

AFRICAN UNION

الاتحاد الأفريقي



UNION AFRICAINE

UNIÃO AFRICANA

Addis Ababa, ETHIOPIA P. O. Box 3243 Telephone: 011-551 7700 Fax : 011-551 7844
website: www.africa-union.org

5th African Union - European Union Summit

Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire

29-30 November 2017

Speech of

Mr. Moussa FAKI Mahamat,

Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union

Mr. President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire,

Mr. President of the Republic of Guinea, Current Chairman of the African Union

Excellencies Heads of State and Government,

Dear Friends of the African and European Institutions,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

My first thought is to address to you, President Alassane Ouattara, and, through you, to the Government and the people of Côte d'Ivoire, my sincere grateful thanks for the tireless efforts you have made for the successful organisation of this Fifth Summit between Europe and Africa.

I am delighted to be on this Ivorian land, home of millions of Africans from the region and beyond.

This tradition of hospitality, the famous Akwaba personified by President Felix Houphouet-Boigny is a source of inspiration, especially in these times of distrust of the Other, the rejection of the foreigner.

Finally, may I thank all the Heads of State and Government, as well as other friends, who have kindly responded to attend this meeting.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Since the last Summit in Brussels, the African Union has undergone significant changes. These are part of the dynamics of restructuring impelled by its leaders to make it an effective instrument of development and integration, commensurate with the aspirations of our peoples.

With the happy return of the Kingdom of Morocco, personified today by the presence of Your Majesty, Africa has regained its totality, its unity. The European Union-African Union couple is thus resuming its balance and is assuming an exceptional bi-continental stature.

The theme of this Summit - Investing in Youth for Accelerated and Inclusive Growth for Sustainable Development – overlaps with the theme of the African Union for 2017, "Harnessing the Demographic Dividend by Investing in Youth".

Far from being a mere coincidence, this thematic convergence confirms that Africa and Europe share the same concerns in the face of the exigencies of the times. It invites us to build a strategic alliance, more than just a simple partnership dedicated solely to the quest for mercantile interests.

Through a more fruitful dialogue between our cultures and our civilisations and the building of bridges of friendship between our continents, we teach our children, our youths, that diversity is the driving force of our movement, the soul of our life.

The huge challenges that we have to take up demand that we further strengthen our partnership. In this exercise, we can build on the tremendous work already done.

As I have said it, the African Union - European Union couple is a beautiful story that, in the past, has been crisscrossed by shadows and lights, but which, today, prides itself on its vivacity, its dynamism and a promising future.

Drawing lesson from the Brussels Roadmap 2014-2017, we must adopt a new Plan that translates our ambitions into deeds. Within this framework, our partnership will have to evolve from the less glorious spirit of the donor-recipient in favour of a genuine mutually beneficial cooperation, governed by the principles of equality and respect.

African youths represent more than 60% of the population of the continent. It is superfluous to overemphasize that, without a heavy investment in this youth, its education, training, employment, intellectual, cultural, sporting and artistic development, Africa - and Europe for that matter - does not have a future.

Young people – men and women - must resolutely be placed at the centre of our alliance. Here we need to go beyond mere incantatory statements. We need operational plans that are immediately applicable.

The slogan of our Summit should not, therefore, be a circumstantial slogan. It will have meaning and scope only if it is sustained in a long term perspective, that of strategic time.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The scourge of conflict continues to plague many African countries in the Horn of Africa, in Central Africa, the Lake Chad Basin and the Sahel.

The fight against terrorism, jihadism and cross-border crime is often at the core of this

concern.

The support of Europe in this area is commendable, which does not detract from the urgent need to increase it to help establish an environment conducive to sustainable development.

Africa is blessed with wealth, through its mines, fishery resources and vast arable lands. Its young population is an asset and a powerful growth driver.

Our young people, and rightly so, no longer accept, no longer support the paradox that is the juxtaposition of this abundance of resources and our destitution.

It is this state of affairs that propels tens of thousands of them on the roads to death, humiliation and slavery.

The question of emigration, especially to Europe, arises in tragic terms. The boats of death on the high seas compete, in a dismal tragedy, with shipwrecks in the ocean of dunes and rocky terrain of the Great Sahara.

This is our common challenge. Our shared responsibilities here are excruciating; they challenge us in the depths of our consciences.

How long are we and you going to watch this tragedy unfold, insensitive, helpless, inactive, paralysed?

I speak to you, horrified and haunted, like many other citizens of the world, by the images of African migrants auctioned as slaves on Libyan territory.

Our Summit must be the starting point for resolute action aimed at finding a response to this tragedy and to the sources of the anxieties of our youths.

Among these sources of agony, is poverty that arises from the lack of socio-economic prospects, a situation worsened by the degradation of the environment, climate change as well as poor governance.

As Nelson Mandela, whose centenary we will celebrate next year, said so well, "Overcoming poverty is not an act of charity, but of justice. Like slavery and apartheid, poverty is not a natural phenomenon, but it is manmade; it can be overcome and eradicated by common actions of humanity".

I thank you for your high and kind attention.

