been consigned to the ignominy of history.
4. Pursuant to one of the major objective of its Charter, the OAU has strived to address Africa's problem of poverty and under development and adopted strategies in this regard, including the 1980 Lagos Plan of Action and the Final Act of Lagos which continue to be the blue print for Africa's integration and development.

5. In June 1991, the Treaty establishing the African Economic Community was signed and is now in force. The Treaty seeks to build the African Economic Community through a Common Market built on the Regional Economic Communities. Today, Regional Economic Communities are consolidating and proving to be engines for integration. ECCAS, SADC, COMESA, UMA, ECOWAS, IGAD and CENSAD are making great effort at economic development and integration as well as at promoting peace through conflict resolution in their region. We remain committed to continental and global cooperation including the strengthening of Afro-Arab cooperation.
6. In the political realm, the OAU Declaration on the Political and Socio-economic Situation in Africa and the Fundamental Changes taking place in the World of 1900, underscored Africa's resolve to seize the initiative, to determine its destiny and to address the challenges to peace, democracy and security. The Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution that was established in 1993 was a practical expression of that determination to begin in earnest, the task of promoting peace and stability in Africa.
7. Through the Mechanism, the OAU has managed to address constructively many of the conflicts which have and continue to afflict our Continent. The Mechanism has made a fundamental difference, not only in its political significance of our determination to strive for peace, but more so in the practical framework it has provided for the continent to address conflicts and conflict situations.
8. The OAU has been on the vanguard in the promotion of the observance of human and people's rights. The OAU Charter on Human and People's Rights and the Grand Bay Declaration and Plan of Action on Human Rights are among the instruments adopted by the Organization to promote human rights. Underlying these instruments is a determination to ensure that Africa responds to the challenge of observing, promoting and protecting human rights and the rule of Law.
9. The OAU has also responded to the yearning of the African people for greater political freedoms inherent in democratic government. To this effect, it was at the forefront in galvanizing governments around a new determination to progressively place the people at the centre of decision making. The Charter on Popular Participation adopted in 1990 was a testimony to this new determination.

10. Today, Africa is firmly on the road to democratisation. In our Algiers decision on unconstitutional changes of Government and our Lome Declaration on the Framework for an OAU Response to Unconstitutional Changes adopted in 1999 and 2000 respectively, we reiterated our determination to see Africa governed on the basis of democracy and by governments emanating from the will of the people expressed through transparent, free and fair elections.
11. Similarly, in our 2000 Solemn Declaration on the Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation, we agreed on fundamental principles to govern our cooperation in security, and development and in the promotion of Democracy and Good Governance in the Continent.
12. Through the OAU, Africa has been able to respond to the many other challenges it faces. Whether in the protection of the environment, in fighting international terrorism, in combating the scourge of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, malaria and tuberculosis or dealing with humanitarian issues such as refugees and displaced persons, landmines, small and light weapons among others, Africa has found collective action through the OAU.
13. We, the Heads of State and Government meeting in the inaugural session of the Assembly of our African Union, honour the founding leaders of the OAU and pay tribute to their tenacity, resilience and commitment to African Unity. They stood firm in the face of the divisive manipulations of the detractors of Africa and fought for the integrity of Africa and the human dignity of all the peoples of the continent. In the same vein, we pay tribute to all the Secretaries General and all the men and women who served the OAU with dedication and commitment.
14. As we hail the achievements of the OAU, we rededicate ourselves more resolutely to its principles and objectives and to the ideals of freedom, unity and development which the founding leaders sought to achieve in establishing the Organization thirty-nine years ago. As we bid farewell to the OAU, we rededicate ourselves to its memory as a pioneer, a liberator, a unifier, an organizer, and the soul of our continent. We pledge to strive more resolutely in pursuing the ultimate goals of the OAU and in furthering the cause of Africa and its people under the African Union.
15. We reiterate our continuing commitment to the objectives of the African Union which was initiated at the fourth extraordinary session of the OAU Assembly of Heads of State and Government in the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriva and as embodied in our 9.9.99 Sirte

Declaration. We further rededicate ourselves to the objectives on the New Partnership of Africa's Development (NEPAD), as a programme of the African Union for strengthening inter-African cooperation and integration in a globalising world and to overcome the prevalence of poverty and strive for a better quality of life for all the peoples of Africa.

16. We commit ourselves to urgently establish all institutional structures to advance the agenda of the African Union and call on all Member States to honour their political and financial commitments and to take all the necessary actions to give unwavering support to all the Union's initiatives aimed at promoting peace, security, stability, sustainable development, democracy and human rights in our continent.
17. In order to ensure the involvement of our peoples and their civil society organisations in the activities of the Union, we recommit ourselves to the early establishment of the Pan African Parliament and the Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC) as envisaged in the Constitutive Act of our Union.
18. We welcome and recognise the important contribution of the youth, women, business community, parliamentary representatives and civil society and call upon these stakeholders to continue participating fully as partners in the regeneration of the African Continent through the programmes of the African Union. We reaffirm, in particular, the pivotal role of women in all levels of society and recognise that the objectives of the African Union cannot be achieved without the full involvement and participation of women at all levels and structures of the Union.
19. We note the importance of continuing to cooperate with Africa's partners as well as regional and continental organisations in the furtherance of the objectives of the African Union.
20. As we enter a new era in the history of our continent, we commit ourselves to the principles and objectives that we set out in the Constitutive Act of our Union in order to ensure that our peoples live in peace and prosperity. We also rededicate ourselves to implementing all programmes, policies and decisions of the African Union.

*Durban, South Africa, 10 July 2002*