

UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

General Debate of the 73rd Regular Session

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- **Excellencies, President of the General Assembly; Secretary-General**
- **Excellencies, Heads of State and Government**
- **Distinguished Delegates**

As we gather here, and work together to make the United Nations more relevant to all people, the positive developments in Africa, over the past year, merit this body's attention.

Let me start, with a paradox.

In no other region, is the sense of trans-national solidarity and unity, so deeply felt, as in Africa. The idea, that our respective national identities stand in contradiction to Pan-Africanism, is unheard-of, in our context.

And yet, despite this unique civic endowment, Africa has too often stood out for division and dysfunction, in practice. This left Africa unable to articulate and advance our common interests. We ceded responsibility for our future to others, not by force, but by default.

But times are changing rapidly, and so the management of Africa's global position must also change.

The trend on our continent, is toward closer and more productive cooperation, both through the African Union, and our Regional Economic Communities.

The evident decline of old certainties and authorities, is not bringing turbulence to Africa, as would have been the case, as of a previous era.

On the contrary, the effect has been to focus Africa's attention, on the urgent need to get our house in order, and fundamentally change how we do business.

That is why the African Union initiated a major financial and institutional reform, more than three years ago.

We are already seeing practical results.

New financial discipline has produced an African Union budget, that is 12 per cent lower, than last year. The share of funding supplied by Member States, has also increased substantially.

Contributions to the Peace Fund, which helps pay for African Union peace support operations, are at the highest level, since its establishment in 1993.

And earlier this year, the historic African Continental Free Trade Area was signed, which was the culmination of decades of effort.

Once in force, Africa's place in the global economic and trade architecture, will be redefined.

Economies of scale, and higher levels of intra-African trade, will help our continent attain the Sustainable Development Goals, by 2030. We will also see new possibilities for public-private partnership, with Africa's growing private sector.

This year also provided examples, of regional security affairs and key political transitions, being handled in a peaceful and forward-looking manner.

More effective consultation and leadership, is reducing the need for external mediation, and this is how it should be.

The momentous developments in the Horn of Africa (Eritrea, Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Somalia) are the most remarkable. The region's leaders deserve our full support, as they set aside decades of mistrust, and work toward a comprehensive settlement.

It is important for the United Nations Security Council, to collaborate closely with the African Union, to accompany this process of normalisation.

In Zimbabwe, as well, the next stages on the country's path of progress, warrant steady encouragement from the international community.

However, there are other situations in Africa, notably the Central African Republic, Libya, the Sahel, and South Sudan, where serious problems remain unresolved, despite so much potential.

Africa and the world, should come together, and do what needs to be done, to harmonise overlapping initiatives, and ensure that agreements are respected.

Peace and security are the foundation of economic and social well-being. Yesterday, we happily marked the centenary of Nelson Mandela's birth, with the Mandela Peace Summit.

In that spirit, we are already set to embark on a new chapter, in cooperation between the African Union and the United Nations, on the stable funding of African Union-mandated peace support operations.

The resolution set to be introduced by Africa's three Security Council members, has the full backing of the African Union. This step will also align, with the Secretary-General's new "Action for Peacekeeping Initiative".

This reflects, once again, that the dividend of a more focused and functional Africa, benefits everyone.

In this wider context, of even stronger partnership between our institutions, it is important for the African Union's diplomatic representation, here at the United Nations, to be accorded the status and weight, enjoyed by other major regional bodies.

The theme for this year's General Debate, is making the United Nations relevant to all people.

This requires a commitment, to achieving real multilateralism, where it has too often been lacking.

The current two-track system of global governance, is unsustainable. A few get to be the ones to define the norms, by which others shall be judged. But standards that do not apply to everyone, equally, are not universal.

Addressing this imbalance in the very foundation of our system, is what will give shape, to a revival of multilateral cooperation, and renew the legitimacy of the international institutions, that are so crucial to our planet's future.

In the years ahead, we look forward to deepening this important partnership between Africa and the United Nations, to advance our shared agenda of peace and security, gender equality and women's empowerment, environmental protection, and shared prosperity.

I thank you very much, for your kind attention.