



**37th Ordinary Session  
of the Assembly of the Heads of State and Government  
of the African Union**

**SPEECH BY:**

**His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Ould Cheikh Al-Ghazouani,  
President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania,  
Current President of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the  
African Union**

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- **Majesties , Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen Heads of States and Governments; dear colleagues**
- **Mr. Chairperson of the African Union Commission;**
- **Mr. Secretary-General of the United Nations;**
- **Mr. Secretary-General of the League of Arab States;**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen Ministers;**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen Ambassadors and Heads of delegations;**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen;**

Allow me to extend my sincere gratitude, both on your behalf and personally, to the esteemed Government and people of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia for their warm and fraternal welcome during our various summits held in this magnificent African capital.

This city, with its undeniable charm, stands as the birthplace of the initial institutional manifestation of our shared commitment to unity and integration.

A birth that is the fruition of the profound visions of our founding fathers and their unwavering resolve, let us recall the poignant words of the late President-elect Ould Daddah. In his address during the inaugural session in 1963, he declared, QUOTE: "We are the focus of the attention of the whole world, especially our African peoples, and the greatest crime we can commit against these peoples is to fail." UNQUOTE.

He held a strong belief in the imperative of fostering collaborative African efforts, firmly convinced that his nation, serving as a historical and cultural bridge between the South and the North of the continent, should stand as one of the fundamental pillars supporting the emergence of this African edifice.

Allow me to hold this opportunity to convey my heartfelt appreciation and profound gratitude to all of you, especially my esteemed brothers and friends, the leaders of North Africa, for the trust you have bestowed upon me. Your decision to entrust me with this noble mission in service of our Union is a great honor.

While I am grateful and deeply honored by this responsibility, I am fully cognizant of the immense duties it entails, particularly given the critical and sensitive juncture our continent and the world are facing. I recognize the weight of the challenges ahead.

Rest assured, dear brothers and sisters that I commit myself to undertake this responsibility with diligence, maintaining a constant dialogue and close coordination with each and everyone of you.

I would like to extend my congratulations to my esteemed brother, His Excellency Mr. Azali Assoumani, President of the Union of the Comoros, for his exceptional leadership and commendable efforts in advancing our Union towards the realization of the aspirations of the African peoples. Concurrently, I commend the efforts of His Excellency Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, President of the African Union Commission, and his team. The various bodies within the African Union hold a constructive role in contributing to the institutional reforms of the Union, aiming to enhance its efficiency and effectiveness.

Majesties and Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The vision envisioned by our founding fathers is now embodied in the collective efforts we have invested in Agenda 2063, shaping our aspirations for the Africa we desire—a continent that is integrated, prosperous, at peace, with its citizens empowered, and a dynamic force on the global stage.

As we are well aware, the success of our plans and strategies toward this noble goal hinges on a substantial investment in human resources, emphasizing a comprehensive, high-quality education that embraces science and technology. The chosen theme of this session "Building Resilient Education Systems for Increased access to Inclusive, Lifelong, Quality, and Relevant Learning in Africa" is aptly selected and holds utmost significance.

Education serves as the cornerstone for sustainable development, acting as a crucial catalyst for security, stability, and the cultivation of skills that pave the way for suitable employment opportunities. It plays a pivotal role in breaking the cycles of unemployment, poverty, and fragility.

Allow me to focus our attention on the youth, constituting approximately 62% of Africa's population. The loss of our youth is synonymous with the loss of our continent, and an uneducated youth is a lost opportunity.

Witnessing millions of young Africans lacking basic skills, unemployed in their own countries, or risking their lives on perilous migration journeys underscores the urgent need for a radical transformation of our educational systems.

Regrettably, our continent lags behind in achieving the fourth sustainable development goal, Our education systems grapple with challenges such as limited access, high dropout rates, and inadequate quality education and training. Unacceptable statistics reveal that more than 17% of our children are out of primary school, and a staggering 75% of our young people at the secondary level lack the essential skills.

It is imperative for all governments, civil societies, and stakeholders across various domains to redouble their efforts in raising awareness and mobilizing human, technical, and financial resources. We must usher in an educational revolution that provides every daughter and son with continuous opportunities for education, training, and skills development. Such initiatives will unlock and empower the creative energies of African women, fostering their effective leadership across diverse development pathways.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

A decade has transpired since the inception of our initial ten-year plan within the framework of the 2063 Agenda's implementation, serving as the foundation for the formulation of medium-term development plans for Member States, regional economic communities, and the organs of the African Union.

Ten years ago, our regional and international landscape faced unfavorable conditions, marked by successive and often simultaneous health and environmental crises. Coupled with economic and security challenges, these crises compounded the already significant hurdles confronting our continent, impeding and slowing the anticipated progress in realizing the 2063 Agenda.

Despite these challenges, notable advancements have been achieved in various realms. Significant strides in the African Continental Free Trade Area have been made, with the successful completion of the first phase. The protocols on trade in goods, trade in services, and dispute settlement have entered into force, and negotiations on the second phase, encompassing investment, intellectual property rights, and competition policy, are progressing at a commendable pace. Concurrently, efforts are underway to launch the Continental Free Trade Area e-tariff book, its rules of origin guide, and its targeted trade initiative.

Encouraging developments have also materialized in digital, road, and electrical infrastructure, as well as in the liberalization of airspace, exemplified by 37 countries joining the Single Continental Aviation Market. Additionally, positive strides in the African Peer Review Mechanism, NEPAD, and institutional reform have been recorded.

Furthermore, our continent's global presence has been fortified, notably through its permanent membership in the G20.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The pressing need for United Nations reform remains crucial, especially concerning our continent's representation in its leadership bodies, including a permanent seat on the UN Security Council.

With your support, I am committed to redoubling efforts in multiple areas, focusing on UN reform, enhancing the multilateral cooperation system, and refining public development support structures. The aim is to establish a more flexible, sustainable, and expedited financing compact for development that does not exacerbate the issue of indebtedness. I commend the valuable efforts of the African Development Bank in this regard.

Furthermore, I will collaborate with you to create a more balanced, equitable, and inclusive multilateral international order for the least developed countries, ensuring our continent has a voice and effective influence. In its current state, the international system is marked by considerable injustice and varying standards, often to the detriment of the most vulnerable and least developed countries.

An evident illustration of the imperative for reform within this international system can be gleaned from the tragic events unfolding in the Gaza Strip. The blatant violation of principles of international legitimacy and human rights, coupled with the international community's hesitancy to exert the necessary influence for an immediate ceasefire, aid delivery, and the establishment of a comprehensive and enduring solution, underscores the urgency for reform. It is paramount to recognize the Palestinians' inherent right to establish their independent state, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in alignment with pertinent resolutions of international legitimacy.

I take pride in the African Union's steadfast positions that denounce injustice and champion just causes adhering to international law and humanitarian principles, particularly in addressing the Palestinian issue.



Ladies and Gentlemen

Despite sporadic progress on various fronts, our collective efforts towards realizing the seven aspirations of the 2063 Agenda have been slow and faltering.

In the 21st century, over 600 million Africans still lack access to electricity. Our continent harbors over 50% of the world's extreme poverty, owns 25% of arable land, yet contributes only 10% to global agricultural production, jeopardizing our food security. The Russian-Ukrainian crisis underscores the vulnerability of our food systems due to disrupted supply chains.

This paradox demands a concerted effort to implement the Second ten-year Plan 2024-2034. The reports from fellow Presidents, focusing on the African Continental Free Trade Area, PIDA 2 infrastructure program, agricultural capacity strengthening, and the Continental Electric Market project, will provide impetus. Additionally, institutional and organizational reform of federation bodies is crucial.

Effective implementation hinges on engaging the private sector robustly across various plan components.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

One of the paramount challenges confronting our continent is the escalation of tensions, armed conflicts, and the emergence of terrorist groups. These threats incessantly jeopardize the stability and security of our nations, unravel social fabrics, impede development efforts, and inflict severe harm on the living conditions of our populations.

The Sahel region stands as one of the most vulnerable areas to these risks, demanding collaborative, coordinated efforts to prevent their proliferation. The toll of loss of life and destruction of infrastructure wrought by terrorism, civil conflicts, and wars underscores the urgency of prioritizing the battle for security and peace on our continent.

Collective continental security is essential, and we must enhance the African Security and Peace Architecture, encompassing mechanisms like the Continental Early Warning System and the African Standby Force. Improving coordination and cooperation within and among regional economic communities is crucial. Our response to security challenges must not be isolated but integrated into addressing the developmental and social issues that fuel them. A comprehensive continental strategy is needed, one that considers security, economic, social, and intellectual dimensions.

The Africa we aspire to is one that adeptly manages and resolves its own conflicts, relying on dialogue, coordination, and creativity to craft solutions suitable to its challenges. While expanding partnerships is necessary, it must be done without fostering competition or settling scores, which can lead to crises, both economically and socially, and especially in terms of security.

Recent unconstitutional changes of governments on our continent have added complexity and gloom to the continental security landscape.

There is undeniable evidence of our Union's substantial commitment, evident in its utilization of legal mechanisms, decisive actions, and numerous declarations. Notably, instances such as those in Algeria in 1999, Lomé in 2000, Accra and Malabo in 2022 demonstrate the Union's resolute stance against various manifestations of unconstitutional changes. Regrettably, despite these concerted efforts, the recurrence of such challenges persists in a disconcerting and unacceptable manner.

It is imperative that we emphasize the unprecedented violation of democracy and the serious threat to institutional stability posed by the escalating instances of unconstitutional changes. We should increasingly rely on our mechanisms for dispute settlement, prioritizing consultation to overcome difficulties and provide African-led solutions free from external interference.

This reality necessitates a collective commitment to consolidating the principles of the rule of law, establishing genuine democracies ensuring a peaceful transition of power, and fostering stability and transparency. Efforts should be directed at calming political life, overcoming social differences and ethnic rivalries through dialogue and consensus, and enhancing overall social, economic, and political governance.

In this pursuit, we must draw inspiration from ancient African wisdom, emphasizing the spirit of dialogue, consultation, and the constant search for consensual solutions in managing various issues. These approaches can pave the way for new formulas that restore calm and peaceful social and political life.

Addressing economic, social, and political governance is crucial, but environmental governance is equally significant. Despite our modest contribution to greenhouse-gas emissions, our continent bears the brunt of resulting floods, desertification, drought, and imbalances in continental and marine ecosystems.

Intensifying efforts to strengthen citizens' resilience to environmental impacts is paramount, coupled with a commitment to a just, gradual, and sustainable environmental and energy transformation. Leveraging our significant green hydrogen capacity can propel us toward universal access to clean energy and accelerate industrial transformation. Coordination and partnerships to mobilize financial resources are imperative for a continental energy revolution through extensive green hydrogen exploitation.

With divine help and your unwavering support, I am committed to actively contributing to translating our continent's vast potential in this area into tangible development projects, significantly advancing the goals of the 2063 Agenda

Ladies, and Gentlemen,

In the current global and continental landscape, the imperative is clear: unity and concerted efforts must prevail. This call is not only in harmony with our shared values but also driven by our recognition of a shared destiny, amplified by the magnitude of challenges ahead and necessitated by the loftiness of our collective purpose.

The vision of creating an "integrated, prosperous, and peaceful Africa, with its citizens leading the charge in its governance and serving as a dynamic force on the international stage" may seem daunting amidst the occasional trials faced by our continent. However, for united peoples endowed with abundant resources, a youthful demographic, and a vision of ambition like ours, it is an achievable endeavor.

It is incumbent upon us all to persist in the institutional development of our African Union. Through its gates, we can assume control of our future, attend to our affairs, enhance our integration and unity, and realize the legitimate aspirations of our peoples as encapsulated in the 2063 Agenda.

As I advocate for heightened unity and increased efforts to address the diverse challenges that confront our continent, I extend my sincere well-wishes to the Assembly of Heads of States and Governments of the African Union as I declare open the 37th session. May its deliberations be fruitful, contributing to the advancement of our collective goals.

Thank you.